GUERRILLA WAR, COUNTERINSURGENCY, AND STATE FORMATION IN OTTOMAN YEMEN

DISSERTATION

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By

Vincent Steven Wilhite, M.A.

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Dissertation Committee

Professor Carter Findley, Adviser
Professor Stephen Dale
Professor John Guilmartin

Approved By

Adviser
Department of History
ABSTRACT

The Zaydi Imamate of Yemen collapsed in the nineteenth century as a result of inherent conflicts in its structure as a tribal quasi-state, between the Zaydi tribesmen’s culture of honor and the Islamic values of the Imamate. This in turn facilitated the Ottoman conquest of the Yemeni highlands in 1872. The inferior weaponry of the Zaydi tribes and their political fragmentation made it impossible for them to conduct a sustained resistance against the Ottomans. As a result, the Ottomans were able to maintain control in the early years of the occupation by the methods of indirect rule: divide-and-conquer tactics coupled with intermittent punitive expeditions. The presence of the Ottoman state, however, created the political conditions under which the Zaydi tribes would unite to defend themselves. This allowed the Imāms to rebuild the Imamate as a supra-tribal state deriving its authority from Islamic principles, organized to unite the tribes in a long-term jihād against the Ottomans. In turn, this compelled the Ottomans to change their methods of dealing with rebellion in Yemen. Ottoman statesmen sought increasingly to employ the techniques of the bureaucratic nation-state to consolidate their grip on Yemen: police repression, counter-guerrilla tactics, and programs of social and economic development designed to win the support of the population. Such measures failed as a result of the poverty of the Ottoman state and the dictatorial practices of the Hamidian regime. Together with the growing military sophistication of the Zaydis, however, they did push the conflict in Yemen toward total war. The culmination of this process would come in the rebellion of 1905, characterized by grinding campaigns of attrition and massive social destruction in Yemen. After this rebellion, the Ottomans would realize the futility of a total war policy, and seek a negotiated settlement with the Imām. Such a settlement finally came after the Young Turk era, peace was made with the Imām on the basis of political and cultural autonomy for the Zaydis.
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VITA

May 9, 1968 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Born-Fresno, California

1992 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . M.A. History, Binghamton University

1994-Present . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Graduate Associate, The Ohio State University

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments........................................................................................................ iii

Vita...................................................................................................................................... iv

Chapters:

1. Introduction.................................................................................................................. 1

2. The Collapse of the Qāsimī Imamate............................................................................ 76

3. The Conquest of Yemen and ‘Asīr.................................................................132

4. Limited Rebellion and “Counterinsurgency,” 1872-1891................................. 197

5. The 1891 Rebellion.................................................................................................237

6. Guerrilla War and Counterinsurgency as Total War in Yemen.................... 303

7. The 1904 Rebellion.................................................................................................372

Epilogue and Conclusion..........................................................................................413

Glossary of Arabic and Turkish Terms.................................................................. 445

Bibliography................................................................................................................. 447
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Patterns of Conflict and Allegiance in the Segmentary Lineage System.</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Transformation of War in Yemen</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our study will analyze the development of guerrilla war and counterinsurgency in Ottoman Yemen from 1872 to 1911. We will focus on the gradual escalation of the conflict, from limited toward what we may loosely term total forms of warfare. The term “total war” may seem to be an imposition of concepts from European military history, on a conflict which had nothing to do with what was going on in Europe. We will show, however, that this was not the case. The conflict in Yemen was a war between the expanding Ottoman state and the Zaydīs, the Shi‘ite sect of the northern highlands which had dominated much of Yemen since the seventeenth century. We will see that this conflict was profoundly affected by the currents which gradually drew Europe into World War I: the burgeoning trade in weapons, the intensified rivalry for colonies, and the growing power of the bureaucratic state. Such developments would impact the political self-definition of both Zaydīs and Ottomans, in such a way as to bring them into deep ideological opposition. This opposition, combined with the steadily increasing war-fighting capability of both sides, led them into a protracted conflict. As a military struggle, this conflict had important elements in common with the guerrilla wars of the twentieth century, whose strategy has evolved in such a way that they can be considered
as total wars.

In this particular context, a closer definition of what we mean by limited and total war will serve to clarify our analysis. Limited war is usually focused on achieving a specific political objective, conducted on a short-term basis between parties having a shared political and military ethos. Such an ethos defines the limits within which violence can take place; and this tends to restrict warfare to armed combat between warriors or professional soldiers, rather than involving the population at large. The aim is the achievement of the objective within the parameters of the political and military “game,” rather than the destruction of the enemy forces.

Total war, by contrast, is aimed at the complete military and political destruction of the enemy. Such war is frequently grounded in opposing ideologies on both sides, which make the political and military existence of the enemy unacceptable. Accordingly, total wars may discard the “rules” of warfare implicit in limited war in favor of military expediency. Total war may involve the mobilization of the noncombatant population on a large scale, to provide political and logistical support to non-combatants. The civilian population is also more likely to be subject to attack, as a means of undermining the social and economic base which supports the enemy army. While limited wars are conservative by nature, total wars have the potential for both massive social destruction and large-scale social transformation.

The contrast between limited and total war has been developed largely within the context of European military history.¹ Can these criteria be applied to the transformation

¹ In this regard, a contrast is often made between the limited wars of the eighteenth century and the mass mobilizing, nationalist military conflict that began with the French Revolution. For one discussion of this
of war in Yemen? We will argue that they can be, provided that the appropriate qualifications are made, and events situated within their cultural context. We will approach the transformation from limited toward total war from three perspectives: weapons technology, the strategic principles of unconventional war developed in the twentieth century, and the political traditions of the Zaydīs and Ottomans respectively.

First, we will outline a “wave” theory of weapons diffusion and state power. This theory attempts to show how revolutions in firepower technology have tended to result in rising internal violence within the state. The state first consolidates its authority by means of new weapons over which it initially possesses a monopoly, and then faces increasingly violent resistance as subjugated populations acquire firearms in their turn. This process played a major role in the emergence of total guerrilla war in the twentieth century, and we will show that a similar process took place in the Ottoman Empire in this period.

Second, we will discuss the evolution from limited toward total guerrilla war on the Zaydī side. We will begin by outlining the general progression from limited to total guerrilla resistance in the twentieth century as it has been defined by modern military writers. Specifically, we will compare Colonel Charles Callwell’s* analysis of the military methods of irregular warriors in the era of high imperialism to the guerrilla strategies outlined in Mao Tse-Tung and Che Guevara. In Callwell, the military methods of irregular warriors are defined by short-term mobilization to achieve limited objectives. Mao and Guevara, by contrast, envision an ideologically driven, long-term, and state-

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* Charles Callwell was a British military officer who published a comprehensive treatise on colonial war around the turn of the century.
forming strategy of guerrilla warfare. We will show that an analogous transformation took place in the Zaydī resistance, discussing the ways in which the specifically military observations of these authors were applicable to the situation in Yemen.

To place these observations on military affairs within their cultural context, however, we will need to have recourse to anthropological theories concerning the tribal societies of the Middle East. We will argue that the shift from limited toward total war in Yemen should be understood in terms of the contrast between intertribal war and *jihād*. While the former is limited by its cultural imperatives, *jihād* has the potential to be a long-term, state-forming, and even total form of warfare. We will show that war in Yemen was gradually transformed from short-term resistance derived from the culture of intertribal war to a long-term *jihād*, driven ideologically by the goal of achieving a just social order in the Islamic sense. The reconstitution of the Imamate as a state to organize this *jihād* was a critical part of this process. To analyze the dynamics of the Imām’s government in this regard, we will have recourse to Ernest Gellner’s theory of the tribal quasi-state; that is, a state which derives its military power from a confederation of tribes, held together by the moral authority of men drawn from “holy” lineages.

Finally, we will set forth the theoretical framework for understanding the evolution of Ottoman counterinsurgency in Yemen. Again, we will discuss this evolution in the context of both modern counterinsurgency theory and Ottoman political culture in the nineteenth century. First, we will discuss the evolution from limited to total methods of dealing with rebellion in the twentieth century, a process which parallels the evolution we have outlined for guerrilla war.
Once again we will begin with Callwell, whose work reflected military thinking about colonial war in the nineteenth century. Taking the short-term orientation of irregular warriors as his premise, Callwell argues for a strategy which we define as limited. Conflicts against irregular warriors could be won by the decisive battle, by force and firepower applied at the proper time and place. Lacking the organizational cohesion to mount a sustained resistance, the irregular warriors would rapidly submit in the face of a series of defeats.

As guerrilla resistance in the colonies became more long-term and sophisticated, however, Western counterinsurgency strategists were forced to respond in kind. They now began to define unconventional war in terms which made it a form of total war; that is, as a prolonged contest between an incumbent and a counter state organization based on opposing political visions, focused on gaining the support of the population, and aiming to destroy the enemy as a military and political force. Two opposing approaches were devised as the best means to do this, those of “punitive repression” and “hearts and minds,” respectively. Advocates of punitive repression argued for a policy based on repressive force alone. Proponents of hearts and minds strategy, by contrast, argued that the support of the population would have to given voluntarily. Therefore, the government should focus on restoring its legitimacy through reform and development programs.

Now, we will argue that the changes in Ottoman counterinsurgency strategy in Yemen had some parallels to the evolution of Western counterinsurgency in the twentieth century. The Ottoman conquest of Yemen was accomplished in the same manner as the colonial conquests which formed much of the basis for Colonel Callwell’s strategic theory; that is,
by a series of decisive battles in which the Ottomans overwhelmed the Zaydī tribesmen through superior firepower. As the Zaydī rebels grew more sophisticated, however, the Ottomans were forced to develop more comprehensive methods of dealing with the rebellion. As in the Cold War era, the central question for the Ottomans was whether to crush the insurgency by main force or to win the voluntary support of the population by programs of reform and development. The Ottoman attempt to employ comprehensive strategies of this kind would gradually push the conflict in Yemen toward more total forms.

To place these developments within their cultural context, we will focus respectively on the Perso-Islamic and the “modernizing” elements of Ottoman political culture during the nineteenth century. The Perso-Islamic tradition of statecraft emphasized the absolute right of the ruler to take any action necessary to protect the Muslim community and ensure social justice. Theoretical absolutism, however, was combined with *de facto* state weakness. Perso-Islamic methods of dealing with rebellion were therefore fundamentally limited in character, based on gaining the support of local elites, divide and rule tactics, and fierce but intermittent displays of force. While traditions of absolutism allowed the sultans to take violent action in the service of the larger good, they could not exercise a sustained coercion in the manner of the modern bureaucratic state.

With the centralizing and reforming trends of the nineteenth century, however, policies emerged which were based on some of the same premises of modern counterinsurgency. The policies of the *Tanzimat* had the same fundamental goals as “hearts and minds” counterinsurgency: to restore the legitimacy of the state by means of reform and development, thereby neutralizing the appeal of nationalist rebels. Such ideas
were assimilated into the political thought of the Hamidian period. Here, however, they were accompanied by a renewed focus on the Islamic character of the state and the absolute power of the sultan, now buttressed by a modern bureaucratic apparatus. The harshly centralizing policies which were implemented in consequence were conducive to repressive counterinsurgency measures.

We will argue that “traditional” Perso-Islamic methods of dealing with rebellion tended to predominate in the first years of Ottoman rule, owing to the practical weakness of both the Ottoman state and the rebel resistance. The modernizing counterinsurgency policies which came afterward were based on both the reformist and repressive orientation of the Ottoman sultanate under Abdülhamid. In this context, we will show that the ideological basis for the move toward total war was the differing conceptions of Islamic government held by Abdülhamid and the Imāms respectively. The one focused on maintaining the absolute power of the sultan as the best means of ensuring the security of the Muslim community; the other emphasized the moral limits placed on the ruler by Islam, and the right of Muslims to rebel if they were transgressed.

A. Technology, the Arms Trade, and International Rivalries.

In using the term “total war” in a qualified sense to describe the conflict in Yemen, then, it is first important to understand that this conflict was deeply affected by the firepower revolution which helped to bring about the total wars of the twentieth century. It is well known that revolutions in military technology have a profound effect on state power, both in the internal and international arenas. A reading of military history shows
that the firepower revolutions of both the sixteenth and the twentieth century have had a “two-phased” impact on the power of the state in this regard.

In the first phase, the new firepower technologies tended to strengthen the state. The expense of these new technologies initially limited their acquisition to relatively established governments, who now had the capability to take over weaker states and subjugate previously autonomous populations under their sway. Fear of increasingly well-armed rivals accelerated the process of internal consolidation and external conquest, leading to heightened international tensions.

This particular process is very well documented in the historical literature for both the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. William McNeill has shown that the sixteenth century firepower revolution resulted in the formation of vast “gunpowder empires” across Eurasia, and heightened competition among the European states possessing the new cannon and muskets. The firepower revolution also resulted in a general strengthening of the monarchies against their autonomous subject communities.

The “first phase” process is also quite well documented for the nineteenth century. It is well known that the massive European colonial expansion of the nineteenth century was due to the technological revolution of that time period: the introduction of breech-loading rifles, steel artillery, telegraphs, and railroads. That such changes in military technology played a major role in the heightened international tensions of the period has

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3 See for example Weston F. Cook’s study of the effects of gunpowder revolution on dynastic power in Morocco in the sixteenth century. The Hundred Years War for Morocco (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 273 ff.
also long been known. The use of the new military technology to extend the internal power of the state in nineteenth century Europe is less well studied. The European states were heavily involved in internal police operations in the nineteenth century, however, and it seems likely that improved weaponry played some role in the successful extension of state power.

The first phase of the firepower revolutions, then, has historically been one favorable to the expansion of state power. In the second phase, however, this process reversed itself. The new firepower technology began to weaken the power of the state, as subjugated rural populations acquired firearms, facilitating an explosion of social tensions resulting from the previous state consolidation. In classical Ottoman times, the acquisition of firearms by the peasant and tribal populations of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the social upheavals of the seventeenth century.

At the same time, heightened interstate tensions led to wars which the new weaponry made increasingly bloody and destructive, weakening the state further. The Long War with Austria played a major role in making the Ottoman state vulnerable to the Celali rebellions.7 The advances in military technology that had enabled the creation of the European Empires in the nineteenth century brought them down in the twentieth; the empires were destroyed both by internecine conflict in the world wars and by well-armed rebels in the colonies.

7 Ibid.
Now, we will show that this process also played itself out in the final century of
Ottoman rule, in the Empire in general and Yemen in particular. Despite the fact that it
was a semi-colonial state, the Ottoman Empire participated fully in the firepower
revolution of the mid-nineteenth century. This firepower revolution was based on two
major developments: the replacement of the flintlock musket by rifled small arms, and of
smooth-bore cannon by breech-loading rifled artillery made of steel.8 The firepower
revolution reached the Ottoman Empire in the 1860’s; and by the end of that decade, the
Ottoman military was armed with breech-loading rifles of British make and Krupp
artillery.9 This would enable it to accelerate the program of internal consolidation it had
been pursuing over the past half century.

At the same time, the Empire was drawn into the heightened regional and great power
rivalries that the new military technologies brought in their train, with their associated
arms races and competition for colonies. Specifically, the statesmen of the Empire feared
that the growing interest of Egypt and the European powers in the Red Sea region would
lead them to occupy Yemen, thereby threatening Ottoman possessions in the Ḥijāz. In
consequence, the Empire decided to occupy Yemen first as an act of preemption.10 The
rifles and artillery of the Ottoman army enabled it to defeat the musket-armed tribesmen
of Yemen with relative ease. The conquest of Yemen, then, was associated with the
major developments characteristic of “phase one” of the firepower revolution: internal
consolidation and external expansion, made possible by the firepower superiority of the
state, and fuelled by heightened tensions among the states possessing the new weaponry.

9 Roderic Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876 (New York: Gordian Press, 1973), 265.
Akbayar. (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfi Yurt Yayınları, 1996), 1:75.
The relative firepower superiority of the Ottoman army in Yemen continued for about twenty years. By the 1890’s, however, a flourishing trade in small arms to the tribal populations of the Middle East had emerged. This had a profoundly destabilizing impact on Ottoman rule in Yemen. Most of the tribes of Yemen acquired breech-loading rifles of some kind in the 1890’s. In consequence, the Ottomans had to expend ever-increasing quantities of blood and treasure simply to maintain a tenuous hold on the region. In the latter years of Abdülhamid’s reign, the situation for the Ottomans in Yemen became more and more precarious, culminating in the massive insurrection of 1904.

In Abdülhamid’s reign, then, the firepower supremacy of the Ottomans in Yemen was steadily undermined. The external consequences of the firepower revolution would not become fully apparent until the era of the Young Turks, when Abdülhamid’s policy of avoiding foreign wars finally broke down. The final major rebellion of the Zaydī tribesmen was accompanied by rising tensions with Italy and the Balkan states, tensions which would soon break into open warfare. Faced with this, the Ottomans were finally convinced of the need to compromise with the Zaydī tribes; and the suppression of the rebellion in 1911 was followed by the conclusion of a peace treaty with their leader, the Imām Yaḥyā.11 Even so, this did not bring their troubles in Yemen to an end. They were now faced with serious rebellion in ‘Asīr and the Tihāma by another religious leader, Muḥammad al-Idrisī, whose great-grandfather had founded a Şūfī brotherhood in the region. In 1911, al-Idrisī was openly armed by the Italians, and carried on his rebellion in

conjunction with Italian operations. Later, in World War I, he would play an important role in the final expulsion of the Ottomans from Yemen.\textsuperscript{12}

Phase two of the firepower revolution in Yemen, then, was marked by the arming of the Yemeni tribesmen, a consequent escalation of the conflict, and the eventual combining of the internal rebellion with external war in a fashion which made the Ottoman position in Yemen untenable. While the Ottomans were temporarily able to salvage their position in Yemen by making peace with the Zaydī Imām, they were not ultimately able to do so in the Empire at large. The conflict in Yemen was part of by which the Empire was torn apart by internal and external wars, made ever more destructive by continuously increasing firepower.

The ripple effect of the nineteenth century firepower revolution, then, was an essential element of the escalation of the conflict in Yemen. As in the European empires in the era of decolonization, a second key element was the development of sophisticated methods of guerrilla warfare by the Yemeni tribesmen. Resistance evolved from short-term rebellion by individual tribes to long-term guerrilla war organized at the supra-tribal level. To understand this process requires a closer familiarity with basic dynamics of both guerrilla warfare and the “tribal quasi-state” of the Middle East, the type of state through which guerrilla resistance was organized in Yemen.

\textbf{B. Guerrilla War and State Formation in Yemen.}

\textsuperscript{12} al-Wāsi‘ī, Ṭārīkh, 136-138.
I. The Land and People of Yemen.

Before embarking on this analytical journey, however, it is essential to provide some basic information on Yemeni society. Yemen is divided into three distinct geographical regions: a low, hot coastal plain called the Tihāma, a highland plateau which rises up from the Tihāma and then slopes down to the interior desert of Arabia, and a portion of this desert itself. The last was entirely outside government control in the Ottoman period.

The Tihāma is extremely hot and humid. Most of it consists of sandy plain covered with thorn scrub, although it has some fertile land which in Ottoman times produced sesame and millet (dhurra).13 In Ottoman times, the tribes of the Tihāma were mainly transhumant pastoralists, living in conical grass huts of temporary construction.14 On the coast, they were involved in fishing, trading, and smuggling. They also became heavily involved in gun-running, supplying the highland tribes with the rifles.

The highlands of Yemen are more fertile overall, with a much milder climate. Broadly speaking, the highlands may be divided into three distinct regions: Upper Yemen, Lower Yemen, and the west. Upper Yemen is the arid plateau of the north and east, inhabited by the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes. In the Ottoman period, these tribes were engaged in dry farming as subsistence cultivators, producing primarily millet, wheat, and barley.15 The region is not very fertile, however; and so these tribes historically resorted

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to raiding the richer areas to the south, or relying on subsidies extorted from various governments.16

Lower Yemen and the west, by contrast, are much more fertile and well watered. Lower Yemen is the southeastern region of the plateau, centered around the cities of Ta‘izz, Ibb, and Ḥujariyya. The west may be defined as the escarpment of the central plateau descending to the Tihāma from the northern plateau, centered roughly around Jabal Rayma to the south and Ḥajja to the north. Both regions have comparatively heavy rainfall, with a system of farming characterized by terraced fields and catchment irrigation.17 The social structure of these regions can be considered as “semi-feudal,” with a powerful class of landholding families and a class of “peasants,” (raʿāyā) who serve as tenant farmers for the former.18

Apart from the food crops of millet, wheat, and barley, both Lower Yemen and the west have historically produced coffee for commercial purposes. Revenues from the export of coffee, in fact, underpinned the state structure of the Imamate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.19 These regions produced the bulk of Yemen’s agricultural wealth, and thus their control was strategically vital for any power that wished to rule in Yemen.

The geographical divisions we have outlined determined the most important social cleavages in Yemen’s population. The most important distinction is between adherents of Zaydi Shi‘ism and members of the Shafi‘i school of Sunnī Islam. The Zaydis are the

16 Dresch, Tribes, 13, 206-227, 213.
17 Bury, Arabia, 103-105.
18 See Dresch, Tribes, 12-16, for a discussion of the conceptual opposition between the “feudal” south and west, and the “tribal” north and east.
19 Dresch, Tribes, 200.
primary group in the northern highlands, dominating the region as far south as the Yarih area. In the southern highlands and the Tihama, the Shafii are predominant, and they also inhabit certain areas to the northwest of San‘a’. In addition to these two groups, the Isma‘ili, a heterodox Shi‘ite sect, live in the Manakha area to the west of San‘a’. In the Ottoman period, organized political opposition was spearheaded by the Zaydis. The Shafii of the southern highlands were relatively quiescent. The Shafii tribes of the Tihama engaged in frequent rebellion, but had neither specific ideological reasons for opposing the Ottoman government, nor a large scale organization to coordinate resistance. The Isma‘ili of the western highlands seemed to switch sides between the Zaydis and the Ottomans, according to their perception of their immediate interests.

The sociology of Yemen is still incompletely understood. Apart from the Zaydi-Shafi split, the chief distinction relevant for our study is that between tribal and non-tribal populations. Historically it was primarily employed in the highland regions, to distinguish between members of the powerful Ḥāshid and Bakīl confederation and the “peasants” (ra‘ayā) of the west and Lower Yemen. In addition to Ḥāshid and Bakīl, there are several other tribal confederations in North Yemen that have yet to be extensively studied by anthropologists. These include the ‘Akk of the Tihama and the Madhīj of the central plateau.

Ḥāshid and Bakīl have been the dominant tribes of the highland region since the seventeenth century, and they spearheaded the revolt against the Ottomans. The tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl live in Upper Yemen and the area around San‘a’. Within their own

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20 Dresch, Tribes, 12-16.
territories, the tribesmen are sedentary cultivators, owning their own land independently of powerful landlords. They possess, moreover, a distinctive martial culture which distinguishes them from the supposedly compliant ra‘āyā.

The primary aspects of this culture relevant to our study are those of piety, honor (sharaf), courage (shajā‘a), and autonomy. Although in the legal arena the tribesmen tend to prefer tribal custom to the Islamic Sharī‘a law, they see themselves as strict Muslims who do not tolerate such vices as the drinking of alcohol, prostitution, and dancing girls. Sharaf, in Steven Caton’s words, “refers to a man’s or woman’s reputation for possessing virtues such as courage, wisdom, self-possession, honesty, and generosity.”

Central elements of sharaf include courage in battle and autonomy; that is, the freedom of the tribe from direct control by outside governments or despotic shaykhs, and the refusal by individuals generally to tolerate bullying or coercion. In this regard, the centralizing drive of the Ottoman government brought it into inevitable conflict with these tribes.

The tribesmen were not the only group in the population with which the Ottomans had difficult relations. The social elite proper in the highlands consisted of the prominent sayyid and qāḍī families, the major tribal shaykhs, and the powerful landholding shaykhs of Lower Yemen. The sayyids are putative descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through ‘Alī and Fāṭima. All sayyids enjoy a certain social status, although not all are wealthy or influential, and a few of the most prominent sayyid families have played a

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22 Caton, Peaks of Yemen I Summon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 27.
23 Ibid.
24 Caton, Peaks, 31-32.
major role in the history of the country.25 The sayyids characteristically act as mediators in tribal disputes, and are often trained as ‘ulamā’.* The Imāms, the spiritual and political leaders of the Zaydī community, were always chosen from among the sayyid ‘ulamā’.

The term qāḍī in Yemen has a somewhat different meaning from its usage in the rest of the Islamic Middle East, where it denotes a judge trained in Islamic law. The qāḍīs of Yemen belong to important notable families whose members have historically tended to become judges and administrators. Only some members of the qāḍī families are judges in the technical sense, but the title is used as an honorific even for those who are not.26 Opposition to the Ottomans among the Zaydī religious elites was fierce. The grievances of the sayyids and qāḍīs centered around the fact that the Ottomans had replaced the “Zaydī” Shari‘a with their own law codes, and deprived the Zaydī ‘ulamā’ of their traditional dominance of the judiciary.27

Among the shaykhly elite of Yemen, attitudes toward the Ottomans were rather more nuanced. As with qāḍīs and sayyids, shaykhly status is hereditary in certain families.28 The term “shaykh” is used with reference to two types of elites. In Upper Yemen, the tribal shaykhs of Ḥāşhid and Bakīl act as war-leaders and mediators in tribal disputes. They have the power to attract followers by means of conspicuous sharaf, displayed

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25 Dresch, Tribes, 140-141.
* Scholars learned in Islamic law and theology. The singular of this Arabic word is ‘ālim.
26 Peterson, Search, 22-23.
27 It appears that Zaydīs trained in the Islamic law were reduced to the role of advisors to the Ottoman judges. See Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Bir Devlet Adamının II. Abdülhamid, Meşratiyet, ve Mütareke Devri Hâtiralari, ed. F. Rezan Hümen. (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1993), 1:280.
28 Among the shaykhs of Ḥāşhid and Bakīl, the families of al-Aḥmar, ash-Shāyi‘if, al-Juzaylān, and Ḥubaysh have risen to prominence in recent centuries. See Dresch, Tribes, 206.
through courageous deeds in battle or skill in mediation. They do not, however, have the power to coerce their tribesmen.

The shaykh of Lower Yemen, by contrast, is a member of a prominent family with large landholdings, who “exercises more autocratic power over a smaller but more tightly knit tribe.” The members of the tribe serve as his tenants. The shaykhly families of Ḥāshid and Bakīl, however, often had extensive landholdings in Lower Yemen or the northwest. Thus the two categories of “shaykh” were not really mutually exclusive, as the prominent shaykhs of Ḥāshid and Bakīl could play both roles according to the population to which they were relating. In general, the shaykhs had to play a delicate balancing act between the Ottoman government and the Imām, as both sought their support in the long war in Yemen. Religious allegiance to the Imamate, as well as pressures from their tribesmen who fiercely opposed Ottoman rule, tended over the long run to cause most Ḥāshid and Bakīl shaykhs to support the Imāms.

II. The Zaydī Imamate.

The Imamate was the political institution which enabled the various Zaydī social groups to unite against the Ottomans. In Zaydī thought, the Imām was defined as the rightful leader of the Muslim community (umma), although in practice his authority was confined to Yemen. He had to be of sayyid lineage, but there were no formal qualifications of descent apart from this. In theory, the primary criteria for

29 Dresch, Tribes, 99-100.
30 Peterson, Search, 21-22.
31 Dresch, Tribes, 206-207.
accession to the Imamate were personal. The Imam had to fulfill fourteen conditions, including learning as an ‘ālim or Islamic scholar, soundness of mind and body, and courage as a warrior. He was supposed to be chosen through the consensus (ijmā’) of the leaders of the Muslim community, which in Yemen meant the leading Zaydī shaykhs, sayyids, and ‘ulamā’.

The election (ikhtiyār) of an Imam was said to be a “claim” (da’wa) to the Imamate by the candidate. The term da’wa was in turn closely tied to the concept of legitimate rebellion in Zaydī political theory, which was conceived as jihād. The Zaydī Imam was supposed to enforce Islamic law and morality, and ensure that justice (‘adāla) prevailed in social relations. If he did not do these things, it was legitimate for another qualified person to claim the Imamate, and rally the Muslim community to rebellion against him. The Arabic term da’wa resonated with a number of meanings which reflected this idea of legitimate rebellion. It was a “claim” to the Imamate, against the claims of others; it was a “summons” to the Muslim community to rebel; and it was a “challenge” to the holders of power.

Usually, rebellion was justified by the claim that the current ruler was practicing “tyranny” (zulm) rather than “justice” (‘adāla). ‘Adāla and zulm could be conceived of as obverse states of society. In a just society, Islamic law was observed. This in turn produced general conditions of peace and prosperity. In a society where tyranny


33 In the Ottoman and Safavid empires, the ultimate source of these ideas was Nizām al-Mulk’s Siyāsat-nāmah; see Nizam al-Mulk, The Book of Government or Rules for Kings, trans. Hubert Darke, Persian Heritage Series Vol. 32 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960). Zaydī thinkers developed a similar set of ideas concerning the Imamate and society, though the extent to which they were influenced by Perso-Islamic theories of government is uncertain. For a text in which this particular Zaydī view appears see al-
prevailed, the opposite was true. Islamic law was not observed, and the different classes of society stepped out of the proper bounds of social behavior in excesses of violence and immorality (*taghan wa baghy*). The ruler had the primary responsibility for *ẓulm*, as he was seen as having created these conditions of social disintegration through his oppressive actions. Such ideas would provide a potent justification for rebellion against the Ottomans, whose government was conceived as tyrannical and un-Islamic.

This rebellion was waged as guerrilla war, first in a short-term and disorganized fashion, and then with increasing sophistication. In this regard, the development of resistance in Yemen had a number of parallels to the evolution of guerrilla war in the twentieth century. Therefore, we now turn to a discussion of the general dynamics of guerrilla war as they have been understood by modern strategic thinkers, to see how can inform our specific analysis of war in Yemen.

IV. The Principles of Guerrilla War and the Zaydī Imamate.

In the works of these thinkers, we can see a distinction between two types of resistance to colonial military forces. Callwell, writing in the era of high imperialism, focuses on the military methods of what he terms “irregular warriors.” The “irregular warriors,” whose social organization is often tribally based, have the military advantages associated with the guerrilla in modern times: superior


34 Ibid.
mobility, knowledge of the terrain, and the ability to swiftly concentrate and disperse.\textsuperscript{35} At the same time, their armament is inferior, and their organization rudimentary. The armies of irregular warriors have little cohesion, and therefore limited ability to carry out resistance over the long term.\textsuperscript{36} A series of major defeats would therefore break the morale of these warriors and make it difficult for them to organize a sustained resistance.

For Callwell, then, resistance to the colonial forces had a tendency to be short-term and poorly organized, although he recognized that it was not inevitably so. As the twentieth century progressed, however, we see the development of a fundamentally different type of resistance. The military advantages of the guerrilla in strategic works such as those of Mao Tse-Tung and Che Guevara are essentially the same as those of Callwell’s “irregular warriors:” mobility, knowledge of the terrain, speed of concentration and dispersal. Modern guerilla strategies, however, necessarily require good organization and prolonged struggle.

Such strategies are characterized, first, by the existence of a defined objective. This objective is total in nature and requires long-range planning to achieve: the overthrow of the enemy state by the destruction of its military forces.\textsuperscript{37} This in turn requires a long-term strategy, divided into several phases. First, the guerrillas set up a base in a remote region, which serves as a refuge from the government and as the headquarters of the movement. Second, the guerrillas establish a counter state


\textsuperscript{36} Callwell, \textit{Wars}, 88.

in the inhabited regions of the countryside to wrest control of the peasantry from the government, and turn them against it. The peasants are regimented into a set of military and mass organization which politicize them by means of propaganda, and mobilize them for long-term warfare.\(^{38}\)

Finally, the rebels begin the military struggle. They begin by initiating continuous guerrilla harassment of the government forces, designed to exhaust and demoralize them. As the struggle picks up momentum, the guerrillas expand their formal military organization, and acquire increasingly sophisticated weaponry. This in turn allows the guerrillas to initiate the final phase, the escalation of the conflict into conventional warfare, wherein the government forces are destroyed on the battlefield.\(^{39}\) The adoption of this model of guerrilla war by colonial resistance movements made military resistance in the colonies increasingly formidable, playing an essential role in the process of decolonization.

Now, we will argue that war in Yemen underwent a similar transformation during the period under discussion. Callwell’s observations about the military behavior of “irregular warriors” were in many regards applicable to the conduct of war in Yemen at the time of the Ottoman conquest. The Zaydī Imamate at this time was in an advanced state of collapse. With no state to organize systematic military campaigns, war was increasingly waged by the tribes on a short-term basis for limited objectives such as the acquisition of plunder. The armies of the period in consequence had no cohesion, and the Ottomans were able to conquer highland Yemen with relative ease.

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After the conquest of the highlands, however, the Imāms proceeded to organize a resistance movement among the Zaydī tribes which took on some of the strategic features associated with Maoist guerrilla war. A counter state was established among to mobilize the Zaydī tribesmen against the Ottoman government, in an ideologically driven guerrilla war designed to expel the Ottomans from Yemen. Guerrilla war in this context was long-term in orientation, rather than short-term and limited. As a purely military struggle, it had some similarities to the total guerrilla wars of the era of decolonization.

The cultural gulf between the jihād of the Imāms and Maoist guerrilla warfare is so wide, however, that any use of the Maoist paradigm requires serious qualification. If we are not to distort the meaning of this transformation, it must be analyzed on its own social and cultural terms. Here, we will argue that the transformation of war in Yemen needs to be understood in terms of the social and ideological tensions of the Zaydī Imamate as a tribal quasi-state. The tribal quasi-state was the vehicle through which guerrilla resistance to the Ottomans was organized, and a discussion of its dynamics is essential to our analysis.

V. The Zaydī Imamate as a Tribal Quasi-State.

The concept of the tribal quasi-state was developed by Ernest Gellner, employing both Ibn Khaldūn’s theory of the state and the segmentary-lineage model of tribal social structures developed by anthropologists. The tribal quasi-state was historically the predominant type of polity in the Middle East. It was based on the complementarity of a
tribal confederation and a small supra-tribal state. The tribes provided essential military support to the state, while the authority of the state itself was based on social groups or institutions outside the tribal structure: Ṣūfī lodges, the ‘ulamā’, an army recruited on a supra-tribal basis. Often, holy lineages claiming descent from the Prophet played a key role in this type of government.⁴⁰

Now, the Zaydī Imamate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries essentially represented a variant of this type of state. The Imamate was based on an implicit power-sharing compact between the powerful tribal confederation of Ḥāshid and Bakīl and the religious classes of Zaydī society. This state as an institutional structure consisted of a small and relatively undifferentiated body of officials drawn largely from the religious classes and Ethiopian slaves; that is, mainly from persons outside the tribal structure.⁴¹

As in the tribal quasi-state model, the major military support of the Imamate came from the Ḥāshid and Bakīl confederation. With the aid of Ḥāshid and Bakīl, the Imāms had managed to drive the Ottoman armies out of Yemen in the seventeenth century, and impose Zaydī rule on the Shāfi‘ī regions of Yemen. The compact between the Zaydī tribes and the men of religion who dominated the state was based on a peculiar conjunction of material and moral-spiritual interests. The Zaydī tribes needed the state to provide a moral and spiritual framework for their community life, and to unify them politically against foes outside the tribal structure. The Imāms and the Zaydī ‘ulamā’, in

⁴⁰ Gellner cites the Sa‘ūdī, Sanūsī, and Berber Ahansal polities as key examples of this kind of state. See Ernest Gellner, “Tribalism and the State in the Middle East,” in Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East, ed. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 117-120.

turn, needed the tribesmen to defend the state and impose their vision of the proper Islamic social order.

The ethical systems which historically underpinned this compact, the values of Islam and tribalism, could be seen as contradictory in many respects. The former is rooted in the “particularistic” interests of the tribe and its members, defined as “honor.” To a great extent, honor is an ethic of competitive manhood within the conflict-ridden social structure of the tribe. It lays the ground rules by which men may compete for prestige, maintain their integrity, and defend their families and possessions within a predatory social environment. The code of honor tends both to require violence and to contain it in such a manner that the social order is not completely destroyed.

Among the majority of Middle Eastern tribes, the particularistic and competitive ethos of honor is counterbalanced by the universal ethos of Islam. The latter stresses the brotherhood and unity of the believers, rather than the sometimes Hobbesian ethos of the tribal system. It has historically focused on the establishment of universal justice, social harmony, and the moral order embodied in the Shari’a law. This is usually accomplished by means of the legal and coercive apparatus of the state. Ideologically, then, it is often opposed to the tribal ethos of competitive self-aggrandizement, the maintenance of tribal autonomy, and customary tribal law.42

Islam and the social groups which act as its custodians, however, have historically fulfilled important social and political functions among the tribes. These groups usually fulfill one or more of several roles. In theory, members of the holy lineages and the Şûfî brotherhoods are supposed to be “above” the competitive strife of the honor system.

42 For a discussion of this Islam/honor opposition in the case of the Pashtun tribes of Afghanistan, see David Edwards, Heroes of the Age (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 191-192.
Therefore, they frequently act as mediators in feuds between tribes and individuals. Representing Islam in its pacific and unifying aspect, they serve as a brake on the competitive tensions of the tribal system, and prevent conflicts from escalating to the point that they threaten the social order.

The ‘ulamā’, as guardians of the laws and scripture of Islam, provide the legal and ideological basis for a state which can exercise authority at the supra-tribal level.\textsuperscript{43} The culture of honor in many Middle Eastern tribal societies tends to preclude outright submission to other tribesmen, to persons who are themselves engaged in the competitive game of honor.\textsuperscript{44} To do so is to lose “face,” as it implies that the other persons have more honor than oneself. To submit to the ‘ulamā’, as persons representing a higher moral and spiritual authority, is not so dishonorable.

Islam, therefore, may provide a unifying spiritual and moral principle to offset the relentless competition of the tribal system. These two ethical systems are associated with different types of warfare: intertribal war, which we define as fundamentally limited in character, and \textit{jihād}, which has the potential to be long-term and total. How, then, did these opposed ethical systems define war as a cultural process in the tribal quasi-state, and serve to shape its fundamental military characteristics?

\section*{VI. Intertribal War and Segmentary Lineage Theory.}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{43} Gellner, “Tribalism,” 112, 117-120.
\textsuperscript{44} R.B. Serjeant notes, for example, that tribal shaykhs in Yemen refuse to defer to one another. See R.B. Serjeant, “South Arabia,” in \textit{Studies in Arabian History and Civilization} (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), 228.
\end{footnotesize}
Intertribal war is rooted in what anthropologists describe as the segmentary lineage structure of the tribe. In this social structure, the tribe consists of an aggregate of lineages which is infinitely divisible into its component parts. In Yemen, the Ḥāṣid and Bakīl confederation divides into the major constituent tribes such as Khawlān and Dhū Ḫusayn. These in turn divide into sections, known as “fifths, or “ninths,” which in turn subdivide into smaller sections. The different segments of the confederation are conceived as kin, with the supposed blood relationships becoming progressively closer as one goes down the segmentary ladder.

The lineage organization is a source of both social conflict and social solidarity. Suppose that there is a tribal confederation AB, consisting of tribes A and B respectively. Let us say that both A and B consist of four sections or lineages each: A1, A2, A3, and A4, and B1, B2, B3, and B4. Finally, let us suppose that sections A1 and A2 consider themselves to have a closer blood relationship than their counterparts in A3 and A4, and that an analogous situation obtains in tribe B.

Now, A1 and A2 are pursuing an intermittent feud with one another. They consider themselves a kin unit as against A3 and A4, however. Therefore, if the latter sections should attack A1, A2 will come to its aid, and vice versa. Going a step further up the segmentary ladder, suppose that a conflict breaks out between sections of different tribes, let us say A1 and B1. If this happens, then in the theoretical model all the sections of A should unite to support A1, while all of B should unite to support B1; again this is because A and B define themselves as kin

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46 Dresch, Tribes, 84, 339-341.
units opposed to one another. Finally, let us say that a powerful enemy from outside the confederation entirely threatens tribe B. In this case tribe A will come to B’s aid, both presenting a united front to the enemy as tribal confederation AB, because AB defines itself as a kin unit opposed to the outside world generally.47 Here, we have supplied a visual illustration of these patterns of potential conflict and allegiance in tribal confederation AB, with its associated tribes and sections.

In segmentary lineage theory, this is conceived as a means of maintaining social cohesion without an overarching state authority. “The idea underlying the theory is that the functions of maintaining social cohesion...[and] some degree of law and order...can be performed...simply by the ‘balancing’ and ‘opposition’ of constituent groups.”48 Thus, the segmentary structure is both a source of conflict and a means of managing it in such a manner that the social order will be preserved. As each segment gains an ally, the opposing segment will gain a corresponding ally, with the dispute drawing in segments at progressively higher levels if it becomes very serious.49 While this has the potential of leading to disastrous war, it also has the effect of maintaining the equilibrium among the segments, so that none gains a decisive advantage.

This model obtains, broadly speaking, for Ḥāshid and Bakīl. The tribes are “defined against their equals, as are sections against sections, villages against villages, and even men against men.”50 While political alliances among the tribal sections do not always divide along neat kin-based lines,51 the general concept of “balanced opposition” is largely valid. To maintain one’s own autonomy and prevent coercive practices generally (at least among fellow tribesmen) is an essential part of the cultural value system of Ḥāshid and Bakīl. The concept of opposition, that the sections repeatedly confront one another in a manner which

50 Dresch, *Tribes*, 354.
51 Dresch, *Tribes*, 346.
prevents any one of them from becoming too powerful, helps to maintain the autonomy of them all. This in turn tends to prevent war from assuming the character of long-term and disciplined coercion.

The “balancing” aspect of conflict within the segmentary lineage social structure is one factor that serves to limit intertribal war. Another is the concept of honor that we have described above, the ethical code that serves to regulate the use of violence within these societies.\textsuperscript{52} A central aspect of honor in many of these societies is the inviolability of house, land, family, and tribal territory. If any of these are attacked, retaliatory violence is not merely permissible, but obligatory.\textsuperscript{53} The appropriate use of violence in these societies is conceived as a means of obtaining retribution for a moral wrong. It is not thought of as anarchy, uncontrolled violence by groups or individuals in pursuit of self-interested ends. In view of the explosive nature of any violent conflict, this situation is apparently feared in some of these societies. Therefore, the concept of honor usually contains explicit limitations on the use of violence. There are definite moral boundaries beyond which violence should not go.

Steven Caton notes that in the Khawlān (Bakīl) tribe of Yemen, a man of honor possesses \textit{maruwah} (in classical Arabic, \textit{muruwwa} or “manliness”), which Caton translates as “self-control.”\textsuperscript{54} Men of honor “channel passions into controlled or

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\textsuperscript{53} In a story recounted to David Edwards by a Pashtun man, a boy whose father has just been treacherously shot is made to say to him “If I do not have the force and power within me to take revenge on one person for every bullet that has struck your body, then I would not be your son” (i.e., I would not be a man of honor). See Edwards, \textit{Heroes}, 34-35.

\textsuperscript{54} Caton, \textit{Peaks}, 29.
stylized violence." In battle, for example, the opponents may exchange gunfire deliberately aimed over one another’s heads. The social ideal here is not the absence of violence, but that of honorable men keeping within the moral boundaries of violence prescribed by the code of honor.

The code of honor, then, contains inherent limitations on the use of violence. Other limitations result from the presence of the holy lineages we have mentioned, whose role is to resolve conflicts through mediation before they become too destructive. In Yemen, this role is played by the sayyids. The towns inhabited by sayyids, referred to as hijra, are “sanctuaries” where violence is prohibited. From the moment a tribal conflict breaks out in Yemen, there will be heavy pressure on both sides to accept mediation by tribal notables and sayyids. To accept mediation is honorable, while to gain one’s ends by pure coercion is not. The stress on ritualistic confrontation, avoidance of outright coercion, and mediation has tended historically to limit intertribal warfare among the Zaydi tribes in time and intensity.

The objectives for which intertribal wars are fought are also limited in character. Wars begin over access to land and water, definition of the tribal boundary, or old feuds. The “objectives” in this case tend to revolve around the honor-concept of maintaining the inviolability of the lands, houses, and families of the tribe. Fighting breaks out when a perceived violation of these boundaries takes place. Such fighting is usually intermittent and relatively restrained, with exchanges of gunfire alternating with poetic declamation. Each side demonstrates that they are men of

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55 Caton, Peaks, 122.
57 Caton, Peaks, 165-166, 175-176.
courage and honor who cannot be coerced.\textsuperscript{58} When this has been achieved, they are expected to accept mediation.

The culture of war in segmentary-lineage systems thus tends to militate against long-term and state-forming warfare. Almost by definition, the state claims a prerogative over the exercise of violence and power. The segmentary-lineage system, however, seems designed to maintain an equality of force, making a powerful state authority undesirable and unnecessary. The goals of intertribal warfare are particularistic and non-ideological; and the honor code, together with the practice of mediation, restrains the use of violence for purely coercive purposes.

We have here presented inter-tribal war as a kind of ideal type, and reality of course is considerably more complex.\textsuperscript{59} War in the “time of chaos” in Yemen was hardly the gentlemanly type of war discussed above, although it was heavily influenced in its goals and conduct by that kind of war. What we will show, however, is that at the time of the Ottoman conquest war in Yemen had come to be dominated by the competitive and particularistic aims of the individual tribes. That is, it was partially rooted in the tribal system and its ethos of honor, even if the behavior of the tribesmen was not always “honorable” in the ethical sense of the term. This in turn served to limit the conduct of war in this period, making it impossible to organize violence as a long-term enterprise.

\textbf{VII. \textit{Jihād, the Tribal Quasi-State and the Zaydī Imamate.}}

\textsuperscript{58} Caton, \textit{Peaks}, 160 ff.

\textsuperscript{59} Lindholm’s study of the Pukhtun of the Swat Valley, for example, shows that different types of armed conflict obtain for different levels at the segmentary-lineage structure. See Charles Lindholm, \textit{Generosity and Jealousy} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 83-87.
In strict conceptual terms, *jihād* was the ideological opposite of war based in the competitive tribal system. In contrast to the particularistic goals of tribal conflict, *jihād* was based on universalist political goals. The specific content of *jihād* has varied over time and place.\(^6^0\) Generally speaking, however, it has focused on establishing the just and humane social order represented in Islam, through submission of the human community to God and His laws. Historically, this was interpreted as the imposition of the authority of an Islamic government, espousing the spiritual ideals of Islam and enforcing the *Shari‘a*.\(^6^1\) The goals of *jihād* were therefore usually total, focusing on the sweeping away of the corrupt social order and its replacement by an Islamic one. These goals transcended the narrow limits of the tribal segmentary system and the reasons for which tribesmen ordinarily fought.

Within the segmentary tribal cultures of the Middle East, however, *jihād* has played a central role in facilitating one function crucial for segmentary-lineage societies: the ability of all the feuding segments to unite against an external foe.\(^6^2\) In the nineteenth century, the tribal societies of the Middle East fought a number of *jihāds* of this character, focused on repelling the intrusion of the European or Europeanized colonial states. Such *jihāds* took place in Algeria, Libya, the Sudan,  

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\(^{60}\) In cases such as that of the Wāhhabīs, it was based on a call for the purification of Islam from quasi-pagan practices and a return to the faith in its pristine form. In Yemen, *jihād* among the Zaydīs focused on the correct implementation of Islamic law and the establishment of a just social order. See Gellner, “Tribalism,” 117; and Dresch, *Tribes*, 145, 161, 183.


\(^{62}\) The Pashtun *jihāds* against the British or the Soviets, for example, had in part the character of segmentary unification against an intruder. See Lindholm, *Generosity*, 56.
and Yemen. In this context, men of the holy lineages frequently played a central role. Representing the universal principles of Islam and standing outside intertribal rivalries, the ordinarily pacific holy men would assume the role of war leaders.\(^6\)

\(\textit{Jihād}\) thus provided the ideological basis for supra-tribal mobilization, and the holy lineages provided a supra-tribal social group which could provide leadership for the \(\textit{jihād}\). \(\textit{Jihād}\) therefore transcended tribal war; and the requirements of waging \(\textit{jihād}\) in turn tended to favor the development of state institutions at the supra-tribal level.

If the \(\textit{jihād}\) were sufficiently popular, mobilizing men and resources for it would require a level of central direction beyond the segmentary lineage structure. To keep men in the field, the charismatic leader might have to establish supra-tribal military institutions such as mamluk armies, or the \textit{Ikhwān} of Saʿūdī Arabia.\(^4\) To fund the war effort, taxes would have to be imposed. To enforce Islamic law, religious courts would have to be set up or increased in number. This would require the formation of judicial and fiscal bureaucracies, usually staffed by the ‘\textit{ulamā’}.\(^5\)

Where military leaders were successful in constructing a supra-tribal state authority, the nineteenth century \(\textit{jihāds}\) could take a long-term form. ‘Abd al-Qādir’s war of resistance against the French lasted for eight years, from 1839 to 1847. In many cases, the leaders of \(\textit{jihād}\) resorted to guerrilla war, as a means of

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\(^6\) In Libya and Algeria, for example, anti-colonial resistance was spearheaded by the prominent men of the Şūfi brotherhoods, who often claimed descent from the Prophet. See Raphael Danziger, \textit{Abd al-Qadir and the Algerians} (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1977), 51-54; and Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, \textit{The Making of Modern Libya} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 97-100, 103 ff. For a study of the nuances of resistance and accommodation to French colonialism among the Şūfi “saints” of North Africa, see Julia Clancey-Smith, \textit{Rebel and Saint} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).


\(^5\) Gellner, “Tribalism,” 119-120. Gellner focuses on the necessity of supra-tribal military institutions and a bureaucracy of ‘\textit{ulamā’} in the formation of the Islamic revivalist state. He does not, however, pay sufficient attention to the role of the exigencies of war in the creation of these institutions.
overcoming the inequality between their own forces and the colonial armies. In 
Algeria and elsewhere, the powerful emotional appeal of defending Islam and the 
homeland tended to draw the Muslim population into increasing participation in the 
\textit{jihād}.\textsuperscript{66}

In military terms, then, \textit{jihād} could transform short-term intertribal war into 
long-term, state-forming, and total war. In Yemen, this had happened in the 
Ottoman occupation of the sixteenth century, and would happen again in the 
occupation of the nineteenth. The evolution of the resistance against the Ottomans, 
however, was necessarily slow. Our task in this study as a whole is to document 
this process. We have shown that in the period immediately preceding the Ottoman 
occupation, the Zaydī Imamate had collapsed as a viable state, and tribalism had 
become the dominant principle of war and politics in Yemen. This made it 
impossible to organize an effective defense against the Ottoman expeditionary force 
in 1872, and served to limit resistance for some time thereafter.

We will see, however, that modes of resistance which were initially limited by 
the traditions of intertribal war were gradually shaped into a long-term and total 
\textit{jihād}. The military resistance involved the gradual reformation of the Zaydī 
Imamate as a tribal quasi-state on the Gellner model, as an instrument designed to 
wage war against the Ottomans. The specific justification employed by the Zaydī 
Imāms for \textit{jihād} against the Ottomans focused on the perceived injustice and 
immorality of the Ottoman state. The centralizing and often brutal actions 
undertaken by the state were seen as a trespassing of the boundaries, physical and

\textsuperscript{66} Danziger, \textit{Abd al-Qadir}, 226-228.
moral, of Zaydi tribal society. Such trespass was deeply offensive both in the tribal moral universe of honor and the Zaydi concept of proper Islamic governance.

The Imams were therefore able to unite the fractured tribal sections of Hashid and Bakil around the Zaydi-Islamic concept of resisting tyranny through jihād. By means of jihād, the immediate threat to tribal autonomy represented in the Ottoman state would be removed, and a just government established under the rightful Imam. The key role in organizing the jihād was played by the Zaydi qādis and sayyids, who brought the tribes into alliance with another by means of their mediatory authority. By overcoming intertribal divisions in this manner, the Imams were able to effect the “last principle” of a segmentary lineage society: the unification of all the competing segments when an enemy outside the lineage structure threatens it.

On the Zaydi side, then, we will focus on the transformation of military resistance from limited war based in tribal particularism to long-term and state-forming jihād. Likewise, we will show that a similar transformation took place on the Ottoman side. Here, we will discuss Ottoman methods of containing rebellion in Yemen as part of the modernization of the Ottoman state. Limited means of dealing with rebellion based on the Perso-Islamic tradition of statecraft and the Ottomans’ firepower superiority were gradually replaced by the more comprehensive measures employed by the modern bureaucratic state. This transformation took place in tandem with the growing sophistication of the Zaydi rebels, which forced the Ottomans to devote increasing resources to the conflict, and plan their strategy more systematically.
C. Counterinsurgency and State Formation in the Late Ottoman Empire.


As in our analysis of guerrilla war among the Zaydīs, our discussion of Ottoman counterinsurgency will proceed on two levels: one attempting to draw general lessons from the analyses of Western counterinsurgency strategists in the twentieth century, and the other showing how these lessons were applicable within the nineteenth century Ottoman cultural context. In the former, we can see an evolution from a short-term reliance on pure firepower to subdue “irregular warriors” to a definition of unconventional war as a long-term struggle for the control of the population. We will show in this context that Western counterinsurgency from an early date reflected a focus on achieving the supremacy of the bureaucratic state, underpinned ideologically by the violent nationalism which later led to the outbreak of “total war” in Europe; and total war, in fact, had antecedents in the nineteenth century colonial conquests.

Callwell’s *Small Wars* reflected both the relative ease of the colonial conquests of the period and the recognition that colonial wars in the future would be much more difficult. *Small Wars* is, in the main, a prescription for limited war. Callwell’s strategy was designed specifically to counter the military methods of the “irregular warriors,” which we have outlined above. Callwell focused on the necessity of bringing irregular warriors to battle as early and often as possible, so that the regular troops could destroy their military capability by bringing their superior firepower to bear. In order to do this, the
commander had to display initiative and boldness. He had to have a definite objective in mind, and pursue the campaign decisively until the objective was achieved.67

The irregular warriors were to be thrown off balance by a succession of “hammer blows,” which were to convince them of their own powerlessness in the face of the regular troops. The irregular warriors generally lacked the organizational cohesion to mount a determined resistance in the face of a series of setbacks. Thus, a campaign conducted in this fashion could destroy their will to fight within a very short period of time. Conversely, a prolonged campaign conducted without decisive engagements tended to increase their boldness, favoring the emergence of guerrilla resistance which regular troops were ill equipped to counter.68 Guerrilla war was merely one type of “small war,” and one which could be avoided by a skilled commander. Overwhelming firepower on the battlefield, applied at the proper time and place, could obviate the need for a long-term struggle which would exhaust the population and the regular forces. Such a strategy reflected the arrogant self-confidence of Callwell’s era, the belief that victories against “savages” could be won relatively easily by the right combination of firepower and panache.

At the same time, Callwell understood that guerrilla war itself would require grinding and protracted operations to suppress. Callwell’s counter-guerrilla strategy is based on a combination of defensive and offensive measures. The theater of war should be subdivided into sections, each with a fixed number of military posts. The sections should then be methodically cleared of the crops and livestock which sustain a guerrilla army. At the same time, mobile columns should be told off to each section. Such columns

67 Callwell, Wars, 37, 71 ff.
68 Callwell, Wars, 97 ff.
would hunt down the guerrilla bands until the guerrilla forces as a whole were completely destroyed.\textsuperscript{69} Such measures have survived in varying form to our own day; and they reflect, in military terms, the concept of unconventional war as a total struggle between the guerrillas and the government.

The sinister exultation of race and violence which would play such a pivotal role in the total wars of the twentieth century was also a feature of Callwell’s work. While the government should handle “civilized” races gently in a guerrilla war, brutal punitive measures were necessary and justified against “savages.” Callwell voiced approval of the massive social destruction visited by the French on Algeria in their efforts to control the country, for “uncivilized races attribute leniency to timidity.”\textsuperscript{70} Measures such as those implemented by the French in Algeria were already a form of total war (albeit a one-sided one), based on destruction of the economic bases of village or tribal life, and often on genocidal measures against the population itself. Such tactics were also employed by the Americans against the Indians of the Great Plains, and by the Italians against the tribes of Libya.

The concept of counterinsurgency as a political struggle, however, was alien to Callwell’s thinking. Callwell’s concept of the relation between government and population was archaic and even feudal. To Callwell, “counterinsurgency” was simply a means of making rebel populations submit by pure military force, of teaching them their place at the bottom of the racial totem pole.

As political opposition in the colonies grew more sophisticated, however, such attitudes began to change. After World War II, Western governments were faced with

\textsuperscript{69} Callwell, \textit{Wars}, 125 ff.
\textsuperscript{70} Callwell, \textit{Wars}, 148.
guerrilla war on a scale which they had never confronted before, based on the Maoist model of achieving complete political control of the population to mobilize them for rebellion. The concept that the government fighting the insurgency would have to achieve a similar control to defeat the guerrillas therefore became the basis for modern counterinsurgency.

Such strategies could be as sinister and racist as those advocated by Callwell, although usually they were less overt in this regard. In general, they tended to crystallize around two opposing approaches: “punitive repression,” the idea that the control of the population could be assured by the application of massive force, and “hearts and minds” counterinsurgency, based on gaining the voluntary support of the population. Both were forms of total war, aimed at the complete destruction of the guerrillas as a military and political force. This would be accomplished by means of comprehensive programs which would involve the population at large, fundamentally transforming the relationship between state and society.

The strategy of punitive repression, as developed by the French officer Roger Trinquier, emphasizes the role of terror in the mobilization of the population by the guerrilla apparatus.71 To neutralize the rebels, the government therefore has to destroy the guerrilla organization by means of counter-regimentation and counter-terror. The government should organize the population into “self-defense” units from the village to the regional levels, heavily infiltrated by informers and intelligence agents. This

71The ideas outlined here are substantially taken from Roger Trinquier’s Modern Warfare. Trinquier helped to suppress the Algerian insurgency, and must be considered as one of the major architects of repressive counterinsurgency in the post-war era. See Roger Trinquier, Modern Warfare, trans. Daniel Lee (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 10 ff.
organization would mirror the administrative structure of the guerrillas, and its purpose would be to monitor rebel activity among its members.

Suspected guerrillas should be arrested and interrogated, with torture if necessary, so that they would provide the names of their compatriots. Once these names are obtained, the persons in question should be arrested and interrogated in turn, until the entire organization was unravelled. This police strategy should be implemented in both the cities and the countryside. Once the guerrilla organization is destroyed in the villages, the government should extend its military operations to the remote “base area” of the rebels, hunting down the guerrilla bands by means of mobile patrols.

The problems with repressive counterinsurgency became evident in the Algerian War of Independence. While repressive tactics succeeded marvelously in crushing the guerrilla organization, they created such outrage in the world at large that the French were forced to simply grant the Algerians their independence. The result was “hearts and minds” counterinsurgency strategy, based in part on British and American ideas which had begun to emerge in the interwar period. Among the more eloquent advocates of this strategy were Douglas Blaufarb and George Tanham, whose book *Who Will Win?* represented a kind of *summa* of Cold War thinking about counterinsurgency.

Blaufarb and Tanham rejected the idea that force was the principle means of achieving the “support” and control of the people. This could only be achieved if the government gained legitimacy in their eyes, and a policy of force would only serve to alienate them. Counterinsurgency, then, was to be divided into its “persuasive” and “coercive” aspects. The latter were, as far as possible, to be aimed solely at the guerrillas in the military

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struggle. Effective control of the peasants could ultimately only be achieved by persuasion, by convincing them to extend their voluntary support to the government.74

The “coercive” aspect of counterinsurgency strategy necessarily comes first. A certain level of basic security must be established in a disturbed area, so that a benign extension of government authority can be carried out. To establish effective security, the military must be reformed in the same manner as the other institutions of government. Here, reform focuses on increasing the military professionalism and war-fighting capability of the armed forces, in addition to ensuring that they treat the population well. The army should conduct small unit “search and destroy” operations in an aggressive fashion, aided by an effective intelligence network to track the movements of the guerrillas.

In this process, a variety of mechanisms should be put in place to protect civilians from the violence of the military struggle. Military operations should be subject to civilian oversight; the troops ought to scrupulously avoid the use of torture or intimidation against the peasants; and the army should restrict itself to the use of small arms in its engagements, so as not to destroy crops and property by the indiscriminate use of firepower.75

The tactics of persuasion focus on comprehensive programs of government reform and development. First, the basic institutions of government must be acceptable to the mass of the population. In the late twentieth century, this meant in practice that they would

have to be democratic. At the local level, the government should reform the behavior of its personnel, ensuring that they are well trained and professional in their conduct toward the peasantry.

Since in the modern era opposition to the government is created by neglect as well as abuse, the government should attempt to meet the needs of the peasantry through health, education, and land reform programs. Consultative mechanisms through which local people can participate in the planning of these programs should be established, so that they are not seen as a patronizing form of charity doled out by the government. Tactics of persuasion, then, aim at establishing the authority of the state on a sound psychological as well as physical basis among the peasantry.

For all its apparent humanity, however, this strategy is still a form of total war. The aim is fundamentally the same as that of punitive repression: to mobilize the population on the side of the government for the purpose of isolating and crushing the guerrillas. Implemented in the prescribed fashion, both strategies would vastly increase the power of the government, and result in a basic transformation of state-society relations.

For our purposes, the essential point is that Ottoman methods of dealing with rebellion in Yemen underwent a transformation which foreshadowed the evolution in Western counterinsurgency policy. The Ottomans were initially able to achieve a swift conquest of Yemen using the military methods of imperialist Europe, aggressive campaigning based on the judicious exploitation of their superior firepower. Superior firepower also

played a key role in allowing the Ottomans to maintain control in the early years of the occupation, allowing them to crush overt rebellion fairly swiftly.

As the Zaydi resistance grew more sophisticated, however, the Ottomans were forced to change their policy. Here, a basic tension emerged between repressive measures and strategies designed to win the voluntary support of the population. In the 1890’s, the Ottomans attempted to deal with the Zaydi rebels using the military strategy of posts and mobile columns characteristic of modern counterinsurgency. This was accompanied by punitive action against suspected supporters of the Imam, including the burning of villages and the destruction of crops; and by police repression and arrests, partially designed to counter the bombing of government buildings in the towns by supporters of the Imams.

At the same time, throughout the period of Ottoman rule there was a consistent thread of thought based on the same principles as “hearts and minds” counterinsurgency. Proponents of this view believed that the Imam could only be defeated by comprehensive programs of government reform designed to gain the voluntary support of the population. These reformers advocated extending the administration to remote areas of the country, reforming the behavior of government personnel, and infrastructural development to foster the economic prosperity of region. Just and efficient administration of this type would strengthen the loyalty of the Yemenis to the Ottoman government, and reduce the appeal of the Imam.

The adoption of such policies naturally intensified the conflict in Yemen and pushed it toward total war. The actual implementation of these policies, however, was consistently undermined by the financial and military limitations of the Ottoman administration. The
government did not have enough soldiers to implement military counterinsurgency in a thorough manner, and large parts of the country remained beyond the reach of the Ottoman army. Repressive police action was brutal but inadequate, tending to center around Ṣan‘ā’ where the government had the greatest control.

Counterinsurgency based on reform, centralization, and development faced even greater obstacles. The desirability of constructing road and rail networks to integrate the country was recognized early on by Ottoman officials, but such projects were never implemented in a sustained fashion. Periodic efforts were made to root out corruption in the bureaucracy and improve the behavior of the military. These efforts, however, were often blocked by powerful vested interests within the administration.

In short, the Ottoman administration in Yemen lacked the financial and institutional resources to implement a sustained counterinsurgency program, of either a repressive or benevolent character. In the last analysis, this meant that it could not shatter the enemy decisively, as a counterinsurgency program on a truly total scale might have done. Ultimately, the Ottomans had to make peace with the Zaydi rebels on a basis not dissimilar to that defining the relationship between local elites and the Empire in the period before the Tanzimat. The Zaydi tribes and the Imām were given practical autonomy in return for formal loyalty.

This particular point, relating as it does to the political and cultural context of Ottoman counterinsurgency, brings up a larger question in regard to our theoretical framework. We have discussed Ottoman policy in the light of European thinking about counterinsurgency because these strategic theories are useful in highlighting some of the military aspects of the conflict in Yemen. It is clear, however, that there is some cultural
and temporal distance between the historical context of these theories and the actual formation of Ottoman policy in Yemen. How, then, is the shift from limited toward total war to be understood in the political and cultural context of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century?

Here, it is necessary to understand the tensions in Ottoman political ideology during this period. The Ottoman Empire was heir to a system of political thought based in Perso-Islamic and Central Asian concepts of governance, which remained very much alive in this period. At the same time, this thought was being transformed by nationalist and bureaucratic concepts of government derived from contemporary European thought. The evolution from limited toward total forms of counterinsurgency in Yemen was part of the shift from classical methods of rule towards those of the modern state. To understand the evolution of counterinsurgency policy in Yemen, then, requires discussion of both the Perso-Islamic background of Ottoman political thought and its transformation in the nineteenth century.

II. Classical Ottoman Political Thought and Methods of Dealing with Rebellion.

We may list the main features of pre-modern Ottoman methods of dealing with rebellion as follows: attempting to gain the support of local elites, divide and rule tactics, and punitive expeditions. These means of maintaining control were rooted in a system of political thought emphasizing the absolute authority of the sultan, combined with
important de facto limitations on the power of the state. As an absolute ruler, the sultan had the right to employ brutal and divisive measures to ensure the overall stability of the social order. The amorality of these means was justified by the morality of the end: the maintenance of social peace through the submission of the Muslims to God and the sultan.

At the same time, these tactics were necessitated by fundamental limitations on the actual coercive power of the state. The Ottoman Empire had a delicate relationship with the armed tribes and notables in its territory, who retained considerable autonomy. For most of its history, the Ottoman state was unable to disarm these groups. Therefore, it could not exercise sustained coercion in a manner which would make overt violence unnecessary, or fully bureaucratize its system of social controls. Divisive and harshly punitive tactics were a means of maintaining overall state supremacy, in a situation where the state could not exert a great deal of effective control.

In classical Ottoman and Perso-Islamic political thought, the sultan’s legitimacy and authority derived from God, and he was responsible to God alone. The ruler will be answerable to God on Judgment Day for his actions, and is in danger of damnation if he has not acted justly; a heavy responsibility, but one not accompanied by a corresponding responsibility to other human beings.

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79 Nizam al-Mulk, Book, 9; Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsat-nāmah, ed. Abbas Eqbal (Tehran?: Enteshārāt-e Asāter, 1369), 1. Nizām al-Mulk’s work formed much of the basis for Ottoman classical political thought, and therefore we will use it extensively here.

80 Nizam al-Mulk, Book, 12-13; Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsat-nāmah, 6-7.
Ottoman sultan was supposed to enforce the Islamic *Shari‘a* and the *kanun*, but was not necessarily bound by either.\(^{81}\)

The concept of sultanic absolutism was reinforced by a rigidly hierarchical and authoritarian conception of the social order. In the classical Ottoman social order, there were two major sets of divisions: that between the ruling class (*asker*) and the subjects (*reaya*), and that between the different religious communities (*milel*).\(^{83}\) In Ottoman thought, members of the ruling class (*asker*) were conceptually or practically the sultan’s slaves (*kul, bende*), exercising their authority on his behalf. Only the *asker* had the right to exercise political authority, and this was defined as carrying out the will of the sultan.

The *reaya* or peasant class was seen as having been given in trust by God to the sultan. The peasants’ duties were to obey the sultan and pay their taxes.\(^{84}\) The sultan’s duties were to protect them, extend them justice, and keep them in their place.\(^{85}\) Likewise, in the *Shari‘a* law non-Muslims were defined as wards of the state rather than active participants in its affairs, and their legal status was inferior to that of Muslims. It was the sultan’s duty, as far as possible, to maintain these distinctions.


\(^{82}\) See the *Hırz ül-Mülük* (author unknown) in Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri*, Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları No. 4, İlimi Araştırmaları Serisi No. 3 (İstanbul: Cihan Matbaası, 1994), 8:35.

\(^{83}\) Inalcik, *Empire*, 68-69, 150-151. Inalcik stresses, however, that the social distinctions between Muslims and non-Muslims were more fluid in practice than in law. Likewise, the social distinction between the *asker* and *reaya* increasingly broke down from the seventeenth century onward.

\(^{84}\) Naturally, the peasants were by no means passive or apolitical in reality, as Amy Singer’s study of peasant-official relations in sixteenth century Palestine shows. See Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89 ff.

\(^{85}\) Inalcik, *Empire*, 65-69.
This hierarchical conception of society was paralleled by a high level of community and elite autonomy. In the Ottoman Empire before the Tanzimat, the government dealt with the population through the latter’s autonomous elites and forms of social organization: the religious community, the church hierarchy, the tribe and its leadership. The state became the patron of these communities, and their institutions were manipulated to serve the interests of the state. The Orthodox church assisted the state in its administrative functions, and tribal chieftains were given military responsibilities.\(^8^6\) This was a form of shallow incorporation, in which the community and its elite were made to serve the state, but retained a basic autonomy.

The concept of rebellion in this system tended to focus on the transgression by community or class of their prescribed social and moral boundaries. In Nizām al-Mulk, peasants who rebel (tamarrodi) are described as “overstepping their bounds” (pāy az andāza-e khwash nehānd).\(^8^7\) For peasants, overstepping the bounds is defined as becoming unruly and defiant; for members of the governing class, it is oppressing the peasants. The concept of rebellion in this context is deliberately depoliticized, associated with ideas of crime and evildoing rather than organized political opposition.\(^8^8\)

Where such transgression was widespread, a generalized anarchy threatening the existence of the state would result. When the social order breaks down, “the


\(^{88}\) In the *Hırz ül-Müluk*, the Ottoman governor (beğlerbeği) is supposed to restrain the “people of evil” (ehl-i fesat) and the “bandits” (eykiye). See Akgündüz, 8:46.
peasants will become unruly and the soldiers oppressive” (raiyyat bī-farmān shavand va lashkariyān derāz-e dast bāshand). The social order is destroyed by rampant evil (fasād), where royal authority disappears, the Islamic law is not observed, and the strong do as they wish. In Nizām al-Mulk, this social condition is described by the phrase fetna va ashūb. The Arabic term here is fitna (Turkish fitne), which has the connotation of sedition, evildoing, and a general breakdown of the social and moral order.

These concepts tended to minimize the idea of rebellion as sustained political opposition, although this depended partially on the specific situation. The concept of the proper means of dealing with rebellion derived from the general idea of rebellion as social transgression and sin. Groups or individuals who sinned or did not behave in a way appropriate to their social station were liable to “punishment” by the sultan, as a means of preserving justice and security. The sultan should inflict punishment (ta’dībī) on those of his officials who are oppressive (derāz-e dast). The term ta’dībī has the connotation of “teaching manners” or “putting in one’s place” by appropriate punishment. He should do the same to the peasants who are overstepping their bounds, that is, becoming unruly and rebellious.

Such punishment could be savage in the extreme. Exemplary brutality was seen as having a “ripple” effect of fear, which would increase the majesty of the

90 Ibid.
91 In the Siyāsat-nāmah, Nizām al-Mulk recognizes that the Ismāʿīlīs and other heterodox rebels are an organized opposition movement, and do constitute a basic threat to the legitimacy and existence of the Seljuk state. See Nizam al-Mulk, Book, 187 ff.; Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsat-nāmah, 235 ff.
92 Nizam al-Mulk, Book, 10; Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsat-nāmah, 2-3.
Pādeshāh, and have a salutary effect on public morals. When the Pādeshāh Nūshirvān flayed one of his army commanders who had unjustly taken a field from a woman, “all those present were so awed by the king’s majesty and authority that they nearly died of fear.” Subsequently they undertook to make restitution for all they had unjustly extorted.\(^93\)

It is in this context that we should understand the punitive expedition, one of the primary means used by the Ottoman government to deal with disaffection. The punitive expedition involved the dispatch of a column of troops against a tribe, village, or notable which had offended the government in some way. In the area of operations, the troops frequently behaved with considerable brutality. Crops were burned, livestock plundered, and heads taken from fallen rebels.\(^94\)

The moral logic of the punitive expedition was the same as that of “punishment” in Nizām al-Mulk: to keep “evil” at bay and preserve social peace by periodic violence against those who stepped out of line. In a social context where a degree of ruthlessness was admired, such measures were not wholly ineffective. The eighteenth century Damascene chronicler al-Budayrī speaks approvingly of Esat Paşa’s ruthless suppression of the “evildoers” (\textit{mufsidīn}) among the janissaries who created \textit{fitna}, and of the Bedouin. As a result of the fear Esat Paşa inspired by these measures, “the people lived in peace and security” (\textit{al-amn wa‘l-amān}).\(^95\)

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\(^95\) al-Ḫallāq, \textit{Hawādīth}, 62 ff., 71.
To punish in this fashion was a limited means of using force. Despite its brutality; it was not designed to completely destroy. In Nizām al-Mulk, the Pādeshāh punishes the recalcitrant peasants “in proportion to their crimes,” after which he will “cover their sins with the skirt of pardon” (‘afv). A similar dialectic of pardon and punishment seemed to govern the Ottoman Empire’s relations with the tribes of its domains. The tribes would rebel, and the government would punish them; the tribes would then submit, and the government would pardon them. This was a constant merry-go-round of limited war, not a total struggle to the death.

Similar points might be made concerning “divide and rule” tactics.” They were rooted in the Pādeshāh’s authority, as absolute monarch, to use amoral means to achieve a moral end. An Ottoman work of the “advice to kings” genre advises that the sultan employ spies in pairs, so that “fearing one another, they will not dare to report anything but the truth.” Such tactics were extended to the various social groups of the Empire, particularly the potentially restive ones. They were necessitated by the de facto military weakness of the state, and the high level of community and elite autonomy in the Empire; and they were a limited means of employing force, aimed at containing armed opposition to the state rather than destroying it.

96 Nizam al-Mulk, Book, 10; Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsat-nāmah, 3.

97 This pattern is evident in an eighteenth century history of Mosul describing the inconclusive fighting between the governors of that city and the Yazīdīs of Jabal Sinjār. The Yazīdīs would “cut the roads;” the governor would send a punitive expedition to Jabal Sinjār to burn and kill; and finally, the Yazīdīs would ask for safe-conduct (amān), which might be granted to them on the basis of a payment in livestock. See Yāsīn ibn Khayr Allah al-‘Umar, Zubdat al-athār al-jalīla fi ‘l-hawādith al-ardīyya, ed. ‘Imād ‘Abd as-Salām al-‘Aṭṭār. (Najaf: Maṭba‘at al-Adab, n.d.), 81,108, 125.

98 Akgündüz, Kanunnameleri, 41.
The government increasingly resorted to divide-and-rule tactics as decentralization weakened the power of the central government. They were used extensively to contain the ayan in the eighteenth century.99 Within the Arab provinces at this time, the government exploited the lineage rivalries characteristic of the segmentary social structure of that region to maintain their supremacy. The eighteenth century Syrian governor Cezzar Paşa, for example, would repeatedly nominate different members of the Shihâb family to the Amirate of Mount Lebanon, and send them with a military force to unseat their predecessor.100 While he could not control Mount Lebanon by these means, he could prevent the Shihâb family from becoming powerful enough to challenge him.

The evident amorality of these means of maintaining control was, in Ottoman thought, ultimately justified by their moral end. The security-producing function of the state is strongly tied to the realization of a social ideal. Security (emn or asayış) is provided by the sultan in his capacity as the “Shadow of God on Earth.” The Ḥurz ül-Mülük opens by praising God, who “made the Majestic Sultans the cause of the security (asayış) and happiness of all human beings, and the tranquility and comfort of the small and the great.”101

The concept of security is closely tied to that of justice (adalet). In the “circle of equity” the sultan exists by means of the army, the army by means of revenue, and

101 Akgündüz, Kanunnameleri, 8:31.
the revenue by means of justice.102 The ruler, by means of his army, must enforce a just social order if he is to survive. Justice is defined as enforcing the Shari‘a Islamic law and maintaining the “order of the world” (nizam-i alem). Where the nizam-i alem prevails, each social class or group will remain within the proper behavioral boundaries (hadd) prescribed for it.103 The sultan, by means of his power, restrains the ruling class from oppressing the reaya, and the reaya from rebelling.104

Where justice obtains, the sultanate will grow and flourish; in its boundaries, in the happiness and prosperity of its people, and in its revenue. The words for “flourishing” are various derivations of the Arabic root verb ‘amara, “to thrive, prosper, flourish, to become inhabited, to build.” In Nizām al-Mulk, the king who is just will see to the “flourishing of the world” (emārat-e jehān) by constructing canals, bridges, and religious schools (madāres).105 The sultan, then, maintains security by means of justice. If he does so, there will be a social balance or harmony between classes, and this will permit a general flourishing of state and society.

Now, we will argue that these ideas played an important role throughout the period of Ottoman rule in Yemen generally, and in its first twenty years in particular. At that time, severe constraints on Ottoman finances and military strength in Yemen compelled them to resort deliberately to “pre-modern” methods

102 Inalcı, Empire, 66.
103 For a definition of hadd, see Shaw, Between, 443 n.
104 Nizam al-Mulk, Book, 9-10; Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsat-nāmah, 2-3; Inalcı, Empire, 66-69.
105 Nizam al-Mulk, Book, 10; Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsat-nāmah, 3.
of dealing with rebellion. Ottoman policy at this time explicitly focused on maintaining control by getting the powerful shaykhs on the side of the government, playing off rival tribes against one another, and dispatching punitive expeditions against rebel tribes when these indirect methods failed. The terms used for these expeditions, *tedib ve terbiye*, reflected the concept of “punishment” in Nizām al-Mulk and classical Ottoman political thinkers.

As rebellion in Yemen intensified, however, it became clear that traditional measures of dealing with rebellion would not suffice to maintain control. Even in the early period of Ottoman rule in Yemen, the classical political concepts described above had been transformed by the reformist thought of the *Tanzimat* period; and governors elsewhere in the Empire had already implemented policies similar to modern counterinsurgency on the basis of this thought. Such ideas had been adopted in part by the Hamidian regime, and would become increasingly important for Ottoman policy-makers as they sought to reverse the deteriorating situation in Yemen.

III. The Political Context of “Counterinsurgency” in the Late Ottoman Empire.

In this context, to show the relevance of the idea of “counterinsurgency” to the policies of the late Ottoman Empire requires us to explain the parallels with modern counterinsurgency in more depth. Counterinsurgency has emerged in the twentieth century as an outgrowth of two interrelated and opposing developments: the
growth in the hegemonic power of transnational empires and the bureaucratic nation-state, and a correspondingly fierce resistance by disadvantaged peoples who sense a threat to their cultural and political existence as a result. Ultimately, the growing political sophistication and military effectiveness of such resistance has confronted the nations and empires of the modern world with a real crisis of legitimacy. This in turn has forced them to deal with the political aspects of rebellion as well as its military ones.

We have noted that the idea of counterinsurgency only fully emerged in the period after World War II, when the European nations were no longer able to control their empires by main force, and the United States faced increasingly serious challenges to its role as global hegemon. While rebellion was often legitimated by universalist ideologies such as Marxism, nearly always it was rooted in particularistic demands for political independence and cultural autonomy by marginalized groups. Colonized peoples refused to be dominated by imperial states designed to benefit others. Within newly emergent nations, non-dominant peoples resisted assimilation by nation-states controlled by others, whose policy was often to force the culture of the latter on the former to create a unitary “national” identity.\footnote{The primary example of this in the Middle East was the Kurdish revolts in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. In North Africa, nationalist guerrilla wars have also been waged in places such as the Western Sahara, Ethiopia, and the southern Sudan.}

Such resistance essentially created crises of legitimacy for the imperial powers of the West, and for many of the newly emergent nations as well. The Western powers such as Britain and the United States therefore began to focus on ensuring
the stability and legitimacy of a network of client states, rather than maintaining the territorial integrity of their empires. The strategy of counterinsurgency experts such as Blaufarb and Tanham was essentially focused on this end.

As we have seen in *Who Will Win?*, this came to mean supporting the ordinary processes of state and nation-building as they had emerged in the nineteenth century: professionalization of the bureaucracy and army, extension of government control to outlying areas of the country, the construction of communications networks to ensure this control and facilitate economic growth, the provision of education and social services to the population. Such measures were designed to improve the people’s well-being and inculcate them with a sense of loyalty to the state, as the legitimate representative of their political community. Counterinsurgency simply meant combining these efforts with efforts to suppress armed opposition militarily, in order to reduce the popular appeal of nationalist guerrillas, and regain legitimacy for the state by reforming it. In this manner, the United States in particular hoped to secure the stability of states which would be favorable to its imperial interests.

Now, the situation in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire anticipated this process in many regards. Here, an imperial monarchy representing an obsolete systems of rule strove to preserve its authority against well-organized nationalist opposition by a combination of reform and repression. In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans were faced with guerrilla rebellions in the Balkans with a fervently nationalist orientation, which would later spread to the Muslim regions of the Empire. The Ottoman Empire was therefore confronted with a crisis of legitimacy.
This crisis, in combination with the external threats to the Empire’s existence at the same time, forced Ottoman statesmen to give serious consideration to the problem of winning the loyalty of the subject populations. It was no longer possible to crush rebellion in the Balkans by simple force and manipulation, as the Ottoman state had done historically, and as the Europeans were doing in their newly acquired empires at the time. How were the reluctant Balkan Christians to be persuaded that their “real” identity and interests lay with the Ottoman state, not with the nationalist organizations and the powers that supported them?

For Ottoman statesmen, the key to answering this question, and therefore ensuring the survival and legitimacy of the Empire, lay in the reconstruction of the Empire as a “modern” state. Because this involved the state-building activities described above in conjunction with active efforts to suppress nationalist guerrillas, Ottoman policies broadly anticipated the counterinsurgency programs of the era of decolonization. The rebellions in Yemen were not nationalist in orientation, but the policies designed by the Ottomans to suppress them were developed in the context of this state-building process. What, then, were the features of this process most relevant to the situation in Yemen?

The efforts of the Empire in this regard were focused on constructing a bureaucratic state to impose a unitary national identity. Findley’s *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire* is still one of the best accounts of the former process. Findley focuses on the reorganization of the Ottoman sultanate in accordance with Weber’s principle of “rational-legalism;” that is, as a “modern [bureaucratic] system that would be governed by rational plan and specially enacted
legislation . . .” A civil bureaucracy was organized around the Sublime Porte characterized by the following features: division of its branches by specialized function (e.g., Ministries of War, Justice, and so on), staffing by educated professionals receiving monthly salaries, and close regulation of its structure and functions by legal codes drawn up for this purpose.

Organized in this fashion, the Porte and its civil bureaucracy came to dominate the central government in the Tanzimat period. The control of the bureaucracy and the rational-legal order it represented was likewise slowly consolidated in the Ottoman provinces. The idea of rational-legalism and bureaucratic centralization as key elements of the Tanzimat reforms can be extended to the policies developed to deal with nationalist rebels in this period.

A central idea of the Tanzimat statesmen was to implement a rational-legal political order to retain the loyalty of Christian populations. The cornerstone of this order was the rule of law, which was to replace the arbitrary and authoritarian practices of the past. The rule of law, and specifically the equality of Ottoman

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108 The Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane states that since life, honor, and property have not been respected by the Ottoman government, the people have become disloyal. Nonetheless, if new laws are put into effect guaranteeing security of life, honor, and property, the government’s legitimacy will be restored. “When life and honor are secure, [this man] will not depart from [the path of] truthfulness and rectitude, and his work will consist only of seemly service to the state and the nation.” Text in Düstur (Der Saadet: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1289), 1:5. Concern about the loyalty of the Balkan Christians was, of course, not the only motive for the Hatt-ı Şerif. Mustafa Reşit Paşa, architect of the Tanzimat order, was concerned to gain the support of Great Britain and other powers against Mehmet Ali. As in nineteenth century Ottoman history generally, however, the internal and external security affairs of the Empire were closely linked. Ottoman statesmen were attempting to prove to the European powers that they were capable of providing good government to their Christian subjects and securing the legitimacy of the state, thereby forestalling the need for European intervention in favor of rebellious Balkan peoples. See Davison, Reform, 36 ff.
subjects before the law regardless of religion, therefore became the key element underlying the policies of the Tanzimat.\(^\text{109}\)

The rule of law was the foundation of a political order which would derive its fundamental legitimacy from its “rational-legal” character. The Tanzimat statesmen believed that if the bureaucracy operated efficiently within the parameters of the law and exercised greater control over the provinces, the state could regain some of the legitimacy it had lost during the anarchy of the eighteenth century. The traditional social goals of “security” (emniyet) and economic “flourishing” (imar, mamuriyet), historically the responsibility of the virtuous sultan, were now arrogated in practice to the bureaucratic state.\(^\text{110}\)

Professionally educated officials would make the state predictable and orderly in its workings, thereby achieving “justice” (Adalet) on the sultan’s behalf. Mamuriyet in turn began to have some of the connotations of “development” in the modern sense: the construction of communications networks, investment to exploit the natural resources of the country, and education to improve the capabilities of the population.\(^\text{111}\) The wealth gained thereby would put Ottoman society on the path of “progress” (terakki) and “civilization” (medeniyet),\(^\text{112}\) the progression toward a more humane, prosperous, and enlightened society which nineteenth century Europeans in general believed they were on.


\(^{110}\) See the text of the Hatt-i Şerif in Düsür, 1:5.

\(^{111}\) See the text of the İslahat Ferman in Düsür, 1:7-14; and Davison, Reform, 87-92, 362-363.

\(^{112}\) Çetinsaya, “Kalemiye’den,” 55-58.
These reformist and progressive measures were in turn to pave the way for a fundamental redefinition of Ottoman identity. Schools, modern legal codes, and communications networks were to have the same integrative effect on the people of the Empire as they did on those of Britain and France. That is, they were to create a sense of “Ottoman” identity in place of local religious and ethnic loyalties, and fidelity to the Ottoman state as representing the unitary Ottoman nation. The state would represent the collective identity of all its subjects, as citizens with equal rights and duties, rather than serving as an the instrument of Muslim social domination. In this manner the Ottoman social and political order would be transformed, and the appeal of nationalist organizations reduced.

The fact that the statesmen of the Tanzimat had to overcome armed nationalist opposition to implement this program, rather than simple local parochialism, was what made Ottoman policy at this time similar to modern counterinsurgency. The most salient example of this was Midhat Paşa’s policies in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian regions suffered from both banditry and political unrest fomented by Bulgarian nationalist organizations abroad. Midhat’s task, as governor of various parts of this region from 1861 to 1864, was to pacify the region and restore government control there. The policies which he implemented were strikingly similar to the specific recommendations of “soft” counterinsurgency: the necessity of combining civil and military action, the importance of development to improve the lot of the peasantry, and the idea of consultation with local people in implementing development.

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113 Davison, Reform, 87-92, 362-363.
In the province of Nish, Midhat Paşa worked with the local notables to develop a program of civil development combined with strong security measures. Schools, hospitals, and roads were constructed, while military patrols were sent out to clear the countryside of brigands. Security improved in consequence, and peasant families who had fled to Serbia began to return.\textsuperscript{114} In the province of the Danube, Midhat Paşa worked to counter nationalist agitation by measures designed to socialize the Bulgarians into loyal Ottoman citizens. A militia was organized from the local people, both Christian and Muslim, and entrusted with the defense of their home districts against Pan-Slavic militants. Midhat also proposed the establishment of state universities in Bulgaria for the Christian and Muslim youth of the province, in order to inculcate both with a shared sense of Ottoman identity.\textsuperscript{115}

In sum, Midhat Paşa’s policies represented the \textit{Tanzimat} logic which resembled that of modern counterinsurgency. The state can only provide effective security if it is reformed. If the state is reformed and can therefore provide a degree of security, it can undertake social and economic development. Development will in turn create “progress,” a general rise in material welfare and human potential. This in turn will increase the loyalty of the population to the state.\textsuperscript{116} And like modern counterinsurgency, such policies were implemented as part of a conflict which was escalating toward total war. This conflict was not a squabble over the

\textsuperscript{114} Ali Haydar Midhat, \textit{The Life of Midhat Pasha} (London: John Murray, 1903), 35-37.

\textsuperscript{115} Midhat, \textit{Life}, 37-45.

\textsuperscript{116} Blaufarb and Tanham emphasize that development programs to win “hearts and minds” are not feasible unless there is a certain level of basic security. The army cannot provide security unless it is well-trained and disciplined. Therefore, the state must first focus on reforming the army, in both its military professionalism and its conduct toward the civilian population. When this is done, a higher level of security is possible; development can be undertaken; and the peasantry is more likely to support the government. See Blaufarb and Tanham, \textit{Who}, 19-22, 25-26, 31-33, 41-42.
exact distribution of power between the state and an autonomous community, but a
deep struggle over the identity and political loyalty of a people.

The political order of the *Tanzimat* came to an end with the Ottoman defeat in the
Russian war of 1877-78, allowing Abdülhamid to reimpose sultanic absolutism and
Islamic identity in a “modernized” form. Much of the *Tanzimat* heritage of ideas,
however, passed intact into the period of Hamidian rule. Ideas of “progress,”
“civilization,” centralization, and state-building were absorbed into Abdülhamid’s pan-
Islamic and absolutist ideology.\(^\text{117}\) Nonetheless, the feature of Hamidian rule which
struck contemporaries most was its repressive character.\(^\text{118}\) In analyzing the dynamics of
this repression, we will make use of the concept of “split-up” modernization.\(^\text{119}\) In this
type of modernizing polity “advocates of change who are in positions of power, their
roles still defined and legitimated in basically traditional terms, tend to advocate change
in spheres where they think they can control it and use it to buttress the order of which
they are a part.” At the same time, such autocratic modernizers “try to restrict change in
the fundamental, constitutive principles of the polity.”\(^\text{120}\)

This kind of policy has historically been highly conducive to the destabilization of the
regimes in question, resulting in an increase in violent repression by the state. This is

\(^\text{117}\) Abdülhamid stressed that the Islamic faith, if properly obeyed and understood, would open the door to
modern progress in the Muslim world. Such progress and rejuvenation was to be achieved by the unity of
the Muslims and their obedience to the caliph, rather than the rule of law emphasized in the *Tanzimat*
period. Development efforts were in fact quite strenuous under Abdülhamid. The construction of roads
and railroads was accelerated, and the number of modern schools increased. See Kemal Karpat, *The

\(^\text{118}\) Ali Haydar Midhat, for example, refers to the “dark gloom of the Hamidian epoch” in *Life*, 101.

\(^\text{119}\) This concept was first developed by S.N. Eisenstadt, and subsequently employed by Carter Findley in
his analysis of the Tanzimat and Hamidian regimes; our points here are substantially taken from Findley.
See Findley’s discussion of S. N. Eisenstadt’s *Modernization: Protest and Change* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ:

\(^\text{120}\) Findley, *Reform*, 149.
because, in the first instance, the autocrat's attempt to control the pace and direction of
“modernization” proves impossible; “as new ideas begin to spread throughout the
society . . . there emerge rival reformist groups that oppose the established leadership and
expound alternative concepts of change.” In consequence, “the rulers of such societies
characteristically use whatever resources are at their disposal to maintain their
position.”121

Nearly always, such resources include a substantial police and military apparatus.
Usually, the autocrats in question have increasingly resorted to this apparatus as the new
intelligentsia step up their political activities and steadily undermine the autocrat's bases
of “traditional” legitimacy.122 While the rebellion in Yemen was not carried out by a
modernizing intelligentsia, the 1890’s witnessed rising opposition of this kind elsewhere
in the Empire, by Armenian, Greek, and Slavic nationalists;123 and the repressive policies
implemented in Yemen reflected in part a larger backlash by the Ottoman state against
these movements.

Such violence may actually be worsened if autocratic rulers to impose a mass identity
from the top down on a diverse population, in an artificial attempt to copy the mass
mobilizing techniques of modern politics to foster loyalty to the state. The employment
of such ideologies tends to intensify the conflict between the autocratic state and

121 Findley, Reform, 149-150.
122 We are thinking in this context of the growing opposition to the regimes of Haile Selassie and
Muhammad Reza Pahlavi in the 1960’s, led in large part by the students whom their educational policies
had helped to create, and which caused both regimes to resort to increasingly repressive tactics. See Nikki
Keddie, Roots of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 235-239; and Leenco Lata, The
123 See William Miller, The Ottoman Empire 1801-1913, Cambridge Historical Series (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1913), 427 ff.
genuinely mass mobilizing movements from below, giving the conflict the Manichaean character of nationalist or other ideological war.\textsuperscript{124}

Our task in this context is to show how Abdülhamid's government, as an autocratic regime engaged in “split-up” modernization, constructed a legitimating ideology that was both internally inconsistent and ultimately conducive to large-scale violence by the state. First, Abdülhamid's regime drew on the traditional justifications for absolutism in Ottoman and Sunnî-Islamic political thought to justify his authoritarian rule. Thinkers in the Sunnî political tradition such as al-Ghazâlî or Ibn Taymiyya placed a premium on the obedience of the subject population to the ruler.\textsuperscript{125} The subject’s duty of obedience took precedence over the ruler's obligation to be just, because fitna, dissension or anarchy among the Muslims, was a worse evil than tyranny.\textsuperscript{126} In Abdülhamid’s view, the sultan was responsible to God and not the people. Therefore he had the power to undertake any action and manipulate power relationships as he chose, provided that the end was to ensure the survival of the state and the good of the community.\textsuperscript{127} Abdülhamid's spokesmen employed these ideas to impress Muslim Ottomans that obedience to the sultan's autocratic rule was a religious duty (farz).\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{124} Such attempts have historically included Haile Selassie's attempt to create an “Ethiopian” identity by forcing Christian Amharic culture on the Muslim and animist peoples of the Ethiopian plateau. See Lata, \textit{State}, 171 ff.
\textsuperscript{128} Mehmet Emin Paşa, “Yemen Kıtâsi,” Manuscript, Istanbul University Library Rare Works Collection No. TY 4615, Istanbul University, Istanbul, 7 (my pagination).
Recent scholarship has shown that such traditional ideas were reconstituted in Abdülhamid’s time into a “proto-nationalist” philosophy based on Ottoman-Muslim identity. Pan-Islamism, employing the nationalist language of unity, progress, and loyalty to the state, was the central element of this proto-nationalism. Concerned about the issue of ethnic nationalism (kavmiyet) among the Ottoman Muslim communities, Abdülhamid sought to outflank its appeal by attempting to “modernize” Islamic identity.

All Muslims were part of one community (ümmet) headed by the caliph, that is, the Ottoman sultan; and Ottoman Muslims constituted a special entity within this community. It was essential that Ottoman Muslims and Muslims at large be united, for disunity had made the ümmet vulnerable to the predatory European powers. The Ottoman caliph represented the unity of the Muslim community and acted as its defender against European aggression. Therefore, Muslims were considered to have a natural loyalty to the caliph; and in education and propaganda undertaken by the regime, the necessity of Muslim loyalty to the caliph was continually emphasized.

To reinforce this loyalty, Abdülhamid had the state engage in visibly “Islamic” endeavours: repairing mosques, building schools whose curriculum emphasized loyalty to the caliph and the Islamic faith, and constructing the Hijāz railway.

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130 Karpat, Politicization, 177.
131 Karpat, Politicization, 188, 320-326.
132 Karpat, Politicization, 241 ff.
133 Karpat, Politicization, 232.
134 Karpat, Politicization, 253-257, 229-233.
These were the specifically integrative measures designed to mold Ottoman Muslims into a single community, whose identity would be bound up in the state and the sultan. And just as the relatively liberal ideas of the Tanzimat formed the basis for counterinsurgency in the Balkans, so did Abdülhamid’s pan-Islamism serve as the foundation for the state-building measures undertaken to pacify Yemen.

In the Yemeni context, however, we will show that such ideas had an artificial character that tended to alienate the population. This was, again, because of the “split-up” character of the Hamidian regime. Abdülhamid had come to the throne in the context of a revolution in the Ottoman elite, with the deposition of the absolutist sultan Abdülaziz by Midhat Paşa and his reformist allies, and the proclamation of a constitution. Hostile to the very idea of political liberalization, Abdülhamid had subsequently managed to suspend the Constitution and imprison Midhat Paşa in Ṭā’īf in the Ḥijāz, where he subsequently had him murdered.135

In constructing his ideologies of pan-Islamism and absolutism, then, Abdülhamid was obviously aware that the traditional bases of his legitimacy were under siege by the newer political ideas of constitutionalism and ethnic nationalism. Likewise, he would have known that organized opposition to his rule would come from the officials that he himself was educating to modernize the Ottoman state, who would have been exposed to these ideas.

Profoundly insecure as a personality, Abdülhamid’s reaction was to clamp down on opposition by an extensive system of press censorship, espionage, and

imprisonment or exile of perceived opponents. The sultan’s Pan-Islamic and absolutist ideologies reflect in large part the rigidity that this attitude entailed. The insistent emphasis on absolute obedience to the sultan, and the intense focus on the necessity for Muslim unity in the face of imperialism, seemed designed to close definitively the *Tanzimat* debates on the role of the sultan. The sultan was to be obeyed without question, because only he stood between the Muslims and their “unbelieving” enemies. This served as the essential justification for the police-state practices of the Hamidian regime.

Because pan-Islamism was so closely tied to the sultan’s policy of suppressing dissent at any cost, it was inherently inflexible as a basis for policy. Now the Zaydī Imām, simply by virtue of their traditional function within the Zaydī community, constituted an implicit threat to Abdülhamid’s claim to universal leadership of the Muslims. The rhetoric of Pan-Islamism and caliphal authority therefore left no place for a rival Muslim authority such as the Imām. The Imām was a “bandit” (*şaki*), and his partisans “scum” (*hazele*), a cancer on the Muslim body politic which had to be eliminated to save the community. In consequence, the sultan plunged into long-term conflict with the Zaydī Imāms; and the unhappy paradox inherent in “split-up” modernization, in which the military-repressive capability of the state expands as the ruler’s legitimacy deteriorates, meant that this conflict would steadily escalate in intensity.

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137 For one example see BBA, Y.Mtv 266/26 27 Eylül 1320/10 October 1904. Telegram from the Commandant of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War.
Beyond this, the political dynamics of Abdülhamid’s “split-up modernization” meant that progress toward the reforms he envisioned would be consistently thwarted and delayed. Abdülhamid continued to expand the professional governing classes which could develop the Empire and save it from its European enemies;\textsuperscript{138} yet it was from within this group of men that the greatest threats to his power could emerge.

Abdülhamid’s solution to this problem was a kind of uneasy compromise, which would have been familiar to other modernizing autocrats such as the Pahlavi Shahs. The modernized governing apparatus should work, but not so well that it threatened Abdülhamid’s monopoly on power. The Yıldız Palace should keep a close watch on the officially constituted ministries with its unofficial network of police agents, and all final decisions would be made there.\textsuperscript{139} Loyalty to the sultan was a primary criterion in selecting men for desirable posts, and professional capability secondary.

Loyalty would be rewarded in part by tacit permission to engage in large-scale corruption. Brutality in eradicating perceived opposition was also tacitly encouraged in practical terms.\textsuperscript{140} Behavior of this kind would create the fear necessary to maintain the sultan’s power, and render his officials dependent on him by depriving them of support among the population. Abdülhamid did want officials capable enough to maintain the security of his throne and the integrity of the Empire. He did not want them to become so successful and popular, as Midhat

\textsuperscript{138} In Abdülhamid’s reign, the School of Civil Administration was expanded, and preference given to its graduates in bureaucratic appointments. See Findley, Reform, 227-228, 276-277.

\textsuperscript{139} Findley, Reform, 229-236.

Paşâ had done,* that they could become a rallying point for opposition to his rule.

To that end, he also fostered rivalry among his own lieutenants and the various branches of the government they controlled.141 The inefficiency resulting from these practices was compensated for by their effectiveness in preventing his officials from uniting against him.

In a disturbed area such as Yemen, the results of Abdülhamid’s system of government were predictable. On paper, official Ottoman “doctrine” was based on the reformist and progressive aspects of Hamidian ideology. The Muslims of Yemen were conceived as having a “natural” loyalty to the caliph and the Ottoman state. The problem was to make this latent loyalty manifest itself in active support for the sultan. This was to be accomplished by *Islah*, reform of the state in conjunction with the benevolent extension of its authority. Implemented in the proper fashion, *islah* would bring progress (*terakki*) and civilization (*medeniyet*) to Yemen, through the paternal justice (*adalet*) of the sultan-caliph.142 In consequence, the Zaydis would abandon the Imâm for their rightful sovereign, the Ottoman sultan.

In practice, officials continued to alienate the population by bribes and petty oppression; suspected collaboration with the Imâm was punished with torture and imprisonment; and the Ottoman soldiers, famished and miserable as a result of the embezzlement of their pay, took out their frustrations on the hapless Yemenis. The

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* Midhat Paşâ may have become Grand Vizier partly as a result of his successes as a provincial governor in disturbed areas; see Midhat, *Life*, 61-64. Abdülhamid made sure that none of his officials could achieve the same degree of power and independence, and one way to do this was to make sure that they were not too successful.

141 See Tahsin Paşâ, *Sultan Abdülhamid* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1996), 98, for the conflict between the Grand Vizier Sait Paşâ and the Minister of War Rîza Paşâ.

142 See BBA, Y.Mtv 187/69 23 Şubat 1314/7 March 1898. Minutes (*mazbata*) of the Reform Commission, sent to the Grand Vizier.
picture was not completely bleak. There were officials who seemed to take the rhetoric of progress, development, and Islamic unity seriously; and these men did, in fact enjoy some success. Eventually, however, their efforts were nearly always defeated by the entrenched abuses of the system. As a result, the resistance of the Zaydīs to Ottoman centralizing policies continued to increase.

In sum, the empire under Abdülhamid was evolving toward the nation-state political model which dominated Europe at the time; yet its fundamental inconsistencies gave it the character of a fortress state, rather than an inchoate “national” one. The state apparatus served primarily to ensure the dominance of the Yıldız Palace over and against the peoples of the Empire, rather than to bind them together in a sense of Ottoman-Muslim identity. The Ottoman state under Abdülhamid was too inflexible and inhumane to bring about a genuine integration of the peoples of the Empire.

In Yemen, its centralizing logic brought it into conflict with a tribal and religious culture which historically was intensely suspicious of state power. The availability of modern weapons and astute political organizing by the Imāms intensified this opposition, and made it increasingly effective in military terms. Before they could make peace on the basis of the values they did share, the Zaydīs and the Ottomans would have to fight one another to exhaustion.

**Conclusion.**
This study will examine the shift from limited toward more total forms of war in Yemen within the general context of modern military history, and the specific cultural context of Zaydf and Ottoman history. We will show that some of the general processes associated with unconventional war in the twentieth century can be identified in Yemen during this period. As with the European empires, the Ottoman Empire was able to expand into Yemen as a result of the firepower revolution of the nineteenth century. Similarly, by the early twentieth century the Ottoman Empire was facing the general military situation that the European empires would confront later: the generalized diffusion of modern firearms among its subject populations, the development of sophisticated forms of guerrilla resistance, and the intensified external competition which the nineteenth century firepower revolution brought in its train. This would make it increasingly difficult for the Ottomans to hold on to their empire in general, and Yemen in particular.

The growing anarchy in Yemen thus forced the Ottomans to address the political problems associated with rebellion there. The measures they took focused on strengthening the power and legitimacy of the state by both fair means and foul: arrests and torture on the one hand, building schools and reforming the bureaucracy on the other. The spectacle presented by the Ottomans in Yemen-of gradually losing control of the country in a guerrilla war fuelled by cheap and plentiful firearms, casting about desperately for means to halt the slide into anarchy, and shifting between ineffectual violence and equally ineffectual attempts at reform-has of course been a familiar one in the late twentieth century.
At the same time, the conflict in Yemen cannot be reduced to a stereotyped model of “modern” unconventional warfare. It was deeply rooted in the political culture and history of both the Zaydīs and the Ottomans. Perhaps its most salient feature in this regard was its specifically Islamic character, distinguishing it sharply from the nationalist conflicts of the same period. The question of state legitimacy, which is often the key issue where an entrenched bureaucratic state faces organized guerrilla resistance, here revolved around conflicting views of proper Islamic governance.

The Zaydī tradition emphasized strict adherence to Islamic law, implying in practice legal limitations on the ruler’s authority, and sanctioned military resistance to an unjust ruler as a duty of the Muslim community. Ottoman traditions of government, by contrast, were explicitly authoritarian. Classical Ottoman thinkers emphasized the Islamic duty of submission to the ruler, rather than to resistance to tyranny. The sultan was entrusted with the survival and prosperity of the Muslim community. Since the state protected the Muslim community, the sultan’s first priority was to ensure the security of the state; and to do this, he could take any measure he deemed proper, including the abrogation of the Shari‘a.

Such ideas were modified in the Tanzimat period, with its emphasis on the rule of law. Under Abdülhamid, however, they returned with a vengeance. Abdülhamid’s pan-Islamic and absolutist ideas represented in part an adaptation of classical Ottoman concepts to the new realities of the bureaucratic state in the nineteenth century. The educated bureaucratic classes could and did pose a threat to the sultan’s authority. Outside the state apparatus itself, however, the modernized army and bureaucracy
became a tool of Abdülhamid’s absolutism, enabling him to exercise a closer degree of control over the population of the Empire than any of his predecessors.

The extension of this authoritarian state to Yemen created immediate conflicts with the Zaydí tribes, whose own traditions emphasized resistance to government authority. One of the essential functions of a tribal quasi-state such as the Imamate, to unify its supporting tribes to resist an outside invader, became immediately relevant in this context. The Zaydí ‘ulamā’ were thus able to reconstruct the Imamate as a jihād state, organized specifically for the purpose of waging war against the “tyrannical” Ottoman government.

The conflicting rhetoric of Islam was a major factor in the escalation of the conflict toward total war. The Zaydís believed that it was their Islamic duty to expel a regime which was tyrannical and did not enforce the Sharī’a. In the pan-Islamic ideology of Abdülhamid’s government, however, the Zaydís were refusing to perform their Islamic duty of submission to the caliph, and threatening the unity of the Muslim community. Therefore, “Islam” sanctioned their suppression.

At the same time, Islam provided a shared set of cultural assumptions which would ultimately facilitate dialogue and reconciliation between the two sides. The sense that Muslims needed to be united in the face of external threat was an important factor in enabling Zaydís and Ottomans to effect a reconciliation (particularly on the side of the former). Ahmet İzzet Paşa and the Young Turks, however, were motivated primarily by the simple recognition of the limits of Ottoman power in Yemen. Although the Zaydís perceived the Ottoman state as immensely powerful, the Ottomans never had the ability to implement a counterinsurgency program in a truly comprehensive fashion. The basis on which peace was finally concluded, then, in some ways reflected the practices of the
Empire before the *Tanzimat*. The Imām was allowed to retain his position in return for formal submission to the Ottoman state.

In a sense, then, war in Yemen never quite became “total” in the same manner as the nationalist conflicts elsewhere in the Empire. The position of Yemen on the periphery of the empire, the archaic character of its society, and the absence of a tradition of Ottoman rule made it impossible for the Ottomans to impose a strong central authority there. Similarly, while conflicting interpretations of Islam served to intensify the war, shared cultural assumptions deriving from Islam also made it possible to bring about a reconciliation. No such means of compromise was available with rebels committed to a strong nationalist ideology. Yemen was close enough to the world at large to be profoundly affected by the general slide toward total war during the period in question. It was distant enough that the developments associated with the rise of total war would receive their own particular cultural stamp in Yemen, and play themselves out in ways which were unique.
CHAPTER 2

THE COLLAPSE OF THE QĀSIMĪ IMAMATE.

In the introduction, we discussed the specific institutional features of the tribal quasi-state as defined by Ernest Gellner, and noted that this type of polity in the Middle East has historically been characterized by a tension between tribal and “Islamic” values. In this chapter, we will show that the Zaydī Imamate in the early nineteenth century conformed in its essential features to the Gellner model. Likewise, we will show that the tension between tribal and Islamic values contributed to the collapse of the Imamate as a viable state.

Specifically, cleavages among the Zaydī scholarly elite resulted in civil wars which permitted this tension to emerge as open conflict, resulting in the destruction of the Imamate. By the eighteenth century, a group of Zaydī ‘ulamā’ had emerged who were reformulating Zaydī religious and legal doctrine in accordance with certain principles associated with Sunnī thought. These men, known as “Sunnīs” increasingly came into conflict with the “Shi‘ites” or “Hādāwīs” among the Zaydī ‘ulamā’; that is, those who followed the Shi‘ite teachings of al-Hādī, the founder of the Zaydī Imamate in Yemen. The Imamate in the early nineteenth century was dominated by Zaydī ‘ulamā’ of “Sunnī” sympathies who supported the central state authority, partly as a means of protecting the
Shāfiʿī raʿāyā of Lower Yemen against marauding northern tribesmen. The “Shiʿite” party among the Zaydī ‘ulamāʾ tended to oppose the central authority of the Imamate and its Sunnī tendencies. These men appear to have been supported by those who had grievances the established order, such as the Zaydī tribesmen of the north and the poorer classes of Ṣanʿāʾ. Opposition to the central authority of the state, if not to the Imamate as an institution, accorded well with the tribal culture of autonomy and the “oppositional” character of Zaydī Shiʿism.

The subsequent rebellions against the Imamate were therefore undertaken as jihād to uproot tyranny and establish Islamic law. These jihāds, however, degenerated into bloody civil wars in which the Imamate was effectively destroyed as a state institution, with several different claimants to the Imamate appearing at once. It soon became clear that that jihād had simply become a means for the tribesmen to plunder and seize territory. The Zaydī chroniclers referred to this as “strife and evildoing” (fitna wa fasād), terms traditionally used to denote the supposed anarchic, violent, and un-Islamic character of tribal culture. We might say in this context that the particularistic and self-aggrandizing aspects of tribal culture, associated with concepts of “honor” in anthropological terms, had practically overwhelmed the Zaydī-Islamic orientation of tribal rebellion in this period.

In military terms, this meant that war in this period lost the long-term, state-forming, and ideological character inherent in the concept of jihād. As the authority of the Imamate disintegrated, military power passed into the hands of the Zaydī tribes and their shaykhs. The character of war in this period was thus largely determined by an unpleasant kind of tribal warlordism, with all the military limitations this implies:
unstable organization, short-term mobilization for limited and self-interested goals, shifting alliances, and inferior military technology. These, in essence, were the basic weaknesses of “irregular warriors” outlined by Callwell in *Small Wars*; and like Callwell’s irregular warriors, the Zaydī tribes would later show themselves to be vulnerable to a well-armed force organized along European lines.

I. The Imamate as a Tribal Quasi-State: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.

As described by Ernest Gellner, the tribal quasi-state as an institution has the following features: an undifferentiated administrative apparatus dominated by the religious classes, a small army recruited on a non-tribal basis, and reliance on a tribal confederation to provide its major military support. The Imamate, as we shall see, displayed these essential characteristics. As a state institution, the Imamate was dominated by and reliant on the Zaydī scholarly elite of sayyids and qādis. These groups provided literate men to staff the administration and determine the ideological orientation of the state. They dominated two key institutions of the Imamate in the eighteenth century, the vizierate and the judiciary.

Under al-Mahdī ‘Abbās (1748-1775) and al-Manṣūr ‘Alī (1775-1809), the most powerful officials in the government were the viziers, of which there were usually about three or four; virtually all came from the major *sayyid* and *qādī* families. Under al-Mahdī ‘Abbās, *Sayyid* ‘Alī ibn Yahyā ash-Shāmī, *Qādī* ‘Alī ibn Ḥasan al-Akwa’, and

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Faqīḥ ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn al-Jirāfī served as viziers. The viziers were given vast and often ill-defined powers. One of al-Manṣūr’s viziers was responsible successively for administering the key regions of Ḥudayda, al-Ḥayma and Ḥarāz, and finally Lower Yemen. Under al-Manṣūr ‘Alī, the vizier Ḥasan al-‘Ulūfī became the most powerful man in the state, engendering such resentment by his policies that he eventually brought about the downfall both of his master and himself.

The judiciary was dominated by the qāḍī families. The head of the judiciary was the chief judge, or qāḍī al-quḍāt, who had oversight of the judges appointed to the provincial capital. Niebuhr also refers to a “supreme tribunal” consisting of a certain number of judges in Ṣan‘ā’. The emphasis in Zaydī thought on the supremacy of the Shari‘a gave the judiciary considerable power. According to Niebuhr, the Imām could not put anyone to death without the approval of this “supreme tribunal” of Ṣan‘ā’, which would determine the verdict in accordance with the procedures of Islamic law.

The Imām had the power to appoint and dismiss the judges at his discretion. In practice, however, the tenure of a judgeship was much more secure than that of other positions. While al-Mahdī ‘Abbās did imprison his own chief judge, Yahyā ibn Ṣālīḥ as-Sahūlī, he was subsequently reinstated under al-Manṣūr ‘Alī, and held the position until his death. His successor, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ash-Shawkānī, did

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145 al-‘Amrī, Mi’at ‘āmm, 75.
146 al-‘Amrī, The Yemen, 58-64.
147 The Shawkānī family, for example, had served the Imāms in a legal and administrative capacity at least since the first Ottoman occupation. See al-‘Amrī, The Yemen, 103-104.
149 Niebuhr, Travels, 2:83.
150 al-‘Amrī, The Yemen, 29; Niebuhr, Travels, 2:83-84.
The chief judge advised the Imām on matters of state, in addition to supervising the judiciary, and his power at court was rivalled only by that of the first vizier.

Below the viziers were the ‘ummāl (pl. of ‘āmil), or the provincial governors, stationed in the main cities of the Imām’s territories. The provincial governors were often, although not exclusively, manumitted Ethiopian slaves; one such man was the Amīr Rizq Allah, governor of Ḥudayda under al-Manṣūr ‘Alī. The governors appear to have been appointed directly by the Imām, although they reported to the viziers under whose jurisdiction they came.

The Imāms also had a supra-tribal army, known as the “followers,” or tawābi‘. The commanders of the former were often Ethiopian slaves (‘abīd), given the title of amīr al-jund at the higher levels and naqīb at the lower. The men themselves were variously recruited from Ethiopian slaves, the urban lower classes, and Zaydī tribesmen. They received a salary (jāmakiyya) from the public treasury (bayt al-māl).

The primary base of the Imamate’s military manpower, however, continued to be provided by the powerful Ḥāshid and Bakīl confederation. In sum, what made the Imamate a “tribal quasi-state” was the peculiar balance of authority between elements of the ruler’s household, the sayyid and qāḍī religious elites, and the autonomous Zaydī tribes. All these groups had an interest in controlling and exploiting the richer Shāfī‘ī areas, Lower Yemen and the Tihāma ports, for their own benefit. The tribes had served

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151 al-‘Amrī, Mi’at ‘āmm, 64; al-‘Amrī, The Yemen, 22.
153 al-‘Amrī, The Yemen, 23.
154 al-‘Amrī, Mi’at ‘āmm, 251.
as the military arm of the Imamate during the conquest of these areas in the seventeenth century. At that time the Imamate had espoused an aggressively Shi‘ite form of Zaydism based in the teachings of the Imamate’s founder, al-Hādī, and had engaged in proselytization in the conquered areas.155

Prior to our period, expansion by means of jihād helped to stabilize this tribal quasi-state by reducing some of its inherent tensions. The Shāfi‘īs of Lower Yemen and the Hadramaut served as a common external enemy to unite the tribes, the Zaydī ‘ulamā’ and the Imāms. The availability of lands through conquest gave the tribesmen material incentive to support the wars of the Imāms, and may have helped to relieve some of the competitive pressure among the Ḥāshid and Bakīl lineages for land, water, and grazing. The Imamate provided the ideological justification and organization for military expansion, while the tribesmen provided the military muscle. The unity of purpose between tribes and state in this fashion helped to reduce the threat inherent in most segmentary lineage societies, that of being torn apart in internecine conflict. With the program of proselytization, the goals of an aggressive tribal society and an Islamic scholar-elite were fused in the Qāsimī tribal quasi-state.

Bernard Haykel, however, views the establishment of the authority of the Imamate over the Shāfi‘ī areas of Yemen as having changed the fundamental institutional and doctrinal character of the Imamate. Employing theories of authority derived from Max Weber, Haykel argues that the “charismatic” Imamate of the seventeenth century became a “patrimonial” state in the eighteenth. This took place as as the expansionist drive of the Imamate waned, the state institutions we have described above assumed their final form,

and the principle of heredity replaced the strict requirements for election to the Imamate. These institutional changes were accompanied by a shift in the ideological orientation of the state toward Sunnī doctrines of jurisprudence and state authority, with their emphasis on stability and obedience to the ruler.

Such changes led to serious strains within the ruling elite and Zaydī society at large; and our concern, as we discuss Haykel’s argument, is to show how the changes described by Haykel placed particular stress on the inherent tensions in the Imamate as a tribal quasi-state.

II. The Transformation of the Imamate in the Eighteenth Century.

Weber defines charismatic authority as authority derived specifically from the personal qualities of the charismatic leader; that is, on his unique access to the divine or sacred, the magnetism of his personality, and his capacity to perform heroic or miraculous deeds. In this it differs from “routinized” methods of establishing authority, on the basis of tradition embodied in the principle of heredity, or the rational criteria of specialized training for leadership. While the latter are institutionalized means of transmitting authority conducive to the maintenance of stable social relations over time, charismatic authority is unique to the individual leader and potentially revolutionary. The divine revelation supersedes established custom, and it is the charismatic leader’s
mission to put a new social dispensation in place. His success in doing so and overturning the established social order is seen as proof of the divine favor.156

In Haykel’s view, the Ḥādāwī-Zaydī ideal of the Imām has the main characteristics of Weber’s “charismatic” leader. In Ḥādāwī Zaydism, the key element in holding together the Muslim community and ensuring its obedience to God is the personal qualities of the Imām, his learning, piety, courage, ability to command, and so forth. The oppositional character of Ḥādāwī Zaydism, its historical character as a movement challenging established structures of authority, is embodied in the requirement of khurūj: the Imām must establish his authority by rising against tyranny and unbelief. As a result, Haykel argues, “the political structures they [the Imāms] established are not to be understood in terms of a state (dawla); rather, theirs was a daʿwa whose fortunes followed that of the Imām. As a result, these daʿwas had an evanescent and terminal quality . . . it is the quality of the man which is stressed and no mention is made of what one may call the trappings of state. . . .”157 Authority was embodied not in the institutional structures of a state, but through the personal qualities of the Imāms and their capability to command in the jihād.

Haykel argues that the Imāms in the seventeenth century period of conquests attempted to follow this model in their actions; and that the state at this time was held together by the force of their personalities and their leadership in the jihād. Expansion reached its height under al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl (r. 1644-1676). Al-Mutawakkil sent expeditions to Lahj, Aden, and the Hadramaut. He installed his own nominees from the

local families of the region as rulers, compelling them to pay tribute, and thereby obtaining a considerable share in the lucrative port trade of the region. The Dhū Ghaylān tribes of Baraṭ, who would give such trouble to the Imāms in the eighteenth century, played an important role in these campaigns.

The conquests themselves were waged specifically as *jihād* against the Shāfī’īs, declared to be “infidels of interpretation” (*kuffār ta’wil*), who were “predestinarians” (*mujbira*) and anthropomorphists (*mushabbiha*), opposing Zaydi doctrines of free will and the absence of human attributes in the Divinity.158 Their lands could thus be taken by the Imām and given to his Zaydi tribal supporters as their “portion” (*iqṭā’*). As a result, many of the Zaydi tribes and the shaykhly families obtained extensive landholdings in Lower Yemen and the west in this period. The Imām al-Mutawakkil Ismā’īl also sent Hādawī scholars to the Shāfī’ī regions to spread Zaydi teachings, resulting in substantial conversions in the central plateau.159

According to Weber, however, the new social dispensation established by the charismatic leader must become “routinized” if it is to survive. The following attracted by the personal and supernatural magnetism of the leader, living off the booty of his campaigns, must become a body of soldiers and officials maintained by pay or benefices; regular means of transmitting authority, through “customary” or bureaucratic procedures, must be found; and the divine revelation must be codified as established doctrine.160 Now, Haykel argues that the Imāms ultimately had to “routinize” their authority through the establishment of the state institutions characteristic of Near Eastern monarchy, to

maintain control of the territories seized through *jihād*. In Haykel’s view, as the authority of the Imāms was “routinized”, the Imamate was transformed into a patrimonial state. The patrimonial state, one form of organizing “traditional” authority in Weber’s thought, is an extension of patriarchal organization: that is, the domination by the patriarch of his household dependents based on the authority accorded by custom to the father or father-figure. In a patrimonial state, the dominion of the patriarch has grown to encompass an empire or kingdom, which is governed according to the principles of the patriarchal household.\textsuperscript{161}

The empire is defined as the private domain or patrimony of the ruler, and its officials as his dependents, theoretically subject to the absolute authority traditionally accorded to the master of the household. Here, the patrimonial ruler confronts the power of local elites whose social position derives from their inherent status-honor, rather than their connection to him; and the political game in part becomes a constant negotiation of the boundaries of power between either side. The process of extending patrimonial rule thus involves the establishment of a central body of officials and soldiers who are defined as dependents of the ruler, who can if necessary be used against the autonomous status-honor groups. To this end, the ruler may employ persons who are literally dependents of his household, slaves or sons of concubines, to staff the government apparatus. The slave armies of the Islamic world, literally owned by the ruler and paid from his private treasury, constitute the quintessential type of patrimonial military force.\textsuperscript{162}

The central state may also offer employment to members of traditional status-honor groups. This becomes a means of gaining their support, and, we might add, of controlling and disciplining them. The patrimonial ruler also exerts control through his power to dispose of benefices and salaries, although Weber stresses the practical difficulties that patrimonial rulers encounter in maintaining this control. By this means, members of the traditional elite are drawn into competition for his favor, and rendered dependent on him. The officials of the patrimonial state therefore increasingly derive their power and prestige from connection to the ruler, rather than inherited status.

Thus, in contrast to the leader who attracts followers by “charisma,” the magnetism of his personality and connection with the divine, the ruler of a patrimonial state’s power is based on “tradition.” That is, it is sanctioned by the customs according authoritarian powers to the patriarch independently of his own personal qualities. Patrimonial rule is maintained by the stable institutional structures of bureaucracy and army, whose members are held in check by fear of the ruler and the necessity of seeking his favor. With its focus on consolidating the institutions of the state and stabilizing the social hierarchy established by custom, a “traditional” authority of this kind constitutes the very antithesis of charismatic authority.

Haykel argues that the Zaydī Imamate increasingly assumed the characteristics of a patrimonial state legitimated by “tradition” in the eighteenth century. The criteria of personal piety and learning in Islamic law were abandoned in favor of hereditary

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succession, the standard means of transmitting authority in patrimonial states. Slaves from Ethiopia were increasingly used to staff the army and administrative apparatus. The first Imām to use slave soldiers extensively was the Imām Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad [al-Mahdī], in the early eighteenth century. The power of the state came increasingly to reside in the semi-bureaucratic institutions of vizierate and the judiciary described above. These institutions drew their members largely from the qāḍī status group, and judges enjoyed some autonomy. The wazīrs, however, were subject to arbitrary imprisonment and confiscation of property at the whim of the Imāms, although they were not executed as at the Ottoman court. The Imāms thus increasingly adopted the bearing of absolute monarchs, exercising authority through a body of dependent officials representing their will to the subjects, rather than by means of their own personal and spiritual charisma.

The Imamate’s assumption of the trappings of monarchy was paralleled by a shift in its religious orientation. The conquest of the Shāfī’ī areas of Yemen was followed by intense interaction between Zaydī and Shāfī’ī scholars, resulting in the opening of the Zaydī establishment to Sunnī currents of thought, and a subsequent split among the Zaydī ‘ulamā’ between those of Sunnī and Shi‘ite orientation respectively. The “Sunnī” ‘ulamā’ among the Zaydīs elaborated doctrines which reflected the practical transformations in the Imamate as a state institution, overturning Shi‘ite doctrines of “charismatic opposition” to corrupt authority in favor of a stable bureaucratic order.

Doctrinally, the split revolved partially around questions of *fiqh*, the derivation of legal rulings on the basis of *Sharīʿa* law. The Sunnī-oriented Zaydī scholars adopted the legal method of the “Traditionists,” (*ahl al-hadīth*) who focused on the *hadīth* collections as a primary source for the development of Islamic law. Muḥammad ash-Shawkānī, the most prominent of the “Sunnī” Zaydī scholars of Yemen, emphasized the Traditionist idea that legal rulings should be derived from a close and literalist reading of the Qurʾān and the *hadīth* texts. The derivation of a legal ruling directly from these texts by a scholar using his powers of reason was *ijtihād*, which ash-Shawkānī regarded as the only valid method of determining proper legal rulings; and he opposed it especially to *taqlīd*, or the acceptance of a previous scholar’s ruling without this direct reference to the Qurʾān or *hadīth*.

These ideas brought ash-Shawkānī into conflict with the Hādawī or “Shīʿa” ‘ulamā’ on several levels. The classical *hadīth* collections contain numerous traditions attributed to the Companions, which the Hādawīs therefore looked on with suspicion. Likewise, the Hādawīs viewed the “consensus” (*ijmāʿ*) of ‘Ali’s descendants, and their own Imāms in particular, as the major source for their own legal opinions. Therefore, although importance was given to the idea of *ijtihād*, *taqlīd* or imitation of authoritative Zaydī legal texts was expected in practice. Ash-Shawkānī’s methods of *ijtihād* would have rendered much of this literature secondary if not redundant, diminishing the central

importance of the Imamate and the family of ‘Alī in Zaydī thought, and thereby undermining its doctrinal core.

Not content with this, ash-Shawkānī proceeded to dismantle the charismatic and oppositional character of the Imamate itself. He rejected the doctrine that Imāms needed to be descended from ‘Alī, as the ḥadīth stated only that they should be from the tribe of Quraysh. Likewise, he abandoned the idea of rising against tyranny in favor of a Sunnī-influenced focus on the subject’s duty of obedience to authority. He forbade Muslims to rise (khurūj) against a tyrannical Imām so long as the latter conformed publicly to the major rituals and doctrines of Islam. He dismissed the idea that the Imām had to be trained in the religious sciences as a mujtahid, focusing rather on the ruler’s function of maintaining the safety and order of the Muslim community.174

The Imāms were thereby deprived of the charisma inherent in their descent, spiritual authority, and opposition to the established order. The ‘Alid or Shi’ite doctrinal core of the Zaydī Imamate had been gutted in favor of a political dispensation whose major ideas derived from Sunnism. In Shawkānī’s thought, the locus of spiritual and religious authority was to shift from the Imāms to a body of religious scholars trained in the methods of the Traditionist school as mujtahids. These men were to staff the state apparatus and the judiciary, ensuring that the Sharī‘a was enforced, and advising the Imāms on religious matters.175 In short, the spiritual authority residing in the individual Imāms was to be transferred to the bureaucratic and judicial institutions of the central state.

175 Haykel, “Order,” 88, 99-100, 156.
Now, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the influence of the Traditionist school became paramount at the court of the Imāms, reaching its zenith in the years when Muḥammad ash-Shawkānī served as chief judge (1795-1834). Sunnī thought, with its emphasis on stability and obedience to the ruler regardless of his personal qualities, was inevitably much more suited to the Imamate’s style of ruling in this period than the oppositional thought of Hādāwī Zaydis. It was in this context that ash-Shawkānī elaborated the idea that the ‘ulamā’ should serve the ruler even if he was a tyrant, provided that they themselves did not engage in tyrannical acts. If the ‘ulamā’ did not serve the state, there would be no-one to instruct the people in the Shari‘a, or alleviate the ruler’s tyranny by timely advice. Refusal to serve a tyrannical ruler would simply worsen the situation of the Muslims.

The “Sunnification” of the the Imamate and its consolidation as a patrimonial state, however, was accompanied by a steady contraction of its territories and revenues. The coffee trade, on whose revenues the Imamate depended heavily, began to decline owing the development of new sources of coffee by the Dutch and French in their own colonies. Shortly after the death of al-Mutawakkil Ismā‘īl, the Imamate lost control of the Hadramaut and its ports. In the eighteenth century, the control of the Imamate was limited to an area roughly contiguous with the former North Yemen, and further territorial losses followed in the nineteenth century. As a result of the decline in the income from trade, the Imamate became increasingly dependent on agricultural revenues


from the fertile areas of Lower Yemen. This brought the state into increasing conflict with the tribes who had settled there in the earlier period of conquest, who controlled the revenues of the region through the *iqṭāʾ* system.\(^{179}\)

What we see here, in Haykel’s phrase, is a *conjoncture* of forces which altered the basic nature of the Zaydī Imamate as a religious and political institution.\(^{180}\) Such changes brought to the fore certain tensions which were inherent in the Zaydī Imamate as a tribal quasi-state. The increasing assumption of the Imamate of the attributes of patrimonial Near Eastern monarchy, coupled with its adoption of a Sunnī-oriented political philosophy, served to accentuate the distance between the values of tribe and state respectively. Many of the Zaydī tribes remained fiercely Hādawī in sympathies; and the centralizing trend of the Imamate, together with its ostentatious pomp and luxury, would certainly have aroused resentment among them.

If the stability of a patrimonial state was partially dependent on its control of the sources of patronage, enabling it to buy off opposition by the judicious distribution of lands and salaries, then the contraction of the Imamate’s sources of revenue would inevitably produce instability. The Imāms had increasing difficulty in buying off the opposition of the tribes by the distribution of *iqṭāʾāt*.\(^{181}\) The widening social and ideological gulf between state and tribe was therefore accentuated by competition over increasingly scarce resources.

To present the situation in this fashion is to oversimplify to a degree, to construct tribe and state as monolithic entities inherently opposed to one another. In fact, the actual


situation was much more complex. The cleavage between the “Shīʿa” and the “people of the Sunna” in Zaydī society at this time has barely begun to be studied as a social phenomenon. It divided Zaydī society on both vertical and horizontal lines, creating bitterly antagonistic factions among the ‘ulamā’, and opposing the artisans of the eastern section of Ṣanʿā’ to the wealthy individuals connected with the government in the west.

III. Social Aspects of the Hādāwī-Sunnī Conflict.

The political ascendance of the Traditionist school at this time meant that ‘ulamā’ of the Sunnī persuasion were preferred at the court and in the judiciary. This was especially true in the years that ash-Shawkānī served as chief judge. Ash-Shawkānī’s vast number of students, and the powers of patronage that he enjoyed, seem to have effectively crowded out Hādāwī scholars from the most desirable posts in the judiciary. In Ṣanʿā’, the wealthier ‘ulamā’ and those who had received government preferment resided in the western section of the city, Biʿr al-Azab. This section was described by the author of the Hawliyyāt as a “paradise among paradieses,” among whose “superior inhabitants” were the ‘ulamā’, judges, and “elegant people” (ẓurafā’).

This group contrasted sharply with the poorer elements among the Zaydī scholarly class. Among the people who appear as fervent Hādāwīs in our sources are individuals referred to as “doctors of law” (fuqahā’) and “students” (ṭalaba). Such individuals played a key role in the accession of the last Hādāwī Imām with real power, ʿAbdullah ibn Ḥasan [an-Nāṣir] in 1837. The “students” and “doctors of law” often appear to have

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been people in reduced circumstances, products of the relatively extensive system of religious education in Yemen for whom no posts could be found. The author of the Ḥawliyyāt said of the fuqahā’ and ṭalaba who supported this Imām that “the hearts of those [people] had been ‘nourished’ by hunger, and they [harbored bitterness] in their souls against those who held a position (mihna).”\textsuperscript{183}

The power base of these people seems to have been in the less wealthy section of Ṣanʿā’, among the artisans and tradesmen of the sūq in the eastern part of the city. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, periodic outbreaks of unrest took place among these people to protest the Sunnī-oriented policies of the government, as when the government prevented the Hādawī scholar Sayyid Yahyā ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥūthī from preaching in the Great Mosque of Ṣanʿā’, or when it was rumored that the names of the Companions were to be included in the Friday khutba.\textsuperscript{184} Within the seat of the Imamate at Ṣanʿā’ itself, then, the Sunnī-Hādawī divide appears as partially coterminous with the gap between the richer and poorer classes of the city.

Likewise, strong opposition to the “people of the Sunna” emerged among elements of the Ḫāshid and Bakīl confederation. Specifically, the powerful Bakīl tribes of Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn in the Baraṭ region of the northeast emerged as strong opponents of the Sunnī regime in Ṣanʿā’. It appears that these tribes, referred to collectively as Dhū Ghaylān, had been among the major beneficiaries of the Qāsimī expansion in the seventeenth century. The Imāms gave them autonomy and monetary

\textsuperscript{183} al-Ḥibshī, Ḥawliyyāt, 67.
\textsuperscript{184} al-ʿAmrī, The Yemen, 117-118; al-Ḥibshī, Ḥawliyyāt, 132.
inducements to support them in their campaigns in the south;\(^{185}\) and in all likelihood, they began to receive land grants (\textit{iqṭā‘}) in Lower Yemen at this time. Drought and economic hardship forced them to continue migrating to Lower Yemen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1823, for example, there was a mass migration of the tribesmen and their families to the Samārra region of Lower Yemen as a result of the severe drought in that year. They “made this region their homeland” (\textit{istawṭanūhu}), dividing up the land among themselves, and intermarrying with the local population.\(^{186}\)

The seizure of land and fortresses by the Bakīl tribesmen in this fashion made it difficult for the Imāms to collect taxes in this region. The Imāms therefore led repeated expeditions to Lower Yemen to expel the tribesmen, none of which had any long-term success. For their part, the Dhū Ghaylān tribes engaged in repeated rebellion under members of the al-‘Ansī qāḍī family, who were staunch partisans of Hādāwī Zaydism.\(^{187}\) They plundered the Shāfi‘īs of Lower Yemen and the Tihāma, repeatedly surrounding the city of Ṣan‘ā’ and threatening to attack it if they were not paid. The climax of these rebellions came in 1818, when the Bakīl tribes sacked the Bi‘r al-‘Azab quarter of Ṣan‘ā’ in revenge for an earlier massacre of their compatriots in that city, killing many high ranking \textit{ulamā‘} associated with the government.\(^{188}\)

The contraction of the territories and economy of the Imamate in the nineteenth century served to intensify these social and doctrinal tensions among the Zaydīs. Increasing violence followed the loss of the Tihāma to the Wahhābīs around the turn of

\(^{186}\) al-Ḫibshī, \textit{Hawlīyyāt}, 34-35.
\(^{187}\) al-‘Amrī, \textit{The Yemen}, 41 ff.
\(^{188}\) al-Ḫibshī, \textit{Hawlīyyāt}, 20-23.
the century, with the concomitant reduction of the Imamate’s revenues and loss of its ability to buy off opposition. After the defeat of the Wahhābīs by Mehmet Ali in 1818, the Tihāma was returned to the Zaydī Imamate, which enjoyed about a decade of stability in consequence. In 1833, however, the Egyptians reoccupied the Tihāma once again, extending their control to the city of Ta‘izz in Lower Yemen; and the Zaydī Imāms would not regain the Tihāma until the departure of the Ottomans after World War I. As a result, the underlying tensions between Hāḍāwī and Sunnī came to the fore once again, leading ultimately to full-blown civil war.

IV. The Outbreak of Civil War.

The tawābi‘ of San‘ā’ revolted in 1837 and deposed the reigning Imām ‘Alī ibn al-Mahdī, in part because their salaries had not been paid. With the help of his partisans among the religious students, the Hāḍāwī ‘ālim ‘Abdullah ibn Ḥasan [an-Nāṣir] managed to become Imām. His accession was followed by a purge of the Sunnī-dominated judiciary built up by Muḥammad ash-Shawkānī, puritanical legislation restricting the movements of women and the playing of musical instruments, and harsh repression of the Ismā‘īlīs in the regions west of Ṣan‘ā’. An-Nāṣir’s policies actually accelerated the decline of the Imamate. His expeditions to expel the Egyptians and the Dhū Ghaylān tribesmen from Lower Yemen were unsuccessful, and alienated members of the Ismā‘īlī

189 al-‘Amrī, Mi‘at ḍamm, 220 ff.
190 al-‘Amrī, Mi‘at ḍamm, 228-229, 258.
191 al-Ḥibshī, Ḥawlīyyāt, 65 ff.
sect drove the Imamate’s representatives out of Ḥarāz. Ismāʾīlīs from the Hamdān tribe eventually succeeding in assassinating the Imām himself.192

After his assassination, elements of the “Sunnī” party regained power; but the Ḥādāwī ‘ulāma’ had meanwhile established themselves in the north among the tribes of the Ṣaʿda region.193 One of an-Nāṣir’s partisans, Sayyid Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Mu’ayyidī, had gone to Ṣaʿda to “enjoin the good and forbid the evil” among the tribes of Khawlān ash-Shām. He remained in the region for about a year until his death in the mid-1830’s.194 He had been accompanied by a number of the prominent Ḥādāwī ‘ulamā’ and a younger scholar named Aḥmad ibn Hāshim; and in the Hijrī year 1264 [1847-1848], Aḥmad ibn Hāshim led some of the same ‘ulamā’ from Ṣan‘ā’ to Ṣaʿda again in performance of the Zaydī duty of hijra, or emigration from the region where tyrannical rule prevails.195

The civil wars over the Imamate began in earnest when Aḥmad ibn Hāshim decided to march on Ṣan‘ā’, after first asserting his claim to the Imamate in Ṣaʿda. The last of the “Sunnī” Qāsimī Imāms with any semblance of power, Muḥammad ibn Yahyā [al-Mutawakkil], had just been deposed in disgrace, after having invited an Ottoman expeditionary force from Ḥudayda to assist him in subduing the tribes. The Imām who had been elected to succeed him, ‘Alī ibn al-Mahdī [al-Hādī] was a man without significant force of character. Taking the throne-name of al-Manṣūr, then, Aḥmad ibn Hāshim marched on Ṣan‘ā’ with a large following from the Zaydī tribes of the northeast.

192 al-Ḥibshī, Ḥawliyyāt, 75 ff., 85-87.
and Ḥāshid. On his arrival near Ṣan‘ā’, he summoned the Zaydī regions of the central plateau to obedience; and delegations from the Anis and Dhamār regions came to offer the bay’a to him.\(^{196}\) Apparently realizing the unsuitability of ‘Alī ibn al-Mahdī for the Imamate, the ‘ulamā’ of Ṣan‘ā’ decided on the election of ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd ar-Rahman [al-Mu’ayyad] to resist Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim.

The rising of Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim brought the social and doctrinal cleavages among the Zaydīs into stark relief. It appears that Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim drew much of his initial support from those social elements that had opposed the Sunnī-oriented administration in Ṣan‘ā’. He had been accompanied on his hijra to Ṣa’d to by several of the prominent Hādāwī ‘ulamā’ of Ṣan‘ā’. Such men included Qāḍī ‘Abdulrahīm ‘Abd al-Ghālibī, who had accompanied Sayyid Ḥūsayn ibn ‘Alī al-Mu’ayyidī previously to the Ṣa’d region, and Aḥmad ibn Ismā’īl al-‘Ulbī.\(^{197}\) The tribes of the northeast, historically strong supporters of Hādāwī Zaydism, also threw in their lot with Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim. The tribes of Khawāf ash-Shām and Saḥḥār, in the area where the Hādāwīs had initially established their hijra, were the first to answer Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s summons.\(^{198}\) Qāḍī Aḥmad ibn Ḥūsayn al-‘Ansī al-Baraṭī, a scion of the family which had led the Dhū Ghaylān tribes of the northeast in rebellion against the Imamate in the eighteenth century, was one of his partisans.\(^{199}\) Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim therefore apparently received strong backing from elements of Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥūsayn, in both the northeast and Lower Yemen. The sources also suggest that he had strong support among among the


\(^{197}\) Ibid.

\(^{198}\) Ibid.

\(^{199}\) al-Ḥibshi, Hawliyyāt, 197.
“Shī‘a” of the sūq in Ṣan‘ā’, referred to as the “rabble” (ghawghā’) by the author of the Hawliyyāt.200

The party of ‘Alī ibn al-Mahdī and ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥman, by contrast, appears to have been dominated by the “Sunnīs.” ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥman himself was one of ash-Shawkānī’s students, and his chief qāḍī was the latter’s son, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ash-Shawkānī.201 Among the tribes who supported these Imāms against Aḥmad ibn Hāshim were Arḥab, ‘Iyāl Surayḥ, Hamdān, and Khawlān.202 It is not possible to determine whether the tribes who supported them did so due to sympathy with the “Sunni” ‘ulamā’ on doctrinal grounds; some of them, however, had pragmatic reasons for doing so. The Ismā‘īlī tribesmen of Hamdān apparently feared persecution from the “Shī‘a” party.203 The Khawlān tribe had tended to support the “Sunni” Imāms, probably because of their proximity to the capital and connection to the ash-Shawkānī qāḍīs.204

As the two sides joined battle to determine who would control the city of Ṣan‘ā’, open civil war broke out among the Zaydīs of the central plateau. The population of Ṣan‘ā’ itself split into factions supporting al-Mu‘ayyad and al-Manṣūr, respectively,205 as did the people of Dhamār and Yarām. The social tensions among the Zaydīs had finally

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200 See al-Ḥibshī, Hawliyyāt, 200.
201 Zabāra, Nayl, 2:18; al-Ḥibshī, Hawliyyāt, 199.
202 al-Ḥibshī, Hawliyyāt, 190-192, 211.
203 The sources suggest that the assassination of the Hādāwī Imām an-Nāṣir by the Hamdān tribe was related in part to his oppression of the Ismā‘īlīs. See al-Ḥibshī, Hawliyyāt, 86-87.
204 The village of Shawkān was located in Khawlān, and Muḥammad ash-Shawkānī’s father had served as qāḍī there. See Haykel, “Order,” 7; and al-‘Amrī, The Yemen, 103.
205 al-Wāsīṭī, Tārīkh, 246.
exploded into full-scale ideological warfare. The war involved large sectors of the Zaydī population, and not simply factions of the ‘ulamā’ with their tribal supporters.

The war was the culmination of an increasing alienation of the state from significant elements of its base of social support among the Zaydīs. Economic decline after about 1830 both weakened the state and created growing hardship for the population at large, preparing the ground for a violent uprising by those who felt marginalized or oppressed by the governing elite. Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim had been able to assemble a massive following from Zaydīs of the northeast, Ṣan‘ā’, and the central plateau,\(^\text{206}\) indicating that discontent with the “Sunni” Imamate in Ṣan‘ā’ was fairly widespread.

This rebellion was based very specifically on the political tenets of Ḥādāwī Zaydism, on the necessity of waging jiḥād to against tyranny and corruption to establish the authority of the rightful Imām. No doubt Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s partisans applied these ideas to the pomp, luxury, and authoritarianism of the governing elite in Ṣan‘ā’. In its weakened condition, the “Sunni” elite was in no position to resist what was evidently a very powerful movement. Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s supporters gained control of Ṣan‘ā’, and ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥman capitulated after he and his supporters were driven into the citadel.\(^\text{207}\)

Nonetheless, Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s “revolution” was ultimately unsuccessful. Rather than the establishment of a stable Ḥādāwī polity, Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s accession heralded the destruction of the Qāsimī Imamate, the complete fracturing of Zaydī society on regional and tribal lines, and the seizure of political power by the tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl as autonomous entities. Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s tribal supporters abandoned him

\(^{206}\) al-Wāsi’ī, Tārīkh, 242-246.

\(^{207}\) al-Ḥibshī, Hawliyyāt, 205-206.
shortly after his accession; and without money to pay them or the unruly *tawābi‘* of Ṣan‘ā’, he was unable to assemble a field army to restore the control of the government over the country.\(^{208}\) ‘Alī ibn al-Mahdī with his supporters among the “Sunni” *‘ulamā‘* renewed his *da‘wa*, now with the throne name al-Mutawakkil. Constructing an alliance with the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes around Ṣan‘ā’, he managed to retake the city and restore his own Imamate.\(^{209}\) While he was on an expedition to the central plateau, however, a new claimant arose, Ghālib ibn Muḥammad [al-Hādī] and took Ṣan‘ā’ from him.\(^{210}\)

At this point, the struggle over the Imamate began to lose any semblance of coherence. Ṣan‘ā’ became the scene of constant fighting, as one claimant after another sought to wrest it from his rivals. The city was besieged and sacked repeatedly, by the armies of tribesmen whom the various claimants summoned to their aid, while the townsfolk continued their factional fighting in conjunction with this process. While the incumbent Imāms usually sought to extend their control beyond the city for such time as they remained in power, they were never successful in doing so. The armies which they led out would abandon them, or they would be forced to return to Ṣan‘ā’ prematurely to fight some new rival.\(^{211}\)

The tone of the Zaydī chroniclers becomes increasingly cynical in describing these events, implying that greed, self-interest, or revenge were the main motivations for the tribesmen who joined the armies of the various claimants. The endless shifting of


\(^{209}\) al-Ḥibshī, *Ḥawliyyāt*, 207-212.


\(^{211}\) See any of the important Yemeni chronicles dealing with this period, e.g. Muḥammad ibn Luṭf al-Bārī Qādī al-Ḥaymī al-Yamanī, *Ar-rawd al-bassām fī mā shā‘a fī qutr al-Yaman min al-waqā‘i‘ wa‘l-a‘lām*, ed. ‘Abdullah Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī (Ṣan‘ā’: al-Mufadḍal Offset Printers, 1311/1990), or the *Ḥawliyyāt*. 

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allegiances effectively discredited the idea of the jihād and the Imamate. The Ṣanʿānīs became suspicious of all claimants, and began to elect “mayors” (shaykh al-balad) from among the leading merchants of the city. At the end of the 1850’s, the Ṣanʿānīs drove the soldiers of one of the claimants to the Imamate, Ḥusayn al-Hādī, out of the citadel. They then held a meeting in which it was announced by public crier (dawshān) that the people of the city would “protect themselves” entrusting their affairs to their own leading men (‘uqqāl).\footnote{Ṣafahāt majhūla min tārīkh al-Yaman, li-mu’allif majhūl, ed. al-Qāḍī Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad al-Yasāghī (Ṣanʿā’: Markaz ad-Dirāsāt wa’l-Buḥūth al-Yamanī, 1978), 79-80.}

The chief of the latter was the merchant Muḥsin Muʿīd, who assumed the position of shaykh al-balad. Muḥsin Muʿīd engineered the election of Muḥsin ash-Shihārī [al-Mutawakkil] to the Imamate, a claimant who seems to have been favored by the heavily “Shīʿa” people of the sūq. The Imām, however, was without real power. The “people of Ṣanʿā” had taken over the waqf and the public storehouses, so that “they disposed of everything pertaining to the [office of] Imām without an Imām.”\footnote{al-Yasāghī, Ṣafahāt, 81.} Muḥsin ash-Shihārī was compelled to reside in the fortress of Dhī Marmar outside Ṣanʿā’.\footnote{al-Ṭāʾisī, 256-258.} This was the situation when the Ottomans occupied the highlands in 1872.

The tribes at this time became the most powerful element in the highlands, dominating the Shāfiʿī raʿāyah in their own right, rather than as enforcers for the Zaydī Imamate. The Baraṭ tribes of Ḍhū Muḥammad and Ḍhū Ḥusayn seized important areas in Lower Yemen and the west. The al-Ḥadāʾ tribe of Madhhij took over part of the area between Ṣanʿā and Dhamār, while the Arḥab tribe became powerful in the Taʿizz region.

\footnote{Ṣafahāt majhūla min tārīkh al-Yaman, li-mu’allif majhūl, ed. al-Qāḍī Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad al-Yasāghī (Ṣanʿā’: Markaz ad-Dirāsāt wa’l-Buḥūth al-Yamanī, 1978), 79-80.}
\footnote{al-Yasāghī, Ṣafahāt, 81.}
\footnote{al-Ṭāʾisī, 256-258.}
Innumerable fortresses in these areas were occupied by bands of tribesmen, who used them as bases to plunder travellers and the peasantry.\textsuperscript{215}

We may say, then, that the conflict between Hādāwī and Sunnī served as the vehicle that brought the tensions between tribe and state in the Zaydī Imamate to the fore. Edwards’ study of narrative among the Pathan of Afghanistan has shown that “honor,” as an ethic of competitive aggrandizement of the self and the tribe, exists in tension with the universalist ethos of Islam which the tribesmen profess. The self-destruction of Afghan society in the 1990’s stemmed in part from the fact that the nation-state of Afghanistan was superimposed on the “moral fault lines of honor, Islam, and rule.”\textsuperscript{216} Edwards’ analysis suggests that the Soviet invasion intensified the inherent pressures of these fault lines, ultimately blowing apart the fragile structures of Afghan society.

Obviously, the situation in nineteenth century Yemen does not offer precise parallels; nonetheless, there are important points of comparison. The Hādāwī jihād, itself the result of deep social and economic frustrations which had reached the point of crisis, laid bare the underlying tension between the particularistic tribal ethos of honor and the Zaydī-Islamic emphasis on order and right conduct. As the tribesmen were drawn into the conflict, it became increasingly clear that they were less interested in its doctrinal aspects than in advancing the interests of their own tribes, in looting and seizing by force the emoluments traditionally granted by the state.

The pressures along the “moral fault line” of loyalty to tribe and Imamate respectively thus resolved themselves in favor of the former. In this context, we wish to show that the


\textsuperscript{216} Edwards, \textit{Heroes}, 233.
forms of social authority and warfare defined by Zaydī-Islamic political thought disintegrated in favor of those shaped by the self-interested and aggressive ethos of tribalism; and this in turn would have important effects on the conduct of war, and the ability of the Zaydīs to organize sustained resistance to Ottoman rule. To understand this process, we will first discuss how this transition was reflected in the language employed by the Zaydī chroniclers to describe the “period of anarchy” (fatrat al-fawḍā).

V. Islam and Anarchy: The Moral Language of the Zaydī Chroniclers.

In the moral language of the Zaydī chroniclers, the rise to dominance of the tribes in the highlands was viewed as nothing less than the collapse of Muslim society. The just or justified war of jihād became what the Zaydī chroniclers described as fitna and fasād; that is, force exercised as a moral sanction became meaningless violence aimed at satisfying the basest desires of human beings. The authority of the “rightful” (muḥiqq) Imām was replaced by that of the mutaghallibūn, the tribesmen who took power unlawfully by main force.

To highlight the opposition between legitimate war and illegitimate violence, let us first analyze the concept of jihād as it was defined by Aḥmad ibn Hāshim. Replying to a letter urging him to give up his claim from the Qāḍī Aḥmad ibn Abd ar-Rahman al-Mujāhid, one of the partisans of ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd ar-Rahman, Aḥmad ibn Hāshim sought to justify his actions within the framework of Hādāwī and Islamic teachings about jihād. A key principle of Hādāwī Zaydism is that Imām must establish his authority by the khurūj, the “rising” against tyrannical and unjust government. Jihād through the khurūj
is therefore the principle means by which the Islamic state is established, and the Zaydī social vision of a just and moral social order realized. Four themes are therefore prominent in Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s letter: jihād as an act of “striving” requiring self-denial, jihād as a means of bringing about the unity of the Muslim community, jihād as the moral purification of society, and jihād as the construction of a social order based on the principles of the Sharī’a. The Imām leads the Muslim community on the “straight path” of jihād, in a collective act of self-denial designed to realize the social ideals of Islam; and it is by means of jihād that the maṣlaḥa, the general good, of the Muslim community will be realized.

The concept of self-control, of the ability to deny one’s own desires to achieve a higher moral end, is central to Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s conception of jihād. “If a man is subject to his own passions, then there is no cure for his sickness; but if a man [puts his] passions behind him, he is a whole [man] (sahīḥ) who sleeps in the resting place of Paradise.”217 Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim implies that he is the latter, a man who is capable of denying his own desires to achieve a higher moral good.

Therefore, it is his duty and right to wage jihād. This requires him to summon up all his reserves of energy and will to endure the hardships of war. Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim is a man who “draws the sword of God and fights the enemies of God, leading the ranks in battle and routing thousands...enduring the heat of the sun and sleeplessness at night, acting in accordance with the Book and the sunna, leaving his home and country.”218 The self-denial of Aḥmad ibn Ḥashim, then, as one who “[put his] passions behind him”

217 al-Ḥaymī, Rawḍ, 64.
218 al-Ḥaymī, Rawḍ, 65.
enables him to undertake the “striving” of *jihād*, as a difficult physical and moral struggle to bring about the purification of the Muslim community.

*Jihād* here is likewise strongly associated with the unifying of the Muslim community. What makes the *da’wa* of Aḥmad ibn Hāshim legitimate, first, is that the community of the Muslims has reached a “consensus” (*jamʿat al-kalima*) to support him.²¹⁹ Aḥmad ibn Hāshim had a large number of supporters drawn from all the major Zaydī regions of Yemen, as he makes clear in his letter. “Praise be to God, the tribes of the north and the south answered [our summons], and this great multitude followed us and gave us allegiance both openly and in secret . . .”²²⁰ The consensus of the Muslim community (*ijmā’*), is an important principle in the *Sharīʿa* in determining the correct resolutions to legal problems. Aḥmad ibn Hāshim here argues, in effect, that the vast number of his supporters constitutes a consensus in favor of the legality of his Imamate; they are therefore the *hujja*, the decisive proof of the legitimacy of his rule.

The political support of the Imām is inseparable from waging *jihād* on his behalf. *Jihād* in this context is a collective endeavour of the Muslim community, led by the Imām. As a collective enterprise, it is aimed at restoring the unity of the Muslim community. Aḥmad ibn Hāshim has been elected Imām by the consensus (*jamʿat al-kalima*) of the Muslim community. For ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥman [al-Muʿayyad] to refuse to accept his Imamate is therefore to go against the injunctions of the *Sharīʿa*, and secede or dissent from the Muslim community (*shaqqaʿ aṣrā*).²²¹ To secede in this fashion is also to deviate from the “straight path” of righteousness on which the Imām

²¹⁹ al-Ḥaymī, Rawd, 67.
²²⁰ al-Ḥaymī, Rawd, 64-65.
²²¹ al-Ḥaymī, Rawd, 65.
leads the Muslim community in his role as its rightful ruler. Aḥmad ibn Hāshim asserts that “our path is straight” (sabīlnā mustaqīm). That is, the legitimacy of his Imamate allows him to lead the Muslim community along the path toward the moral ideals enjoined by God. By refusing to accept Aḥmad ibn Hāshim’s Imamate, al-Mu’ayyad and his partisans are in effect deviating from this “path of righteousness;” they have “been recalcitrant...in answering [the summons of the rightful Imām] (tamarrada...‘an al-ijāba) and therefore have “deviated from the proper path” (tanakaba ‘an ṭarīq al-īṣāba).222

It is partly in this context that Aḥmad ibn Hāshim is undertaking to besiege the city of Ṣanʿā’. He is leading the Muslim community on the “straight path” of jihād for the purpose of bringing the dissenters from that community back into the fold, and thereby restoring the unity of the umma. Against the sinners who “deviate” from the straight path, violence is both permissible and obligatory. The Imām has “drawn the sword of God against rebels and tyrants” (al-bughāt wa’-z-ẓalama). By engaging in jihād, he is “destroying the adulterers,” (mubīdan li’l-fujjār), “binding the evildoers” (muqayyidan li’l-ashrār), and even “drinking the blood of the enemies of the faith” (shāriban min a’dā’ ad-dīn ad-damā’).223

Jihād, therefore, is an act of destruction, involving the physical annihilation of evil individuals and the corrupt practices they represent. At the same time, it is also an act of building, of laying the foundations of a moral social order and the state which will enforce it. The Imām is “acting in accordance with the noble Sharī‘a, and reviving that

222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
which the Book and the *Sunna* have brought into being.”

The destructive acts of *jihād*, aimed at cleansing society of its corruption, are designed to pave the way for the constructive act of ordering social life according to the principles of Islamic law.

As defined by Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim in this letter, then, *jihād* is a collective act by the Muslim community, an act of self-denial and moral purification. Muslims put aside their baser desires to follow the Imām along the “straight path” toward the higher moral ideals represented in the *Sharī‘a*. To engage in this moral purification requires that sinners and those who “deviate” by refusing to follow the Imām be dealt with severely. Society must be cleansed of its evildoers, and the unity of the Muslim community restored. To accomplish this, it is necessary to wage war, and to willingly suffer the hardships that war entails. The violence and destruction which war entails, however, is ultimately constructive in purpose: the authority of the rightful Imām is to be established, and the laws of God enforced among the Muslims. *Jihād* in this sense is a state-building form of war aimed at universal moral ideals, requiring its participants to put aside their private interests and desires for the larger good of the community.

We have seen, however, the practical results of Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim’s *jihād*: the destruction of the Imamate, on which the moral integrity of the Muslim community depended in Zaydī thought, and the descent of the highlands into anarchy. For the Zaydī chroniclers of this period, then, the *jihād* to establish the authority of the rightful Imām simply became a vehicle for “strife” (*fitna*) or “evil” (*fasād*). *Fitna* and *fasād* in this context can best be understood as illegitimate violence, the conceptual reverse of *jihād*. They are associated with the concept of people being overcome by their desires and

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224 Ibid.
indulging in sinful excess, rather than the disciplined self-denial associated with *jihād*. This results in “deviation” from the straight path and the disintegration of the Muslim community, rather than its unification.

Thus, as the *jihād* undertaken by Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim [al-Manṣūr] lapsed into full scale civil war across the central plateau of Yemen, the chronicler Muḥammad ibn Luṭ al-Bārī al-Ḥaymī describes the situation as one in which “discord was raging” (*al-fitna thāʿira*). The term *fitna*, having the general meaning of “discord” or “anarchy,” is also associated with concepts of “temptation.” The passive verbs *futina* and *uftutina* can have the meaning “to be tempted, to stray from the right path.” The connotation, then, is that when the Muslim community is in a situation of *fitna* it has been overcome by temptation. The Muslims have failed to follow the straight path of “striving” and self-denial embodied in the term *jihād*, the struggle against personal and social evil.

*Fitna* is frequently used in conjunction with the term *fasād*, “evil” or “moral corruption.” The use of these terms together implies that a surrender to temptation results in social and moral decay; that is, a situation of generalized violence, without meaning or purpose except the immediate satisfaction of man’s evil desires. Thus the Qāḍī Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad al-‘Arashī describes the second half of the nineteenth century as a time when “the people raided one another, and plundered one another” as “the signs of corruption (*fasād*) appeared among the tribes;” when [the tribesmen] “plundered property and killed men; they had no desire for royal authority (*tamalluk*) or any beneficial thing, except the [satisfaction] which could be had immediately” (*al-‘ijāla al-maʾkhūda*). In *fitna* and *fasād*, therefore, the moral order of Islam is destroyed as a result of man’s surrender to

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225 al-Ḥaymī, *Rawd*, 70.
his evil desires. In this it contrasts directly with *jihād*, through which “religion is made firm;” that is, through which the moral order of Islam, as represented in the Imamate and the *Sharī‘a*, is built up.

These ideas are likewise associated with concepts of social atomization, the reverse of the unification of the Muslim community through *jihād*. In a letter sent to all the regions of Yemen, the Imām Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullah [al-Manṣūr] wrote that when the “disorders” (*fitan*) had flared up in the country, “every traitor and fornicator did as he pleased.”227 The verb used here is *istabadda*, which means broadly to proceed alone and without restraint. The chronicler Muḥammad ibn Luṭ al-Bārī al-Ḥaymī states that the reason for the *fitna* in the region of al-Ḥayma was that the shaykhs were at odds with one another. The term used here is *tafarraqat kalimatuhum*, “their ‘word’ was divided;”228 this is the reverse of *jam‘at al-kalima*, the “unity of the ‘word’” or “consensus” on which Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim based the legitimacy of his *jihād*. In a situation of *fitna*, every man’s hand is against that of his neighbor, as each one seeks to satisfy his lusts at the expense of the others. The unity and moral “striving” of the Muslim community disintegrates into selfish strife.

The rhetorical opposition of moral Imamic authority to immoral tribal anarchy does, of course, partially reflect the social disintegration that accompanies prolonged warfare in any society. Within this opposition, however, we can also distinguish the clash of different ethical systems which, if not mutually exclusive, were not always entirely compatible. To the Zaydī *‘ulamā‘*, the tribal culture was sinful almost by definition. The tribes’ apparent rapacity and aggressiveness constituted the very antithesis of the humility,

228 al-Ḥaymī, *Rawḍ*, 103.
focus on the common good, and social peace which Islam encouraged. Such seeming
violence and anarchy, however, had their own moral codes, even if they were not always
necessarily followed. Within the picture of complete social breakdown painted by the
chroniclers, we can discern the outlines of systems of war and authority peculiar to
the tribal culture.

VI. Anarchy and Honor.

With regard to the question of authority, the Zaydī chroniclers employ the term
taghallub to describe the tribesmen’s seizure of lands in Lower Yemen on their own
initiative. The verb taghallaba means to dominate or overcome by violence. The related
idea of ghalaba seems to have been employed in Zaydī thought to denote the forcible
“usurpation” of the leadership of the Muslim community by the Umayyads.229 In the
absence of the rightful authority of the Imām and the Islamic law, power is exercised
simply through the violence of the tribesmen. Therefore, the Bakīl tribes who seize lands
and castles in Lower Yemen are described as mutaghallibūn “possessing [these regions] by force.”230

Passages in some of the Zaydī chronicles, however, indicate that the process of
occupying these lands was somewhat more complex. In describing the migration of the
Bakīl to Lower Yemen, the author of the Ḥawliyyāt notes that the tribesmen “made
[Lower Yemen] their homeland (istawṭanūhu) and took the peasants under their

229 See Ashwāq Aḥmad Mahdī Ghulays, At-taġdīd fi fikr al-imāma ‘inda az-Zaydiyya (Cairo: Maktabat
Madbūlī, 1997), 47.
230 al-Ḥaymī, Rawd, 23.
protection.”231 The noun waṭan, from the same root as the verb istawṭana, is used elsewhere in its plural form (awṭān) by the chronicler to denote the original “homeland,” or tribal territory, of the Bakīl tribes in the northeast.232

The verb used for “taking the peasants under their protection” is yuraffiqū [bī].233 The word means literally “to accompany someone, treat them as a friend, treat them courteously.” Among Ḥāshid and Bakīl, it is associated with the protection extended by a tribal “escort” to a traveller in the territory of his tribe. The “escort,” or muraffiq, undertakes to guarantee the safety of the traveller on his own honor. To allow harm to come to the traveller is an ‘ayb, or “shame,” for which he must exact revenge or compensation.234

This kind of “honor” protection is extended by the tribe to non-tribal people in its territory generally, such as the mazāyina, the hereditary caste of “weak” people who act as butchers, barbers, and servants among the tribesmen;235 and the term rafaq may also be used to denote this more general kind of protection. The non-tribal people may be referred to as “neighbors” (jīrān, sing. jār).236 What the term yuraffiqū means in our context, then, is that the Bakīl tribes extended this protection to the “weak” Shāfi‘ī ra‘āyā of Lower Yemen.

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231 al-Ḥibshī, Hawliyyāt, 35.
233 al-Ḥibshī, Hawliyyāt, 34.
234 Dresch, Tribes, 59-60.
235 Dresch, Tribes, 119-120.
236 Dresch, Tribes, 118-123.
The tribesmen’s seizure of lands in Lower Yemen on their own initiative therefore cannot quite be reduced to the simple assertion of the “right of the stronger.” Naturally armed force played a pivotal role in this process, but possibly no more so than in the Imāms’ extension of their own authority. What we see here, however, is the assertion of a kind of authority which is fundamentally different from, and independent of, the authority of the Imāmate. In making Lower Yemen their “homeland,” the Bakīl tribes made a specifically tribal claim to ownership of that territory and its revenues. In extending their “protection” to the peasants of that region, they asserted an authority over them which was rooted in the tribal ethos of honor, rather than the universalistic claim to leadership of the Muslim community.

As much as any atrocities the tribesmen may have committed, it was the existence of this separate kind of authority which infuriated the Zaydī chroniclers. Only the rightful Imām could ensure the maslaha, or general good, of the Muslim community; and in Zaydī thought, this was associated with the ruler’s sacrifice of his individual interests. In the Hawliyyāt, the Imām ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥman [al-Mu’ayyad] was said to have voluntarily surrendered the Imamate to Aḥmad ibn Hāshim because “he saw the maslaha in . . . relinquishing the throne of the caliphate, and requesting peace for the people of Ṣanʿā’, quieting their fears, and preserving lives.” The tribesmen’s seizure of the lands and revenues of Lower Yemen independently of the Imāms therefore represented an infringement of the general good of the Muslims for their own particular interests.

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It was for this reason that the tribesmen were labelled as *bughātt*, rebels against the consensus of the community and the authority of the lawful Imām.\(^{238}\) Rebellion against the rightful Imām (*baghy*) was the conceptual reverse of *jihād*, war to establish his authority. Within the Zaydī chroniclers’ angry denunciations of the tribesmen as *bughāt*, we can again discern the tension between war as a means of advancing the honor and interests of particular tribes, and war as *jihād* aimed at serving the larger good of the Muslim community.

In tribal politics and war generally, there was always a strong element of immediate self-interest. Military leaders, Imāms or otherwise, had to assemble field armies through the medium of the tribal alliance. In order to bring tribes into alliance with them, they had to offer immediate rewards in the form of cash payments or opportunities for plunder. Even then, such armies were not usually reliable. Frequently, they were bought off by their ostensible enemies and abandoned their leader.

We have seen that this kind of behavior reached pathological proportions in the civil wars over the Imamate in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Imām Aḥmad ibn Hāshim [al-Manṣūr] was eventually driven out of Ṣanʿā’ by ‘Alī ibn al-Mahdī [al-Mutawakkil], a claimant who seems to have had Sunnī sympathies. The Khawlān, Sanḥān, and Hamdān tribes who had supported him against Aḥmad ibn Hāshim, however, began to make excessive “demands” (*talābāt*) [sic] on him. Shortly thereafter, the Khawlān tribe abandoned Alī ibn al-Mahdī for another claimant, Ghālib ibn Muḥammad, who promised them a a large sum of money (*amwāl kathīr*).\(^{239}\)

\(^{238}\) See for example al-Ḥibshi, *Hawliyyāt*, 19, 48.

What is important to note is that such behavior is not considered dishonorable in the tribal context, and may in fact be considered as part of the “game” of honor. In discussing the means by which tribal shaykhs advance their own power, Dresch notes that the shaykhs should be generous or “open-handed” (\textit{mabsūṭ al-yad}). The term “generous” (\textit{karīm}) “is virtually a synonym at times for \textit{sharīf} or ‘honorable,’ and there is nothing dishonorable in demanding largesse from a powerful shaykh in the form of rifles or cash or perhaps a new truck.”\textsuperscript{240} The exchange, in fact, may be considered as honor-enhancing on both sides. The shaykh gains honor by being generous, and the tribesman by receiving the beneficence of a powerful and honorable shaykh.

The shaykhs use such gift-giving to gain tribal allies to support them in their enterprises. Such support, however, is vulnerable to the sudden shifts of allegiance characteristic of politics in the segmentary-lineage system; and such shifts are normal and expected. “Constancy is not really hoped for. A man may take payment from a powerful shaykh, then fail to support him, or may even oppose him, and then come back for more without either he or the shaykh finding this uncomfortable . . . .”\textsuperscript{241}

Such a politics, however, was obviously better suited to gaining influence within the decentralized polity of Ḥāshid and Bakīl than establishing a central state under Imamic rule. For this reason, the Zaydī chroniclers were apt to define this kind of behavior as an immoral selfishness, which could not be reconciled with the fundamentally moral and Islamic aims of the Imamate. According to the author of the \textit{Hawliyyāt}, the “people [tribesmen] are the sons of \textit{dīnārs} and \textit{dirhams}, who have neither religion (\textit{dīn}) nor good faith (\textit{dhimma}). They are not led to the right (\textit{al-ḥaqq}) except by arousing their greed.

\textsuperscript{240} Dresch, \textit{Tribes}, 101.
\textsuperscript{241} Dresch, \textit{Tribes}, 102.
The rightful [Imām] (al-muḥiqq) among them is he who possesses much money, whose two hands are open (yadāhu mabsūṭān); the false one . . . is he who is bankrupt, or gives them nothing.” The honor game of trading allegiance in return for “open-handed” gift-giving is simply not compatible with the idea of “rightful” authority as determined by piety and personal moral qualities.

This prevalence of the tribal ethos of war in the “period of anarchy” had profound effects on its actual conduct. Jihād had lost whatever long-term and state-forming potential it had possessed in previous times. There was no central state with an organized army, or the capacity to conduct long-term military operations with a defined objective. As a result, war in this period came to be deeply infused with the tribal culture of war as a game of honor, with its concomitant limitations; and this in turn would render the highlands vulnerable to the Ottoman expeditionary force of 1872.

VII. The Culture and Conduct of War in the Period of Disintegration: “Irregular Warriors” and Heroic Culture.

In our analysis of war in late nineteenth century Yemen, we will rely for our theoretical framework on Charles Callwell’s Small Wars, the classic treatise on colonial warfare in the nineteenth century. Here, we will focus on Callwell’s analysis of the fighting methods of “irregular” warriors, as a means of understanding the character of tribal war in Yemen. As we noted in the introduction, Callwell lists the particular strengths of irregular warriors as mobility, elusiveness, possession of the element of

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242 al-Ḥibshī, Hawliyyāt, 54.
surprise, and skill in guerrilla war. Poor armament, lack of organization, and difficulty in sustaining long-term resistance are their corresponding military weaknesses.\textsuperscript{243}

Expanding somewhat on ideas which are implicit in Callwell’s analysis, we may say that is is because the “irregulars” tend to have a “heroic” culture of war. That is, war is not primarily a means of achieving long-term military and political goals. It serves, rather, to demonstrate one’s personal courage and fitness for membership in a “warrior” society. Among many tribal societies of the Middle East, intertribal wars historically often had the character of an elaborate “game” of honor. Political and material objectives did exist, generally in the form of plunder, rights to pasture or water, or defense of the boundaries of tribal territory. The military achievement of these objectives, however, was in practice inseparable from the tribesmen’s self-demonstration as men of “honor,” through acts of courage in battle.\textsuperscript{244} War was waged as a spasmodic contest, a means to achieve limited objectives in conjunction with the demonstration of heroic courage, and not as a lengthy project to achieve political domination.

To say that war was never used as an instrument for political domination by the tribes would be a grotesque oversimplification, insofar as it would ignore the pivotal role of tribes in the historic formation of empires of the Middle East; and “tribal warfare” cannot, of course, be reduced to petty intertribal clashes below the level of the state. “Tribal warfare” existed at varying levels, tending to increase in violence and state-forming

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\textsuperscript{243} Callwell, \textit{Wars}, 85 ff.

\textsuperscript{244} For discussions of intertribal or intervillage war as a contest of honor among equals, see Caton, \textit{Peaks}, 155-179, on the Khawlān tribesmen of Yemen; Lindholm, \textit{Generosity}, 84-85, on the Pukhtun of the Swat Valley of Pakistan; and John Bagot Glubb, \textit{The Story of the Arab Legion} (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), 117-132, on the Bedouin of the Syrian and Arabian deserts.
potential as it became less localized. The cult of chivalry among many of these tribes often went by the board when they dealt with non-tribal or ethnically different populations, as may be seen in the brutality of the Afghan occupation of Iran in the eighteenth century.

Nonetheless, in peripheral regions where the tribes were historically very powerful, the culture of intertribal warfare tended to exert a powerful influence against war as a long-term strategy of disciplined coercion. John Bagot Glubb details some of the main features of this influence in his description of war among the Bedouin of the Syrian and Arabian deserts. He notes that campaigns on behalf of a ruler were never popular among the nomad tribes, “for they involved on the one hand submission to a measure of discipline and on the other little chance of plunder.” Rulers could not usually compel the military support of the tribes, but had to wheedle them into alliance through a combination of threats and gifts. Where two rival rulers confronted each other, there would be intense competition to attract the support of the most powerful tribes, which would cynically switch allegiances according to which ruler offered the best chance of glory and material gain. At the conclusion of a successful campaign, the tribesmen

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245 In discussing war among the Pukhtun of Swat, Charles Lindholm distinguishes between intervillage and interregional wars among the Pukhtun themselves, and wars of conquest against non-Pukhtun populations. The scale of violence tended to increase at each level, and even intervillage wars were more or less violent depending on the genealogical distance between the villages. See Lindholm, Generosity, 83-87.


247 Glubb defines a “ruler” or “prince” as a leader who controlled several tribes by virtue of alliances or conquest, rather than the shaykh of a single tribe whose position of leadership within that tribe derived from blood descent (although the “prince” might be a shaykh of his own tribe). These “rulers” included the Rāshīdīs of Hā’il, the Sa‘ūdis, and the Sharīfs of Mecca. See Glubb, Legion, 115-116.

248 Glubb, Legion, 120.
would melt away with the loot they had acquired. They would not stay in the “area of operations” to consolidate the ruler’s power, and indeed do not seem to have been expected to do so.

While the Zaydī tribes of Yemen were sedentary rather than nomadic, they had a similar military culture of shifting alliances, glory, and plunder. As we have noted, in the period of disintegration we see a process wherein war based in the tribal ethos of honor slowly overwhelmed Zaydī-Islamic concepts of war as a means to maintain or restore a moral social order. Callwell’s remarks on the fighting qualities of “irregular warriors” were largely apposite during the “period of anarchy” (faṭrat al-fawḍā) in highland Yemen. Permanent military institutions were rudimentary or nonexistent, weaponry was outdated, war was fought for short-term objectives, and armies did not remain in the field for long.

Because the wars of this period were fought out in the non-tribal areas of Yemen, they were distinguished by their predatory rather than chivalric character. A kind of small scale warlordism emerged, in which the Shāfi‘ī, the ra‘āyā, and the urban population were subjected to constant depredations by petty tribal chieftains. The horrors of this “anti-political” system tended to accentuate the disorganization of war, if not its honorable character. The prevalence of robbery, murder, and rape no doubt demoralized the combatants as well as their victims, exerting a constant downward pull on military leaders’ capacity for organization and directed effort.

VIII. The Objectives of War.

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As in the Arabian desert, the key element of Yemeni military “organization” at this time was the tribal alliance. A shaykh or would-be Imām who wanted to put an army into the field had to rely on the temporary mobilization of loyal tribes, whom he was expected to reward in some way. As a result, war was fought for what might be termed “layered” objectives. Armies in Yemen were held together by shifting bonds of loyalty and self-interest, rather than an obedience-compelling legal and bureaucratic apparatus. In consequence, the objectives of all participants—nominal war-leaders, ordinary tribesmen, and shaykhs—were of significance in determining the course of conflicts. In planning his campaigns, the ambitious Imām or shaykh had to take into account the interests of his followers, what inducements he could offer them to follow his standard, and what they would and would not do in his service.

As we have noted, in the anarchy of the mid-nineteenth century the struggles over the Imamate were justified ideologically in terms of delivering the Muslim community from “discord” (*fitna*) and “rebellion” (*baghy*), restoring order and security through upholding the *Sharīʿa*. We have seen what had happened to these ideas in practical terms; and here, we will focus more on the immediate material objectives of war in this period. We may list these objectives as follows: plunder, the seizure of lands and fortresses, and the demonstration of heroic prowess.

**Plunder.** For the ordinary tribesman, the greatest inducements to fight were the prospects of plunder and gifts of money. Once these were obtained, there was little reason to fight further, the rhetoric of *jihād* notwithstanding. As a result, the tribal armies of Yemen had a tendency to suddenly disintegrate, particularly in the anarchy of the post-1850 period. Such eventually proved to be the case with the partisans of Aḥmad ibn
Hāshim [al-Manṣūr], who by 1851 was struggling with a new rival, ‘Alī al-Mahdī [al-Mutawakkil]. Al-Manṣūr was supported by the Banī Ḥārith, some of Dhū Ḥusayn, and the people of the regions just to the north of the city; the partisans of al-Mutawakkil consisted of the tribes of Sanḥān, Hamdān, and ‘Iyāl Surayḥ.

The armies of the two claimants had been fighting in Ṣan‘ā’, whose people had also split into Manṣūriyya and Mutawakkiliyya factions. When it became clear that al-Manṣūr was losing, his tribal partisans began to melt away, after plundering the western section of the city. Meanwhile more and more tribesmen joined al-Mutawakkil’s army in the hope of profiting from his victory. “Thus the Mutawakkiliyya soldiers continued to grow in strength and numbers, while the army of al-Manṣūr became weaker...and fear came upon Ṣan‘ā’, because of all the tribesmen who were inside and outside the city, as they had no other objective besides plunder.”250 The chronic instability of this period was thus partially the result of the unstable nature of tribal levies, whose participants were mainly interested in exploiting political-religious conflict for personal gain.

3. The Acquisition of Land. Seizure of loot was one means of profiting through war; the acquisition of immoveable property in the form of lands and fortresses was another. Historically this was formalized through the institution of iqtā, while in the period of disintegration, lands were simply appropriated by force. The process is described by Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, in his account of the Ottoman conquest of Yemen. “A ‘usurper’ (mütegallibe) would come from the waterless regions (that is, the tribal areas to the north and east) and seize a place in the watered regions with his men. Here he would build a castle, or occupy a castle which had been built previously. Employing people of his tribe

250 al-Ḥibshī, Ḥawliyyāt, 211.
as soldiers, he would govern the people of that region...and exact tolls from travellers . . .The size and wealth of the area was in direct proportion to the forces at the disposal of the usurper.”

Among these tribal warlords, however, the boundary between taxation and plunder was crossed rather frequently. As the ideological wars of the 1850’s burned themselves out, it appears that warfare tended increasingly to degenerate into the depredations of these petty chieftains. Such depredations were devoid of the chivalry of intertribal warfare in Yemen, and many of these “warlords” were a far cry from the dashing and heroic stereotype of the tribesman. ‘Abdullah ad-Dafi‘ī and his Arḥab tribesmen, for example, terrorized the population of Ṣan‘ā’ from a small mud fort outside the northern wall of the city, robbing and killing with impunity. When one of his compatriots demanded the repayment of a loan, he stabbed the man in the back after inviting him to a soirée, and then hid the body in a recess inside his own well. The Ṣan‘ā’ nīs hated him so much that when Ahmet Muhtar Paşa brought him into the city as a captive, he had to put an extra guard around him and his men to prevent an angry mob from beating them to death.

For the Zaydī tribes of Yemen, then, the wars of the mid-nineteenth century offered wealth, land, power, and the moral corruption these things bring in their train. The acquisition of land and loot, however, was not merely a means of enriching oneself. These things had a status or “honor” value in the warrior society of Yemen, serving as

251 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 1:83.
252 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 260.
253 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 94.
254 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, , Sergüzeşt, 80.
material evidence of one's membership in the warrior class. This in turn leads us to a broader discussion of the heroic code of the tribesmen, and the role of war as an arena for the demonstration of personal prowess.

The Acquisition of “Honor” through the Demonstration of Courage. While warlordism tended to turn the tribesmen into Mafia-like gangsters, the code of heroism survived and played itself out in the constant conflicts of this period. In the introduction, we have discussed the central role of “honor” (sharaf) in the tribal code of ethics and manliness. In particular, we have emphasized its connection to the specific attributes of the warrior, such as possession of weapons, and the demonstration of heroic action in battle.255 The chronicles of our period were written by the Zaydī scholar-elite rather than tribesmen; and references which strictly reflect the heroic code of the tribes, as described by present day anthropologists, are not especially common. Nonetheless, scattered references here and there indicate that such values were as prevalent in the nineteenth century as in the twentieth.256

A related standard of heroism, that of furūšiya, survived in Yemen up to the time of the Ottoman occupation. This term means literally “horsemanship” or “mastery in horsemanship,” implying also the qualities of courage, chivalry, and honor associated with the ideal “cavalier.” The employment of cavalry in a quasi-medieval fashion, involving charges of horsemen equipped with lances and coats of mail, was still practised

255 Dresch, Tribes, 39.
256 In an unfinished novel by an Ottoman officer who obviously had a first hand acquaintance with Yemen, a group of paramount shaykhs seeking to raise a rebellion against the Ottoman government are made to say “May God whiten their faces” (Bayyada Allah wajūhahum) and “May God blacken his face” (Sawwada Allah wajh hu) with reference to shaykhs who would and would not cooperate with them respectively. According to Dresch, in the moral universe of the Yemeni tribesmen one’s face is “whitened” by actions which enhance one’s honor, and “blackened” by actions which are shameful. See Ibn Hayrūllah Ahmet Şevki, Yemen Muharipleri (n.p., 1327 H.), 31, and Dresch, Tribes, 59.
in Yemen in the nineteenth century; and young men of the elite *shaykh* and *sayyid* families, at least, were expected to master horsemanship as part of their education. The chronicler ash-Shawkānī writes of the sons of Imām al-Mahdī ʿAbbās that “They are the *sayyids* of the *sayyids*. Mastery in horsemanship (*furūsiyya*), high moral standards, and a predilection for knowledge are common to them all.”

What *furūsiyya* meant in terms of the display of heroic prowess is demonstrated in the actions of Sharīf Ḥusayn, ruler of the Tihāma, in a battle in 1848 with the reigning Imām al-Mutawakkil Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā. The former had several horses killed from under him, and was himself wounded by a musket ball, but continued to fight on. The horsemen of the Imām surrounded him but did not dare to approach “because they knew of his bravery (*shajāʿa*) and *furūsiyya*.”

The armies of our period thus conducted their operations on the basis of a shifting set of goals determined primarily by the heroic culture and material interests of the tribesmen, and to a diminishing extent by the ideological preoccupations of the Zaydī scholar-elite as well. I am not arguing here that Yemeni military commanders were incapable of strategic planning, or of setting prosaic military and political objectives for war. The fissiparous character of Yemeni military organization, however, made the precise planning and execution of campaigns even more difficult than in the present century. As in many cultures of “honor,” war had a tendency to become an end in itself, perpetuated by a warrior class to whom it was both a means of personal enrichment and a source of positive identity formation. The consequent deepening cycle of violence resulted in the

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degeneration of politics into warlordism, and the distortion of ethical codes of honor by increasing atrocities.

IX. Weapons and Tactics.

The disorganization of war, together with the increased isolation that anarchy brought in its train, tended to negatively affect the sophistication of military technology and tactics. The export of small arms to the tribes of the Middle East had not yet become big business, and weaponry in the “period of anarchy” was archaic by nineteenth century standards. The cavalry of Yemen were armed with long lances, swords, and sometimes mail shirts.259 The infantry possessed smoothbore matchlock muskets, spears, and curved daggers (janbiyya).260 Cannon of the smoothbore muzzle-loading variety were usually mounted in the fortifications of major cities; and sometimes they were employed in battles and sieges, though not in a particularly expert fashion.261

259 In the battle between Sharīf Ḥusayn and al-Mutawakkil which is described above, Ḥawliyyāt states that the former had on “two mail corselets” (dir‘ayn) and “two swords” (sayfayn). Elsewhere, one of the Imāms is described as going into battle mounted on a white horse with a “large lance (rumḥ kabiř) in his hand of the [kind known as] mazāriq, which are carried by the people of courage (an-najda), honor (an-nakhwa), valor (ash-shajā‘a) and strength (al-quwwa).” See al-Ḥibshi, Ḥawliyyāt, 152, 200.

260 The officer and historian Atf Paşa states that the tribesmen of ‘Asīr were armed with smoothbore (kaval) muskets at the time of the Ottoman conquest; the term used in Ḥawliyyāt is banādiq. The British captain Walter Harris says that in the 1891 rebellion, the Yemeni tribesmen were mainly armed with matchlock and fuse guns, and many only with spears; in all likelihood this reflects the technology of the previous half century as well. See Atf Paşa, Yemen Tarihi (Istanbul: Manzume-i Efkar Matbaası No. 54, 1326 [The publisher did not indicate whether the Hicri or Rumi calendar was used. The Hicri year 1326 corresponds to 1908-1909 in the Gregorian calendar, and the Rumi to 1910-1911.]), 2:19, and Walter Harris, A Journey Through Yemen and Some General Remarks on that Country (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1893), 110.

261 In the conquest of ‘Asīr over twenty “short bronze 9-pounder cannon of the old muzzle-loading type” were found in the citadel of Rayda, where the amīr Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ had made a last stand. Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 1:59.
The firepower disposed of by Yemeni armies in this period was thus roughly comparable to that of the armies of Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. This permitted the survival of anachronistic elements in the tactical patterns of the time, which we will analyze according to the divisions of field, siege, and guerrilla warfare.²⁶²

These anachronistic elements were most prominent in the arenas of field and siege warfare. While the preponderant numerical element in field armies tended to consist of infantry, the cavalry often played the dominant tactical role. The headlong charge and the cavalry mêlée remained important in pitched battles. Such was the case in the above-mentioned battle between Sharīf Ḥusayn and Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā [al-Mutawakkil].

Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā drew up his battle lines according to the tribal divisions of his men, and then ordered his 400 cavalry to charge the Sharīf’s forces. The latter had split his army into two sections, one directly opposite the army of the Imām, and one on the left, where he had positioned a large cannon.

As the Imām’s horsemen charged into the Sharifian ranks, they were met by fire from both the cannon and the musketeers. The artillery shots, however, landed well away from their intended targets. Nor did the musket fire succeed in repelling the Imām’s men, as apparently the infantry ran out of ammunition too soon. The Imām’s soldiers were able to capture the cannon and kill most of the artillerymen. Thereupon the Sharīf apparently led a cavalry charge against the Imām’s troops, but this was halted by the musket fire of

²⁶² These categories are derived Dr. John Guilmartin’s typology of war, which includes four categories in toto: war in the field, siege warfare, guerrilla warfare, and war of economic attrition. Because of the short-term character of war in this period, the last was not really relevant.
the latter. The Sharīf himself was wounded, and his army fled in disarray.\footnote{al-Ḥibshī, \textit{Hawliyyāt}, 151-153.} In another battle which took place in the middle of Ṣanʻā’ between the partisans of Aḥmad ibn Hāshim [al-Manṣūr] and their opponents, the fighting went against the latter, on account of the seventy horsemen who were with the partisans of al-Manṣūr.\footnote{al-Ḥibshī, \textit{Hawliyyāt}, 209.}

Accounts of battles in this period tend to be vague and contradictory. What emerges clearly, however, is that firearms in Yemen had never quite revolutionized war in the thoroughgoing manner which they did elsewhere. In the battle between the Sharīf and the Imām it appears that the musketeers were employed almost in an auxiliary role, to support the offensive actions of their own horsemen, or defend against those of the enemy’s. The inadequacy of Yemeni artillery and the slow rate of fire of matchlock muskets meant that infantry could still be ridden down by a determined cavalry charge, and hand to hand combat remained an important part of warfare. The resulting emphasis on direct assault and exposing oneself to danger would work to the disadvantage of the Yemeni tribesmen, when they faced the Ottoman army later in the century.

Similar points could be made about siege warfare in mid-nineteenth century Yemen. Many of the fortresses from which the tribesmen terrorized the countryside were simply single high towers built of stone or mud brick, hardly capable of withstanding a determined artillery bombardment.\footnote{See Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeş}, 1:68, for a detailed description of these small castles.} Since Yemeni armies rarely employed artillery effectively, however, fortresses remained comparatively impregnable places of refuge in the event of invasion or defeat.

\footnote{al-Ḥibshī, \textit{Hawliyyāt}, 151-153.}
\footnote{al-Ḥibshī, \textit{Hawliyyāt}, 209.}
\footnote{See Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeş}, 1:68, for a detailed description of these small castles.}
That is not to say that those who took refuge in fortresses were invulnerable, but rather that it was comparatively rare for a fortification to be taken by means of artillery breach and assault. Siege warfare had its own distinctive pattern in Yemen. In the event of defeat, or invasion by an army which he did not feel himself capable of resisting, a given potentate would often retire into one of his fortresses with his retainers. The enemy army would surround the fortress and a siege of varying duration would ensue, marked by exchanges of gunfire, bargaining, and attempts by both sides to subvert one another’s troops. The stalemate could be ended in one of several ways: an agreement could be reached through negotiation, the besieged might be induced by money payments to open the gates of the fortress, or the besiegers might be convinced in a similar fashion to withdraw.

This pattern can be seen in the aftermath of Sharīf Ḥusayn’s defeat. After the collapse of his army, the Sharīf retreated into the citadel of al-Quṭai’, which was thereupon surrounded by the forces of al-Mutawakkil. A one month siege ensued, in which the Sharīf’s followers began to gradually slip away as it became clear that the immediate advantage lay with the Imām. The sayyids of al-Quṭai’ wrote to al-Mutawakkil and obtained his pardon for supporting the Sharīf; and the tribesmen remaining with him finally agreed to give him up in return for a money payment.\footnote{266 al-Ḥibshī, \textit{Ḥawlīyyāt}, 154-155.}

This particular pattern of fortress warfare was to prove as disadvantageous to the Yemeni tribesmen as their customary battle tactics during the Ottoman invasion. Yemeni traditions of guerrilla war, on the other hand, would ultimately work to their advantage in the ongoing conflict with the Ottomans which began with the conquest. Such traditions
were prominent in the period under discussion; and they included proficiency in ambush, surprise attacks, the disruption of military communications, and the rapid organization of subversive activity through the medium of the tribal alliance.

The skill of the tribesmen in ambush and surprise attacks may be seen in the following episode from the war between Aḥmad ibn Ḥāshim and ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥman, which took place in 1850. The latter was in possession of Ṣan‘āʾ at the time; and he had just appointed a governor to the region of Bilād ar-Rū s south of the city, dispatching him there with a detachment of the Ṣan‘āʾi tawābi' under the amīr Fatḥ Muḥammad. The Qāḍī Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn al-Baraṭī, one of the partisans of al-Manṣūr, had meanwhile set up an ambush on the governor’s route. Fatḥ Muḥammad was aware of al-Baraṭī’s presence, but thought that he only had one hundred men with him, when in fact he had eight hundred who were well hidden in the surrounding terrain.

When the governor’s party arrived at the village of Jardā’, the Qāḍī launched his attack, and a mêlée of the horsemen of the two sides ensued (ikhtalat al-khayl). The ‘āmil’s men apparently got the worst of it; they were forced to withdraw to a mountain adjoining Jabal Nuqum, to the east of Ṣan‘āʾ, and await reinforcements from al-Mu’ayyad.267

The speed with which rebellion could be raised, and the tribesmen’s skill in hampering the operations of a field army, may be seen in the aftermath of Sharīf Ḥusayn’s capture by al-Mutawakkil (although in this case the guerrillas were Shāfi‘ī tribesmen of the Tihāma, rather than Zaydī highlanders). After the Imām had installed his governors in the three key cities of Zabīd, Mocha, and Bayt al-Faqīh, the partisans of

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267 al-Ḥibshi, Hawliyyāt, 199.
the Sharīf turned to guerrilla resistance. The Sharīf’s treasurer Ibn Ḥāmid, who had been taken captive at al-Quṭai’, was released on the payment of an inconsiderable sum of money; and upon this he undertook to raise a rebellion in the Tihāma.

Ibn Ḥāmid took money from the treasuries (khazā‘in) of the Sharīf and had it sent to the tribal leaders of that region. Although he himself was killed shortly thereafter by the Imām’s soldiers, the rebellion which he had instigated gathered momentum, aided by conflicts between the Imām’s governors and the tribesmen of the Tihāma. The people of the Bayt al-Faqīh region blocked the road to that city at a place called al-Maṭāḥin, attacking parties of the Imām’s troops and robbing a caravan of supplies destined for their use.\(^2\)

Meanwhile, the Sharīf’s daughter was raising a field army from among the tribesmen of Yām, which was then dispatched under the command of her father’s governor in Ḥudayda. This army succeeded in capturing Zabīd and expelling the garrison which the Imām had installed there. The Sharīf was released without al-Mutawakkil’s knowledge, after his guards were bribed, and likewise payments were made to the Imām’s tribal troops to induce them to abandon him. The Imām’s authority in the Tihāma collapsed, and he was forced to return to Ṣan‘ā’.\(^2\)

In this campaign, then, guerrilla tactics were employed effectively in conjunction with field campaigns and subversion to destroy the shaky authority which al-Mutawakkil had established in the Tihāma. Such tactics were to be refined considerably in the course of the Ottoman occupation, eventually allowing the Yemeni tribesmen to mount serious challenges to Ottoman authority. At the time of the conquest, however, the Yemenis’

\(^2\) al-Ḥibshī, Ḥawliyyāt, 157.
\(^2\) al-Ḥaymī, Rawḍ, 39-41.
skill in this regard was not sufficient to compensate for the weaknesses in weaponry and organization which we have outlined above.

**Conclusion.**

As a tribal quasi-state, the Zaydī Imamate was characterized by an inherent tension between state and tribe, between the tribal culture of honor and the strictly Islamic morality professed by the scholar-elite. Such tensions were reduced when the tribes and the Zaydī ‘ulamāʾ needed to cooperate against an external enemy. Thus, the Imamate reached the zenith of its power in the seventeenth century, in its battle to expel the Ottomans and bring the Shāfiʿīs of southern Yemen under control.

The changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, brought this tension to the fore once again. As the Imāms adopted the trappings of patrimonial Near Eastern monarchy, they became increasingly distant monarchs, surrounded by officials who were often hated by the population. As a result, they could no longer play the role of charismatic military and spiritual leaders among the tribes. The shift in the ideological orientation of the court toward Sunnī-influenced legal and political doctrines created conflict within the scholarly class, and served to alienate the Imamate from substantial elements of the Zaydī population. The steady shrinking of the territory of the Imamate undermined the Imāms’ ability to buy off opposition through patronage, and brought them into conflict with the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes over land and revenue. The resulting economic crises likewise intensified the social conflicts that underlay the division between Ḥādāwī and Sunnī.
Such tensions finally came to a head in the mid-nineteenth century, when civil war broke out pitting elements of the “Sunnī” governing elite against the Hādīwī ‘ulamā’ and their supporters. The civil war allowed the deeper conflict between the universal “Islamic” political morality espoused by the scholar elite and the particularistic tribal culture of honor to come to the surface. What resulted was not a Hādīwī “revolution,” but the destruction of the central authority of the Imamate, and the seizure of land and political power by the tribes. The Hādīwī jihād became “strife and evildoing;” that is, war whose character was shaped by the shifting allegiances and self-interested objectives of conflict in the segmentary-lineage system.

In this politically fragmented situation, the tribal armies had all the weaknesses of “irregular warriors” outlined by Callwell: limited firepower, highly unstable “organization,” and difficulty in achieving long-term military objectives. In the Ottoman assault of 1872, these limitations would cause the downfall of the Zaydī tribal opposition. The tribesmen would try to employ their customary methods of fighting and negotiation with the Ottomans; and these simply did not work, either at the military or political level. The defeats the Yemeni tribesmen suffered in consequence would demoralize them badly, leading to a swift collapse of resistance throughout most of the country. We will analyze the events of the conquest in detail in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

THE CONQUEST OF YEMEN AND ‘ASĪR.

In this chapter, we will discuss the Ottoman conquest of highland Yemen as a semi-colonial campaign in the Victorian mold. First, we will situate the development of the Ottoman military under the Abdülaziz, the reigning Ottoman sultan at the time of the conquest in Yemen, in the context of European developments at that time. The 1860’s was a period of sweeping military changes, in which new technology revolutionized the firepower capability of European armies, and Prussian military organization emerged as the most powerful and efficient in Europe. The Ottoman Empire participated fully in these developments. Abdülaziz’s military reforms modernized the army in terms of equipment and organization, and this would play an important role in facilitating the Ottoman conquest of Yemen.

Second, we will situate the Ottoman expansion in Yemen in the context of the accelerated imperialism and state consolidation of the period. New military technology brought about arms races, increased international tensions, and pressures to expand as a means of protection from one’s rivals. As in the early modern era, this touched off a wave of external expansion and internal consolidation by states at the expense of less
well armed populations. This process is relatively well understood for the great European empires. Analogous developments, less well understood, were going on in the colonial Balkan and Middle Eastern states in the period. For our purposes, the key developments were the Egyptian-Ottoman rivalry in the Red Sea region and the accelerated internal consolidation of the Ottoman state under Abdülaziz, which would both push the Ottomans into the conquest of Yemen.

Finally, we will show that in terms of military strategy the Ottoman campaigns in Yemen had important parallels with European colonial military practice elsewhere. Our key reference point here will be Colonel Callwell’s *Small Wars*, a work of strategy based on an encyclopaedic knowledge of nineteenth century colonial campaigns. The strategy adopted by the Ottomans in Yemen had substantial similarities to that recommended by Callwell, a strategy based on seizure of the initiative, rapid campaigning, and crushing the enemy through superior firepower. We will argue that this was because the Ottoman commanders were doing what Callwell and other European officers were doing in this period; that is, trying to adjust the precepts of an essentially Napoleonic strategic training to the realities of unconventional warfare. This adaptation was successfully accomplished in the ‘Asīr campaign, which then became the model for the Yemen campaign.

While in the present chapter we will focus on the successes of this type of strategy in strictly military terms, we will also show its limitations. Considered overall, the ‘Asīrī and Yemeni armies did succumb to Ottoman firepower in the manner that Callwell defined as characteristic for “irregular warriors.” Among the Ottoman officers, these victories bred arrogance and a belief in armed force as the best means of dealing with
“savages,” as they did with Callwell. To say nothing of its moral repugnance, such a policy could lead to short-sighted inflexibility and stiffen resistance rather than shattering it. This problem first appeared in the conquest, and became more and more serious in the years of occupation that followed.

I. The Technological and Military-Organizational Changes of the Mid-Nineteenth Century.

The military watershed of the 1860’s has been analyzed by a number of authors, most notably William McNeill.270 Innovations in small arms and artillery played a central role in these changes. Weapons that had made their first appearance in the 1850’s became more sophisticated and widespread, vastly increasing the firepower of European armies. The muzzle-loading percussion lock rifle was rendered obsolete by the breech loading rifle, first the Prussian needle gun, and then more sophisticated weapons such as the British Martini-Henry. Rifles such as the Martini-Henry were single-shot weapons, requiring manual reloading after each cartridge was expended; nonetheless, they could be reloaded much more quickly than the rifled musket, owing in part to the development of cartridges which were more easily ejected from the barrel.271 Likewise, smoothbore cannon were replaced by various forms of rifled artillery, in particular Krupp’s steel

270 McNeill, Power, 223-261. McNeill focuses on the period 1840-1884 as the watershed for the initial industrialization of war.
271 See Black, Warfare, 121-124, for the importance of the percussion lock rifle in the 1850’s, and Mick Bennet, The Story of the Rifle (London: Cobbett Publishing Company, n.d.), 30-33, for the introduction of the breech loader. The Martini-Henry was a single-shot rifle with a range of 7-800 meters, according to Atif Paşa, who witnessed its employment in the conquest of Yemen. See Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:19.
breech loading guns. The combination of breech loading and rifling greatly increased the range, rate of fire, and accuracy of both artillery and small arms, weighting the scales enormously in favor of the Europeans in their colonial adventures.

American milling machinery for producing weapons was adopted by virtually all European governments in this period. Weapons production by private artisans was replaced by mass production in government arsenals and the factories of powerful arms companies such as Krupp and Armstrong. There was in consequence a major increase in the global arms trade, dominated at this stage by government-to-government or manufacturer-to-government transfers.

The Ottoman Empire provided particularly lucrative markets for arms manufacturers in 1860’s. Ottoman armament was obsolete at the beginning of Abdülaziz’s reign. The soldiers were armed with flintlock smoothbore muskets at a time when most European armies were using the percussion lock rifled musket. Abdülaziz, however, spent frantically to update the equipment of the Ottoman army, converting its arms repeatedly as each new invention rendered the previous one obsolete. Whatever the effect on the treasury, by the 1870’s the army’s equipment had been fully modernized. The infantry was armed with Snider and Martini-Henry breech loading rifles, while the artillery had been updated through purchases of Krupp guns.

Modernization of Ottoman military equipment was accompanied by modernization of the army’s organization. The model the Ottomans followed was that of the Prussians,

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whose military organization had emerged as the most efficient in Europe in the 1870’s. The chief strengths of this system were the general staff and the Landwehr, or system of reserves. The general staff was selected from the brightest officers in the army, who were given specialized training in fields such as intelligence and topography, and whose task was to apply systematic planning to military campaigns. This permitted greater speed, better control of troop deployment, and better coordination of operations.

The Ottomans had no general staff in the proper sense of the word until the beginning of Abdülaziz’s reign. At that time, however, a formal Office of the General Staff (Erkan-i Harbiye Dairesi) was opened at the Ministry of War. Its staff was to be drawn from the brightest pupils of the Military Academy in Istanbul, for whom a fifth year of study was added beyond the usual four. While it would take some years before the General Staff had enough personnel to function in the proper manner, its members did contribute to the increasing professionalism of the Ottoman military in the 1860’s. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa (1839-1919), the conqueror of Yemen, was one of the first graduates of the general staff section of the Military Academy; and the effects of his training would show in the relatively efficient conduct of the Yemen campaign.

The Ottomans also adopted the Prussian system of reserves, or Landwehr. In Prussia, conscription was nearly universal. Soldiers served for three years in the standing army, after which they were transferred into the reserve. In the reserve, the soldiers passed through categories of four, six, and five years respectively, with their duties becoming progressively less onerous with each transfer. Reservists of the first category were

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277 Black, *Warfare*, 141-143.
subject to immediate recall and could be sent abroad, while those of the third could not.\footnote{279}

The reserve system gave the Prussian army an ample supply of trained manpower which could be mobilized fairly rapidly. This was noticed by the Ottoman Minister of War Hüseyin Avni Paşa, who in 1869 reorganized the reserves along Prussian lines. Prior to this, Ottoman conscripts served for five years in the standing army, and then seven years in the \textit{redif}, or reserve battalions of their home districts. Hüseyin Avni Paşa’s essential innovation was to reduce the period of service to four years and create a new category of reserves, the \textit{ihtiyat}, between the regulars and the \textit{redif}, corresponding to the first category of the Prussian reserves. When the regular soldier was demobilized, he would serve in the \textit{ihtiyat} reserve of his home district for two years, rather than passing directly into the \textit{redif}. Like the Prussian reserves of the first category, the \textit{ihtiyat} troops were subject to recall, and were not permitted to leave their military districts without written permission from the authorities.\footnote{280}

The purpose of Hüseyin Avni Paşa’s reforms was to expand the Ottoman army’s available effectives, from 500,000 to approximately 800,000; and in this he was largely successful.\footnote{281} Shortening the service in the regular army meant an increased rate of turnover for the conscripts, and thus a faster expansion in the pool of trained manpower. In addition, keeping the \textit{ihtiyat} troops in their home districts allowed swifter mobilization than the \textit{redif} in the case of emergency. By 1870, then, the Ottoman army had begun a


\footnote{280 H. Zboinski, \textit{Armée Ottomane} (Paris: Dumaine, 1877), 13-21, 33-40.}

\footnote{281 Ibid.}
process of manpower expansion which would significantly increase its ability to deal with both internal and external foes.

In sum, the reforms of Abdülaziz had gone a long way toward transforming the Ottoman army into an efficient, powerful, and modern force; and all this would have its effect in the conquest of highland Yemen. The *ihtiyat* troops would be mobilized for the campaign with some rapidity; Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, with his training as a staff officer, would show considerable skill in strategic planning; and finally, the Ottomans’ superior firepower would enable them to crush the Yemeni tribesmen in battle.

II. External Tensions and Internal Consolidation.

The Ottoman military buildup of Abdülaziz’s reign thus made expansion into Yemen feasible. This military buildup was part of a larger process in Europe which made the conquest of Yemen necessary, at least in the eyes of the Ottoman elite; that is, what we have described as “phase one” of the nineteenth century firepower revolution in Europe and the Middle East. As stated in the introduction, new weapons technology has tended to strengthen the state in the first stages of the historic firepower revolutions. The expense and the centralized production of the new firearms and artillery initially limited their acquisition to relatively established governments. These states now had the capability to take over weaker states and subjugate previously autonomous populations under their sway, and they proceeded to do so. Fear of increasingly well armed rivals accelerated the process of internal consolidation and external conquest, leading to heightened international tensions. The accelerated arms races and imperial rivalries of
the second half of the nineteenth century, together with the consolidation of bureaucratic-national states in parts of Europe such as Germany, may all be considered as part of phase one of the nineteenth century firepower revolution.

Now, we wish to analyze the Ottoman conquest of Yemen as part of phase one of the nineteenth century firepower revolution. The definition of the Empire as a European state, however, must be qualified with reference to its semi-colonial status. For the subordinate states of the Middle East and the Balkans, there was a “phase one” process, which mirrored that of the great powers. Patronage by great power governments, together with the eagerness of arms companies to sell their wares, tended to foster both internal consolidation of the power of these states and local expansionist ambitions. In turn, this could result in regional conflicts which threatened to draw in the great powers and lead to a major war.282

For the Ottoman Empire, however, the process was given additional complexity by its extreme vulnerability to internal rebellion. Internal rebellion was fomented by the Ottomans’ rivals, in particular Russia, Greece, and Serbia, in order to gain territory at their expense. The greater the tension of the international situation, the more likely that their regional and great power enemies would exploit such rebellions at the Ottomans’ expense. This situation lent a peculiar urgency to the Ottomans’ efforts at centralization. Rebellions tended to be viewed as pretexts for foreign intervention. Therefore, actually or potentially rebellious populations would have to be brought under state control, before hostile powers could use them to undermine the Ottoman state.

282 In the Balkans, the chief example of this was Russian support for such states as Serbia and Montenegro, which played a major role in the catastrophic war of 1876-1878. See Jelavich, Establishment, 141-153; and Tophaneli Kamil Kapudan, Karadağ (Istanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1294), 11.
The process had picked up momentum in the 1860’s, and it is in this context that the conquest of Yemen took place. At the external level, a key development was an arms race with Egypt. This arms race, coupled with the growing interest of the European powers in the Red Sea region, led to Ottoman fears for their position in the Arabian Peninsula. In the 1860’s, the Khedive Ýsmail was seeking to build up Egypt’s military power and assert formal independence from the Sublime Porte. To that end, he sought to purchase weapons in Europe, and pursue a quasi-imperial policy in the Horn of Africa. By the late 1860’s he had acquired the Red Sea ports of Suakin and Massawa from the Ottoman Empire, and was exploring the possibilities of expansion along the Somali coast.  

The Porte had begun to view these developments with considerable alarm, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made the tensions worse. The Ottomans realized that European interest in the Red Sea region would inevitably increase; and that Ýsmail Paşa, in his desperate quest for European patronage, might provide them with an opportunity to expand there. The new military technology of the 1860’s had contributed in large part to a regional arms race in the Middle East, intensifying local rivalries for territory and influence, and-together with the Suez Canal factor-increasing the likelihood of great power intervention.

This situation evidently predisposed the Ottomans to place a sinister construction on the invasion of the Ottoman Tiháma in 1870 by the Amîr of ‘Asîr, Muhammed ibn ‘Á’îd.  

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Technically an Ottoman “vassal,” this Amīr had given trouble to the Ottomans before, and it had not been thought necessary to remove him. Now, however, the Ottoman elite viewed this rebellion as it had come to view rebellions in the Balkans. That is, it was thought to have been instigated by their rivals as a pretext for undermining their power and seizing their territory. They believed that Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ’s rebellion had been stirred up by İsmail Paşa as a means of gaining a foothold on the Arabian shore of the Red Sea. Previously, İsmail Paşa had sent troops to aid the Ottomans against rebels in Crete. Rightly or wrongly, the Ottomans suspected that İsmail Paşa was hoping to be entrusted with the responsibility of suppressing Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ’s rebellion, and that he had acted in collusion with the Russians in raising it.

In consequence, it was felt necessary to preempt any action by Egypt or the great powers by occupying the ‘Asīrī highlands first. In the context of the heightened international tensions of the period, whether İsmail Paşa had in fact instigated the rebellion was less important than the fact that the Ottomans thought that he had. The Ottomans were thus pushed into the colonial competition of the period-albeit only in a peripheral way-in which fear of being outpaced by one’s rivals often played a larger role than the actual material benefits of colonization.

In one sense, then, the Ottoman conquest of Yemen was a quasi-colonial conquest in the European mode, made possible by new weaponry. It was also part of a process of accelerated internal consolidation of state power in the 1860’s, in which new weaponry also played a major role. Again, however, we must qualify this picture of successful state

285 Holt, Egypt, 197.
286 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeş, 42-43.
consolidation with reference to the Empire’s vulnerability to internal rebellion in combination with external pressure.

In the Balkans, intense external pressures rendered the consolidation of Ottoman state power comparatively short-lived. The level of support for Balkan rebels from states such as Russia, Greece, and Serbia was extremely high. They provided anti-Ottoman rebels with arms, bases, and threats of intervention on their behalf.\(^{287}\) Although the Ottoman state did inflict severe defeats on Cretan and Serb rebels in the 1860’s, any superiority in weaponry and successful consolidation of state authority would be short-lived in this situation. The Ottomans would lose most of their remaining European possessions in the war of 1876-78, a classic combination of external invasion and internal rebellion.\(^{288}\)

The Muslim tribes of the Empire’s Asian provinces, by contrast, had fewer outside patrons in this period, and much more limited access to modern firearms. Consequently, in the 1860’s the Ottomans made significant gains in reducing the autonomy of these tribes. The most signal success of this period was the subjugation of the autonomous Turkmen principalities of the Adana region by the *Firka-ı Islahiye*, or “Pacification Division,” in 1865. The musket-armed Turkmen and Kurdish tribes of the region were unable to resist the modern rifles and artillery of the Ottoman forces.\(^{289}\) Similarly, in the Syrian provinces mobile gendarmerie armed with rifles were sent to patrol the desert frontier, and they succeeded in curtailing the incursions of the Bedouin to a substantial


\(^{289}\) See Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Maruzat* (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayımları, 1980), 150-152, for one account of a battle in which Ottoman rifles proved to be decisive.
These measures, coupled with the temporary resolution of Christian-Muslim conflict in the region, inaugurated a period of relative stability in Syria which lasted to the end of the nineteenth century.

In certain respects, the southern Arabian conquests of the Ottomans fit into the pattern of state consolidation in the Empire’s Muslim provinces. While the Imāms of Ṣan‘ā’ were not formally subordinate to the Ottomans, the Amīr of ‘Asīr was, and the conquest of Yemen would begin as campaing to remove him. As stated, the arms race with Egypt had been one factor that pushed the Ottomans into the conquest of ‘Asīr, in a situation which in previous times would have been resolved without recourse to invasion. In view of their successes in southeastern Anatolia and Syria, the Ottomans were also probably aware that their possession of modern weapons made direct conquest feasible in a way that it had not been before.

III. Callwell, Napoleonic Strategy, and the Ottoman Command.

Possession of the new firepower technology likewise had its effect on Ottoman military strategy. The conduct of the Yemen campaign bore close similarities to the strategy recommended by Callwell, a primary exponent of the virtues of firepower in colonial war. In the previous chapters, we have discussed Callwell’s distinction between regular and irregular armies, with their respective military strengths and weaknesses. The strategy he recommends for the former was based on the nineteenth century idea of the “decisive battle.” By virtue of vastly superior weaponry and

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²⁹⁰ Cevdet Paşa, Maruzat, 189-193.
organization, the regular armies would usually have a decisive tactical advantage. In battle, they could therefore inflict crushing defeats on the “irregular warriors” simply by concentrated firepower. To bring the irregular warriors to battle would nullify the strategic advantage the latter enjoyed in terms of mobility, knowledge of the terrain, and intelligence about the enemy’s movements.

These advantages, however, meant that it was usually easier for the irregular warriors to choose the time and place of battle than their opponents, and to avoid it completely if they so chose. To bring the irregular warriors to battle, then, the commander had to act with boldness, speed, and initiative. He had to have a specific objective in mind and pursue the enemy aggressively until it was achieved.\textsuperscript{291} The enemy armies were to be defeated and scattered in a decisive battle or series of battles, raining down in rapid succession on the “irregular warriors” like the blows of a hammer.

Armies of “irregular warriors,” with their loose organization, generally lacked the cohesion to reorganize after a series of crushing defeats. An aggressive campaign of this kind could thus destroy their morale and capacity to resist within a very short period of time. Failure to bring the irregular warriors to battle, by contrast, would tend to prolong the campaign. The irregular warriors might then begin to mount guerrilla attacks on the regular forces, in which their own particular military advantages would come into fuller play.\textsuperscript{292}

While Callwell did recommend in general terms the strategy we have outlined above, it is also important to stress that he was not a formulaic military thinker. He recognized the immense variety of military situations encompassed in the term “small wars,” and

\textsuperscript{291} Callwell, \textit{Wars}, 37, 71-83.
\textsuperscript{292} Callwell, \textit{Wars}, 97 ff.
therefore stressed the need for flexibility, good intelligence, and knowledge of the local military culture. Yet Callwell’s understanding of irregular war was also distorted by the deeply racist strain in his thinking. His focus on the decisive battle was part of a more sinister emphasis on the utility of violence. If the irregulars were “savages,” or “fanatics,” brutality was a better guarantee of submission than leniency. While his knowledge of the military aspects of “small war” was exhaustive, his appreciation of its political character was limited.

The course of the Yemen campaign was similar to Callwell’s version of the ideal colonial war. Obviously, however, the Ottoman officers had not read him, for the publication of Small Wars was still some years in the future. Therefore, our assertion of Callwell’s relevance needs to be explained with reference to the actual intellectual influences working on the minds of the Ottoman commanders.

In terms of military thought, Callwell’s work represents a definitive summation of a historical process in which the Ottomans were intimately involved; that is, the attempt by European officers who were trained in Napoleonic concepts of strategy to apply their training to the ambiguous military situations of the colonies. Napoleonic strategy was essentially focused on the idea of the “decisive battle.” The objective of the campaign was to destroy the enemy army in battle. The “decisive battle” was achieved through what we may describe as the “decisive” campaign, in which a premium was placed on

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293 Callwell, Wars, 29-33, 143-145.
294 Callwell, Wars, 148.
speed of movement, retention of the initiative, and hitting the enemy as hard and fast as possible.\textsuperscript{295} As we have seen, these same ideas are central to Callwell’s strategy.

Perhaps more important, the campaigns of Napoleon gave rise to a quasi-mathematical way of thinking about war which would determine the way that military operations were conceptualized in the nineteenth century and beyond. The most influential exponent of this way of thinking was Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini (1779-1869), an officer of Swiss origin who served in both the French and Russian armies. Jomini sought to reduce the reasons for Napoleon’s success into a simple scientific formula, valid for all wars in all periods.

Central to this formula was the “linear” conception of the theater of operations. This theater consisted of a “base of operations,” from which the armies would launch their attack; “lines of operations,” along which they would advance; and an “objective of operations,” against which the advance was to be directed. The “objective of operations” was usually coterminous with another Jominian concept, the “decisive point.” According to Jomini, victory was achieved through a concentration of the forces at the “decisive point,” enabling the army to achieve a local numerical superiority and thus win the “objective” in battle.\textsuperscript{296} Strategy, in other words, was a problem which could be solved with the proper equation of space, time, and numerical force.

The specifics of Jominian strategy were less important in the long run than his formulaic method of thinking about military operations. In part as a result of Jomini’s


work, military commanders came to stress the necessity of clarifying the “objective,” and formulating a plan of operations based on the simplest and most salient actions necessary to achieve it. So it was with Callwell, who placed great emphasis on the need for a clear definition of the objective in small wars, and a plan of action designed to achieve it in the speediest and most efficient manner possible. What Callwell did, in other words, was to adapt his own strategic training to military situations for which it had not been originally intended. Jominian-Napoleonic concepts of strategy tended to set the terms in which he thought about colonial war, even though colonial war differed radically from interstate war in Europe.

Now, the training of Ottoman officers and the military problems with they were faced were not fundamentally dissimilar to those of European officers such as Callwell. Jominian language appears prominently in the accounts of the Ottoman conquest by the participating Ottoman officers; and while the specifics of their strategic training are sometimes difficult to track down, the evidence suggests that they were trained in the same Napoleonic precepts as other European officers of the period. In the 1840’s, French and Prussian military officers had been brought in to modernize the Military Academy’s curriculum. A course entitled “The Art of War,” (fenn-i harp) was introduced at this time, taught by a French officer, and the academy began to publish military manuals which

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297 Callwell, Wars, 37.
were either directly translated from the French or heavily influenced by French military thought.\textsuperscript{299}

As with Callwell, the Ottomans would learn to adjust Jominian-Napoleonic ways of thinking about war to the un-Napoleonic guerrilla wars in which they were repeatedly involved. Beyond this, it appears that easy successes against “backward” foes had the same psychological effect on Ottoman military officers that they had on Callwell. In Europe, victories in the colonies due to firepower superiority served to intensify the prevailing imperialist arrogance of the period. European officers were more confident than ever of the superiority of their own civilization, the inevitability of its advance, and the necessity of subduing “savages” by force to make way for it. In the nineteenth century, at least, it does not appear that the Ottomans adopted the explicitly racist views of the Europeans. The evidence suggests, though, that the Ottoman elite of this period had begun to be influenced by the civilization/savagery world view, and to justify the subjugation of the tribal populations of the Empire with reference to it.\textsuperscript{300} As we shall see, victories over musket-armed tribesmen seemed to justify this view and the arrogance that went along with it.

As a result of these factors, Ottoman military operations in Yemen had a distinctly Callwellian appearance. The Ottoman command sought to overwhelm the resistance of the Yemeni tribesmen through a “hammer blows” strategy of rapid marches, effective use

\textsuperscript{299} For example, 	extit{Fenn-i Harp} (Istanbul: Mekteb-i Fünun-i Harbiye, 1267) and Halil Halid, 	extit{Huda’-ı Askeriye ve Desais-i Harbiye} (Istanbul: Tophane-i Amire, 1269).

\textsuperscript{300} The naval officer who wrote 	extit{Karadağ}, for example, mentions that one of the Montenegrins’ archbishop-princes (vladika) “was most especially desirous that the Montenegrins be freed from their ancient and customary ignorance and rebelliousness, and sent on the path of civilization (medeniyyet) and humanity (insaniyet).” The above-mentioned vladika had been on a trip to Europe, and proceeded to open schools, libraries, and a printing press after his return in pursuit of this aim. See Kamil Kapudan, 	extit{Karadağ}, 6.
of the Ottomans’ superior firepower, and quick follow-up of successes. Aggressive strategy was combined with the liberal use of brutality and intimidation, in which the Ottomans displayed a manifest contempt for the Yemenis and ‘Asîrîs.

In this campaign, the Zaydî and ‘Asîrî tribes also tended—although not without exceptions—to conform to Callwell’s generalizations about the military behavior of irregular warriors. The tribal armies of Yemen and ‘Asîr, with their military culture of shifting alliances based on immediate self-interest, tended to quickly disband after the serious defeats inflicted on them by the Ottoman expeditionary force. The pattern of retreating into fortresses after a defeat or in the face of a superior foe, generally effective in dealing with poorly armed tribal armies vulnerable to sudden disintegration, proved to be a trap in dealing with a well-armed and determined foe such as the Ottomans. The fortresses were either actually destroyed by the Ottoman artillery, or surrendered by military leaders who had become convinced that Ottoman firepower made resistance useless.

IV. The Conquest of ’Asîr.

The events leading up to the conquest of Yemen suggest, in general, that the victories of the 1860’s inspired the Ottomans to adopt an aggressive “forward” policy in southern Arabia. The conquest was precipitated not by events in the Yemeni highlands per se, but in ‘Asîrî and the Yemen Tihâma. The Ottomans had taken possession of the Tihâma in
1849, but did not interfere in the highlands after an attempted occupation of Ṣṣan‘ā in the same year culminated in a massacre of the Ottoman troops.  

While the internal turmoil of the Yemeni highlands prevented any significant challenges from that quarter, the amirate of ‘Asīr gave considerable trouble to the Ottomans. In contrast to the Zaydī Imamate, the amirate of ‘Asīr had achieved substantial regional power by the second half of the nineteenth century. Geographically similar to Yemen, with a hot coastal plain and a relatively fertile plateau to the east, ‘Asīr was dominated by a confederation of the four major highland tribes—the Rabīʿa, Rufayda, Banī Alqam, and Banī Mughayd. The tribes of ‘Asīr were primarily Sunnīs of the Shāfī school.

The highland tribes of ‘Asīr invaded the Yemen Tihāma under their amīr ‘Āʾiḍ ibn Marʿī in 1855, and again under his son Muḥammad in 1863. In neither case did the Ottomans follow up the invasions with decisive punitive action. In the last invasion, the Ottomans even gave Muḥammad ibn ‘Āʾiḍ the rank of Amīr al-Umarāʾ to persuade him to evacuate the port of Jīzān, which he had occupied in the course of the invasion.

For the reasons we have mentioned above, they reacted very differently when Muḥammad ibn ‘Āʾiḍ besieged Ḥudayda with a major force in 1870. Then, the Ottomans would dispatch a force of about 14,000 men to relieve that city. The garrison of Ḥudayda would, in fact, inflict a severe defeat on the ‘Asīrīs before the arrival of this force. The army would not, however, return to Istanbul, but would go on to conquer the

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301 al-Ḥaymī, Rawḍ, 46-57.  
302 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüçeşti, 1:42.  
303 Atuf Paşa, Yemen, 1:120-121.  
304 Atuf Paşa, Yemen, 2: 6-7.
highlands of both Yemen and ‘Asîr. While we are not primarily concerned with events in ‘Asîr in this study, we will discuss its conquest at some length here. The ‘Asîrî culture of war had broad similarities to that of Yemen, and the strategy employed in its conquest set the stage for the conquest of Yemen.

By and large, the conquest of ‘Asîr tended to demonstrate the efficacy of Abdülaziz’s military reforms. The ihtiyat reserve permitted a fairly swift mobilization for the campaign. When the news of the siege of Ḥudayda reached Istanbul, the Minister of War Hüseyin Avni Paşa ordered the mobilization of a single division of ihtiyat troops from the nearby imperial armies. The telegram reporting the siege had been received on 2 December 1870, and the first five battalions of the division were dispatched to Ḥudayda ten days later. The ihtiyat thus demonstrated its value as a reserve force in the event of an emergency, permitting the Ottoman army to send troops to troubled regions without denuding its permanent garrisons.

The expeditionary force was placed under the command of Divisional General Redif Paşa, with Major-General Ahmet Muhtar Paşa as his second-in-command. Redif Paşa’s background is a little obscure. In the late 1860’s he was a colonel in the Imperial Guard (Hassa Ordusu), and had been promoted to Divisional General shortly before the ‘Asîr campaign. We are on firmer ground with Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, who has left us an autobiography. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa was well suited for the Yemen campaign both by training and experience. He had been one of the first staff officers to graduate from the Military Academy, and had had extensive experience of mountain warfare in Montenegro.

305 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergencyâşt, 1:44.
and southeastern Anatolia. In the Yemen campaign, he would show himself to be a good strategist and a meticulous planner in the fields of intelligence and logistics.

The Ottoman commanders’ professionalism would show itself first in the initial strategic planning for the campaign. The Ottoman commanders conceptualized the theater of war in the strategic terms popularized by Jomini. The “base of operations,” the place where troops and supplies were initially to be concentrated, was Qunfida. The initial objective of operations (hedef ül-hareket) was Sūghā, one of the Amīr’s three major citadels along with Rayda and Abhā. The problem, as the Ottoman commanders saw it, was how to take these objectives with the maximum speed and the minimum bloodshed on the Ottoman side.

Training in Napoleonic strategy thus aided the Ottoman military commanders in simplifying and clarifying the military problems with which they were faced. At the same time, they were well aware that successful campaigning against mountain guerrillas required above all a knowledge of local conditions. In the Montenegro campaign, Ahmet Muhtar Paša had had first hand experience of the difficulty of moving a heavily equipped column in difficult terrain, the dangers of ambush, and the ease with which the column could be blocked in this situation.

The ‘Asīr campaign offered similar challenges. In order to reach the Amīr’s citadels, the expeditionary force had to climb the escarpment from the Tihāma to the plateau of ‘Asīr. The only way up was by ‘aqabas, steep, winding footpaths which Ahmet Muhtar

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308 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 1:7-9. His exact reference states that “it was decided to take Qunfida as the base for the military operations to be conducted in ‘Asīr (Asır üzerine icra edilecek harekat-i askeriye Kunfida’nın mebde ittihaez olunması karargir oldu). Later (p. 23), he uses the shortened term mebde-yi hareket when referring to Shuqayq, the base of operations for the siege of Rayda.
309 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 1:12-17.
Paşa likened to the stairways of a minaret. It was impossible to ascend an ‘aqaba if the enemy held its head, for “if a stone is rolled down from above, that stone will have become a hundred stones by the time it reaches the attacker.”310 There were only three ‘aqabas suitable for the passage of a military detachment to the above-mentioned citadels: the passes of Tayyah, Qaḍḍā’, and ṢṢamma’.311

The solution to this problem was found with a local man who had considerable knowledge of the terrain, and was evidently an astute military strategist as well. This man was Shaykh ‘Umar, the paramount shaykh of the tribes of the Ḥalī region, who had been forced to act as a guide and advisor to the Ottoman expeditionary force. The Ottoman force had proceeded from Qunfida to the Tihāma town of Mukhā’īl at the beginning of February, where they formulated a plan to attack the initial objective of Sūghā. The pass of Tayyah, which led directly to Sūghā, was the closest to Mukhā’īl and the easiest to ascend. Muḥammad ibn ‘Āʾid assumed that the Ottomans were planning to launch an attack on Sūghā by way of the Tayyah ‘aqaba, and had accordingly stationed his main force at its head.312 Shaykh ‘Umar, however, advised the Ottomans that there was another way of getting to Sūghā. The Wādī Aḥābish was primarily used as the main route to Rayda. It was possible, however, to make a sudden turning movement to the left into the pass of Ṣamma’ after going some distance down the Wādī Aḥābish; and Sūghā could also be reached by way of this ‘aqaba.

In consequence, the Ottoman command adopted the following plan. A single battalion of infantry should make a demonstration of moving up the pass of Tayyah, while the

311 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:13.
312 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:14; Ahmet Ziya, Mufassal Yemen Çografyası , Manuscript TY4254, Istanbul University Library Rare Works Collection, Istanbul University, Istanbul.
remaining six battalions should go up the Wādī Aḥābish. The Amīr would thus be deceived into thinking that the Ottomans were going to Rayda or to Sūghā by the Tayyah route. At the proper time, however, the force going up the wādi should make the turning movement into the pass of Ṣammāʿ; and since the head of the 'aqaba was unoccupied, the Ottomans could secure a passage to Sūghā by this route.313

The strategy worked as planned; after 48 hours of continuous marching the entire force had been brought up to the head of the pass of Ṣammāʿ.314 Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’id had been duly deceived by the ruse of the Ottomans, and had sent his brother Saʿd to Rayda to reinforce the garrison there. Belatedly, he then realized that he should reconnoiter the pass of Ṣammāʿ as well; but by the time the scouts he had sent arrived the Ottomans were already in possession of its head.

Through Shaykh ‘Umar’s advice, the Ottomans were able to climb the escarpment by means of speed and deception, skilfully avoiding confrontation with the Amīr’s forces until they were at the top. In this manner, they were able to seize the initiative from the Amīr at the outset, and deal a blow to his morale before fighting had even begun. After this initial setback, the Amīr sank into a despair from which he never recovered.

The success of this phase of the campaign thus primarily rested on the exploitation of Shaykh ‘Umar’s local expertise. Atīf Paşa, who participated personally in the conquest, goes so far as to say that the shaykh devised the plan of operations himself.315 We may state also that elements of this operation were at least consonant with the principles of Napoleonic strategy, although whether this contributed to the formulation of the plan

must remain open to conjecture. Speed and the achievement of strategic surprise were important elements of Napoleonic strategy, as they were also in the warfare of the Arabian Peninsula; and however the plan was formulated, it is evident that it was accepted on the basis of strategic principles that both the shaykh and the Ottoman commanders knew to be sound.

This initial success was thus achieved at least in part through flexible adaptation to local circumstances of the strategic principles with which the Ottoman commanders were familiar. The campaign thus began to assume its “Callwellian” shape early on, in terms of the speed and decisiveness with which it was executed, and the blow which was thereby dealt to the Amīr’s morale. The momentum of success and failure was to snowball in the next phase of the campaign, when the effects of Ottoman firepower became apparent. The seizure of the pass of Ṣamma‘, the initial major blow to Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ, was followed by a series of battles in which Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ’s tribesmen were either actually defeated by Ottoman rifles and artillery, or fled because of the fear of it. The Ottoman successes were like a series of “hammer blows,” falling on the ‘Asīrī armies and destroying their will to resist.

The first engagement had actually taken place while the Ottoman army was on the march. In this engagement, the Ottomans had scattered a party of Rijāl Alma‘ tribesmen near the village of Aḥābish, by a few bursts of fire from their mountain guns.* A larger battle took place after the Ottomans had established their camp near the head of the pass of Ṣammā‘, at a place with running water called Bāḥa. The Amīr came with a force

* A mountain gun is a light artillery piece designed, as its name indicates, for use in mountains. Specifically, it must be light enough to be transported in rugged and roadless terrain by pack mule. As a result, mountain guns are generally smaller than field guns, designed for use in flat and open terrain, with less bulky carriages.
numbering about 500-1,000 to a nearby mountain, where his men began firing on the Ottoman outposts. The Ottomans then sent several companies of soldiers against them, who demonstrated the superiority of Ottoman small arms in the ensuing battle.

The Ottoman troops had Martini breech-loading rifles with an effective range of 700-800 meters, while the Arabs were using smoothbore muskets with a far shorter range. The longer range and speedier rate of fire of the rifles decided the battle in the Ottomans’ favor. The Amīr’s force retreated after a battle lasting two hours, leaving behind thirty dead men; the Ottomans, by contrast, had lost only two.  

The second battle took place when the Ottoman force went to take Sūghā itself. The Ottomans had commenced an artillery bombardment from a ridge commanding Sūghā’s fortifications, while simultaneously launching an infantry assault against the village. While the infantry succeeded in entering Sūghā without too much difficulty, this was due to a deliberate lack of resistance by the defenders. The Amīr’s men had set an ambush, and came out from behind a nearby wooded mountain once the soldiers were inside the village. Luck, however, intervened on the side of the Ottomans. The Ottoman assault party had set up two small Whitworth guns inside the village, and were bombarding its inner citadel. One of the projectiles landed in an ammunition depot in one of the citadel towers, blowing it up with all the men therein. The sight was apparently too much for the Amīr’s men, who broke off the assault and withdrew.

316 Atuf Paṣa, Yemen, 2:18-19.
317 Atuf Paṣa, Yemen, 2:19-20.
318 The Whitworth gun was an early type of rifled artillery piece invented by Joseph Whitworth, an English manufacturer, in the mid-nineteenth century. In the Whitworth gun, spin was imparted to the projectile by a polygonal bore, which the projectile was shaped to fit.
319 Ahmed Muhtar Paṣa, Serviçeṣt, 1:50; Atuf Paṣa, Yemen, 2:21.
The Ottomans were then able to follow up the capture of Sūghā with two quick victories in succession. A force was sent against Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’īḍ’s encampment to the south, where his army was defeated and forced to abandon their military matériel. After this a body of troops was dispatched to the north to take Abhā, the second of the Amīr’s major fortresses; and the garrison there fled without offering any resistance whatsoever.320

In these battles, then, we can trace an almost palpable collapse in the ‘Asīrīs’ will to fight. Their high casualties in the battle at Bāḥa indicate that they had put up some resistance there. At Sūghā, however, they had fled after a single explosion, and at Abhā they fled before the Ottoman troops had even arrived. This was in spite of the fact that the Ottomans had only small field and mountain artillery pieces with them. While these were deadly in battle, they may not, in fact, have been sufficiently powerful to destroy the fortifications of these places. It is clear, however, that defeat in battle had convinced the ‘Asīrīs that they were, and that resistance of any kind was useless.

The resulting differential in morale between the Ottomans and the ‘Asīrīs was crucial in the final phase of the campaign, the conquest of Rayda. Rayda was the Amīr’s last citadel, where he had retreated with a body of his supporters. The conquest of Rayda was mainly the work of Ahmet Muhtar Paṣa, who adopted an arrogant and bullying posture toward the ‘Asīrīs, and won the campaign as much by aggressive bluff as superior firepower. The ‘Asīrīs, for their part, displayed little will to resist, and did not attack the Ottomans even when circumstances were favorable. Here, we can see the emergence in Ahmet Muhtar Paṣa of the same kind of pathological attitudes which underlay much of

320 Ahmed Muhtar Paṣa, Sergüzeşt, 1:50; Atuf Paṣa, Yemen, 2:22.
Callwell’s analysis. Force and firepower seemed to work against “savages,” and therefore the only argument that they understood was that of force.

The Ottoman column which took Rayda was, in fact, much more vulnerable than the column of the Sūghā campaign, and could not maintain the same rapidity of movement. This was because the assault on Rayda required heavy 4-pound [German weight] Krupp artillery pieces, all of which had been left behind in the Tihāma. In consequence, Ahmet Muhter Paşa had to return to the coast and bring them up with a second body of troops. Redif Paşa, meanwhile, remained in the highlands and bombarded the fortifications of Rayda with the small Whitworth guns.321

Of necessity, the transport of the heavy guns was difficult and time consuming. The march from the coast to Rayda took nearly a week, during which time the soldiers suffered intensely from the heat, the lack of water, the sand-laden simoom winds of Arabia, and the difficulty of manhandling the artillery over natural obstacles. Sixteen soldiers died on this march, and many more fell ill. On several occasions the column was marching in the dark over difficult terrain; and an ambush, if executed with the proper skill and determination, might have done great damage in these circumstances.322

The will of the Asīrīs to fight, however, was gone. The column encountered only negligible resistance on the march up the steep wādi to Rayda, despite the fact that Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ’s partisans had in fact placed ambushes there. As for Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ himself, he simply shut himself up in the citadel of Rayda and waited for the expeditionary force to arrive. A test of the Ottoman artillery, conducted a day before Ahmet Muhter Paşa’s arrival there, served to increase what must have been his

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considerable panic and demoralization at that point. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa had had one of his Krupp guns fire a single hollow cannon ball filled with sand at a nearby stone castle. This shell passed neatly through both the inner and outer walls of the castle; thus a howitzer-type explosive shell, the Paşa noted with satisfaction, could be expected to do great damage.323

When he learned of this test, the Amīr apparently grew very frightened. As a result he sent an emissary to the Ottoman camp, ostensibly to present a letter asking for terms, but actually to investigate the guns. Here, the bluff and domineering attitude that became Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s trademark in Yemen emerged fully for the first time. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa detained the emissary until the force arrived before Rayda, when he sent him back with the message that nothing besides the surrender of Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’id would be accepted.324

In the siege of Rayda, the ‘Asīris’ fear of the artillery, together with Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s shrewd exploitation of this fear, were more important than the artillery’s actual firepower. The citadel of Rayda, positioned in the bed of the wādi through which the Ottomans were advancing, was very strongly built. It consisted of a curtain wall reinforced by towers in which cannon were mounted, enclosing three castles of four stories each. Four or five separate castles of similar height were positioned at strategic points on the outskirts of the main citadel.325 The most important of these was the castle

323 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeş, 1:55.
324 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeş, 1:55-56; Atıf Paşa, Yemen, 2:28-29.
325 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeş, 1:56. I have translated the Ottoman term kale as citadel, and hisar as castle. In the Yemen context a kale usually refers to a larger fortification, consisting of a curtain wall with buttresses, and perhaps containing a prominent interior fortification. A hisar usually indicates a smaller fortification, consisting of a single tower with a low wall enclosing the courtyard; a more detailed
of Qaḥṭān. This fortification occupied a commanding position on the heights to the right of the citadel, viewed from the position of the Ottoman force coming up the wādi; and since fire could be directed from the castle against any point around Rayda, it would obviously constitute a serious danger to any besieging force.\textsuperscript{326}

An investment of the citadel would thus be hazardous and difficult, even for a force with vastly superior weaponry. So indeed it was. First, the citadel and its surrounding fortifications proved very difficult to breach. On the day of Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s arrival, the artillery was set up with some difficulty on the broken ground facing the castle (that is, facing it from the direction of the Ottoman advance), where the majority of the soldiers took up their positions.\textsuperscript{327} The Ottomans then directed a howitzer bombardment against the central citadel; and while some breaches in the wall were opened up thereby, the guns were too far away to do damage sufficient for an assault.

Accordingly that night the artillery was moved to a position on the right slope of the wādī, about 50-60 meters above its bed and 3-400 meters from the citadel.\textsuperscript{328} The bombardment continued for three days after this before Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’īd finally surrendered; and while significant damage was done, at no time did the artillery open a breach wide enough for an assault. On the last day of the siege the howitzer shells did blast a gap of several meters width in the curtain wall. Since the ground level within was

\textsuperscript{326} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{328} Ibid. Actually both authors state that the artillery emplacement was 1200 paces (\textit{adim}) from the citadel; I have estimated this as 3-400 meters.
higher than the breach, however, this did not do any good. By this time, moreover, ammunition for the guns was running low.\footnote{Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 1:57-58.}

It is not by any means certain, then, that the Krupp guns made the fall of Rayda inevitable. What was important was that the ‘Asîrîs believed that they did, and this sapped their will to fight. Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ’s surrender was preceded by the neutralization of two of Rayda’s outlying fortifications, not because the Ottomans took them by storm, but because the defenders broke off fighting before they could do so.

During the bombardment of the central citadel, the besieging army had been subjected to constant artillery fire from Qaḥṭān castle. While the defective shells used by the ‘Asîrîs rendered this less dangerous than it might have been, it was sufficiently annoying that Ahmet Muhtar Paşa turned his guns against Qaḥṭān on the third day of the siege.

Since the walls of this fortress were several meters thick, however, the shells had no effect. Despite this, Qaḥṭān’s garrison seems to have had little confidence and little desire to put up a determined struggle. When a small assault force was dispatched to take the castle, the ‘Asîrîs put up some resistance, but then surrendered after suffering another defeat. The next day the commander of a second castle near the central citadel made a separate agreement with Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, to the effect that in the siege and assault his men would not fire on the Ottoman soldiers, and that they in turn would leave his castle alone.\footnote{Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 1:57.}

These setbacks apparently played a major role in Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ’s decision to surrender, a decision in which he was encouraged by Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s blustering threats. On the last day of the siege, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa had again been approached by
envoys from Muḥammad ibn ʿĀʾiḏ. It was in describing this encounter that Ahmet Muhtar Paşa made clear his preference for force over negotiation, especially when dealing with ʿBedouins.’ “I knew the temperament of the Bedouins, however, and if the matter was again left to negotiation (iş tekrar git gele burakılsa)...the talks would only be brought to end with difficulty after several days; and as for [the Arabs], they would attribute the gentle treatment they experienced during this time to weakness rather than mercy.”

Accordingly Ahmet Muhtar Paşa sent them off with a rough demand for unconditional surrender, in which he played on their evident fear of his artillery to the full. “Get the hell back [to the citadel] (geri defolunuz)...and say this to Muḥammad ibn ʿĀʾiḏ: I am going to my artillery. If he comes in person before I arrive there and gives himself up, he will be given a safe conduct (aman). If not, tomorrow morning his head will be rolling around underfoot (kellesi ayaklar altında yuvarlanır).”331 The guns, he added, would not be fired until the Paşa came to them in person, after which the “cease-fire” would end.

Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s threats were effective, although not on that same day. When dawn broke the next morning, white flags were flying from the fortress; Muḥammad ibn ʿĀʾiḏ had surrendered. The date was 20 April 1871, 130 days after Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s departure from Istanbul, and 78 days from his departure from Qunfida.332 The ʿAsir campaign was thus successfully concluded through a combination of firepower superiority, swift and aggressive campaigning, and skillful psychological exploitation by Ahmet Muhtar Paşa of the ʿAsīrīs’ fear.

331 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 1:57-58.
332 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 1:58,60.
The Ottomans’ preference for ruthless action in this campaign led to a sad end for the ‘Asīrī Amīr and his chieftains, although the role that Ahmet Muhtar Paşa played in this is not entirely clear. Shortly after Muḥammad ibn ‘Āʾiḍ’s surrender, he was surreptitiously murdered with his principal commanders. The crushing defeat that the Amīr suffered, culminating in his own death, in turn leads us to question the role of his own mistakes. Barring extreme incompetence on the part of the Ottoman command, it is difficult to see how the ‘Asīrīs could have actually won a victory against the Ottoman expeditionary force. Nonetheless, the conquest of ‘Asir did not need to be the relatively bloodless walkover that it was for the Ottomans, and Muḥammad ibn ‘Āʾiḍ could have lived to fight another day. As with other military commanders in history, the Amīr’s main mistake appears to have been unimaginative adherence to the traditions of war with which he was familiar in an age of new technology.

The behavior of Muḥammad ibn ‘Āʾiḍ and his armies substantially conformed to the “model” of tribal war we have outlined for nineteenth century Yemen, a model which proved to be worse than useless in the confrontation with the Ottoman army. First, the heroic tradition of battle, in which martial display and reckless valor played an important role, initially caused the ‘Asīrīs to expose themselves to needless risks and suffer heavy casualties in consequence. At the siege of Ḥudayda, the Amīr’s men had launched a ferocious assault on the city’s fortifications, attempting to scale the wall with ladders in

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333 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Sergüzeş*, 1:59. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa actually says that Muḥammad ibn ‘Āʾiḍ and the 31 captive chieftains with him were shot and bayoneted while trying to escape. Coincidentally, all eighteen leaders in the castle of Qaḥṭān were also bayoneted while trying to escape, and this almost immediately after they had surrendered. Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Sergüzeş*, 1:57.
the teeth of the Ottoman artillery. In consequence, they lost about six hundred men to the Ottomans’ thirty.334

In the first skirmish of the ‘Asîr campaign proper, the Ottomans broke up a force of Rijal Almâ’ tribesmen within minutes by several bursts of fire from one of their mountain guns. The tribesmen’s mistake had been to assemble in the open where the Ottomans could see them, shooting their muskets in the air, waving their spears and *janbiyyas*, and reciting verses to encourage one another.335 The practice of conspicuous martial display, which historically served to intimidate the enemy and bolster one’s own “warrior” image, was suicidal in the face of modern artillery.

Second, the tradition of “ephemeral” war in the Arabian Peninsula compounded the natural effect of these defeats, thus shattering of the ‘Asîrîs’ morale and will to resist. The Amûr’s armies were loose confederations of tribesmen, and tribal confederations of this kind were inherently unstable. They were based to a very great extent on the tribes’ calculation of their short-term interests, and the ability of the war-leader to provide spoils through a never-ending succession of victories. The tribesmen and their shaykhs thus had a strong tendency to side with winners and abandon losers.

In consequence, when the Amûr began to lose, his partisans abandoned him like men jumping off a sinking ship. As Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’id’s defeats piled up, the shaykhs of the major ‘Asîrî tribes streamed into the Ottoman camp to offer their submission. Even before the seizure of the pass of Şammâ’, the Amûr lost a good third of his fighting men when the Banî Shahr tribes had withdrawn their support; and afterwards, important


* A type of curved dagger used in Yemen and ‘Asîr.

elements of the Rabī‘a, Rufayda, and Banī Alqam tribes submitted to the Ottomans.\(^{336}\) In this case, then, the behavior of the ‘Asīrī tribesmen substantially reflected Callwell’s dictum concerning “irregular warriors.” That is, the lack of cohesion among their armies made it difficult for them to sustain resistance in the face of a series of defeats.\(^{337}\)

Finally, the difficulty of sustaining resistance with tribal troops was compounded by the flaws of a purely stationary and defensive strategy, a strategy which again was in keeping with the traditions of warfare in the region. As we have noted, in the highlands of southern Arabia, the weaker party would retreat into fortresses in the event of a defeat or the advance of a powerful opponent. If besieged, they might initiate a period of bargaining with the opponent, or simply bribe his forces to leave. So it was with Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’id; as we have seen, his only plan was to attempt to hold vital strong points against the advance of the Ottomans. This strategy, while often effective against poorly armed and organized tribal armies, again proved to be suicidal as a means of resistance to the Ottoman forces.

Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’id’s first plan had been to hold the pass of Tayyah against the advance of the Ottoman forces. Accordingly, he stationed a large contingent of 6,000 men there with some smoothbore cannon left over from the Egyptian occupation; he also strengthened his other fortresses with ammunition and matériel.\(^{338}\) The basic flaw of this kind of strategy of passive defense, of making elaborate preparations for battle at a fixed location, is that one essentially hands over the initiative to the enemy. As had been

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\(^{337}\) Callwell, *Wars*, 88.

discovered by many commanders before Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’id, an enemy with good intelligence can outflank one’s position and attack from an unexpected direction.

Similarly, in the closing phase of the campaign the Amīr again made the choice to simply shut himself up in the citadel of Rayda and wait for the Ottoman advance.339 This seems to have been an act of reactive despair rather than a “strategy” per se. His own morale was very low at this point, and he may have simply been too exhausted and depressed to devise a more proactive means of resistance. The Amīr did, however, have other choices, even within the limitations of the military practices of the time. He could have taken to the hills with a small body of supporters. This was done by the Imām al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin ash-Shihārī after his defeat by the Ottomans in Yemen proper, who was able to survive and build a resistance movement in consequence.

Instead, the Amīr’s tortoise-like “strategy” gave the Ottoman commanders the leisure to plan and organize the capture of Rayda. Thus, he surrendered the initiative to the Ottomans once again; the factor of time, which in a guerrilla style conflict would have tended to favor the local people over the invaders, now worked to the advantage of the latter. We have seen that the hauling of the heavy Krupp guns to Rayda took considerable time, and cost the soldiers much suffering.

While the ‘Asīrīs could not win in open battle against the Ottomans, the column was much more vulnerable than they realized. The soldiers were sick and exhausted, short of water, and sometimes marching by night in unfamiliar terrain. If they had faced determined guerrilla resistance by the ‘Asīrīs, the campaign might have miscarried badly.

339 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeş, 1:50; Atıf Paşa, Yemen, 2:22.
More than one column of “regular” troops has been annihilated by tribal guerrillas in this type of situation.

The fear and despair of the ‘Asīrīs, however, had caused the degeneration of Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’īḍ’s defensive strategy into one of virtual paralysis. This was evident not only in their failure to take active measures of resistance, but in the ease with which they gave up their fortresses. A well-built Arabian fortress could, in fact, withstand a bombardment by heavy breech-loading artillery, as we have seen from the example of Qaḥṭān. Furthermore the use of this artillery was attended by serious problems; it was difficult to transport in steep terrain, and difficult to carry an adequate supply of ammunition.

In fact, none of the fortresses captured by the Ottomans were taken by breach and assault; all were abandoned or surrendered by their defenders. The ‘Asīrīs, in other words, were not in a position to realistically assess the limitations of the Ottoman artillery. Its noise and evident destructive force were new and frightening to them; and its effectiveness in open battle convinced them that their fortifications were equally vulnerable, and that therefore resistance was useless.

In short, for a variety of reasons the ‘Asir campaign tended to reflect the Callwellian ideal of a successful colonial campaign. On the Ottoman side, adaptation of Jominian-Napoleonic ideas to local circumstances resulted in a strategy based on the skillful use of intelligence, speed, deception, and judicious employment of their firepower. In consequence, the Ottomans always seemed to be one step ahead of the Amīr, whose strategy was purely passive and defensive. The reaction of the ‘Asīrīs in the face of defeat likewise tended to conform to Callwell’s assertions about the behavior of
“irregular warriors.” Constant setbacks sapped the morale of the ‘Asīrīs and made them progressively less willing to put up a determined resistance. The process was facilitated by the tradition of ephemeral war in the Arabian Peninsula, which made it extremely difficult to keep an army together in the event of defeat (or even victory). All these factors resulted in a relatively painless victory for the Ottomans and a crushing defeat for the ‘Asīrīs.

V. The Conquest of Yemen.

The strategy employed in the conquest of ‘Asīr set the stage for the conquest of Yemen. Here, we may speak confidently for the first time of Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s “personal” strategic and command style, for Redif Paşa had to return to Istanbul due to illness. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa was formally appointed as the commanding general (mūşir) of the ‘Asīr expeditionary force, now reorganized as the Seventh Army, and as governor of Yemen. He was given the responsibility of conquering the areas of Yemen still outside Ottoman control; and he set out to do so after a little less than a year, during which time he had organized the administration of ‘Asīr.

During this campaign, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa essentially sought to repeat the “paradigm” of successful conquest that had been formulated in ‘Asīr. Expanding on the points we have made about the strategy of the ‘Asīr campaign, we may state that this paradigm was based on three major components. First, the campaign was preceded by a period of careful planning, with extensive acquisition of intelligence from local sources. This

would involve an attempt to gain local allies in the area of operations, both for the intelligence they could provide and as a means of subversion.

Second, when the campaign was actually launched, the Paşa would try to employ a combination of speed, deception, surprise, and intimidation to achieve his objectives. As in the ‘Asîr campaign, the primary objectives were usually citadels or fortified towns which served as regional power centers. The danger always existed that a campaign to seize a fortress could degenerate into a lengthy siege with significant casualties, even if the besiegers were better armed than the defenders. In the ‘Asîr campaign, this had been avoided by stratagems which, in effect, won battles before they were actually fought; and Ahmet Muhtar Paşa essentially sought to repeat this pattern in Yemen.

Thirdly, if stratagems and intimidation did not work Ahmet Muhtar Paşa would resort to pure force, to sieges and battles in which he would try to use his firepower to maximum advantage. He would never negotiate, even when doing so might have saved the Ottomans considerable bloodshed, for he believed that negotiation would always be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Superior firepower usually enabled him ultimately to win, although not always as quickly or easily as in ‘Asîr. Once victory was achieved, his opponents would be dealt with ruthlessly. As we have noted for the ‘Asîr campaign, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa knew how to exploit people’s fear to undermine their will to resist; and he may have calculated that the murders of his opponents would have a similar effect, deterring opposition in the future by creating fear of the consequences.

This “Callwellian” strategy was substantially successful in Yemen, and for much the same reasons that it had been in ‘Asîr. That is, defeat by Ottoman firepower, coupled with the fissiparous character of the Yemeni forces, tended to shatter the resistance of the
Zaydī and Ismā‘īlī tribesmen fairly quickly. Despite this, they did not always behave in the stereotyped fashion of Callwell’s “irregular warriors,” and the Ottomans encountered substantially greater resistance in Yemen than they had in ‘Asīr. We will also show that Ahmet Muhtar’s policy of “force and firepower” was not necessarily the best strategy under the circumstances. In some cases, it may have served to stiffen the highlanders’ resistance, and prolong the fighting. In this section, then, we will qualify our use of the Callwellian paradigm, and show the beginnings of the process whereby the strategy of “force and firepower” was eventually rendered untenable.

Here, we shall focus on the three most crucial phases of the Yemen campaign: the conquest of Ḥarāz, the occupation of the Ṣan‘ā’ region, and the conquest of Kawkabān. These campaigns involved, successively, the taking of the major strategic areas in the west, northwest, and center of the highlands. We will analyze each phase in light of the strategic paradigm we have outlined above: what features of this paradigm were present in each stage, and how well did the actual strategy adopted succeed?

A. The Conquest of Ḥarāz. The Paşa had come by ship to Ḥudayda in the middle of February 1872, bringing with him nine battalions of infantry and two gun batteries.341 The initial objective of the campaign was Ṣan‘ā’, and the ground for the Ottoman occupation of that city was being prepared through contact with the city’s ruling political faction. Between Ṣan‘ā’ and the Tihāma, however, lay the independent Ismā‘īlī “principality” of Ḥarāz, ruled by the dā‘ī Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl. The dā‘ī would not permit the Ottoman army to cross his dominions, and so the Ottomans had to subjugate Ḥarāz before they could proceed to Ṣan‘ā’.

341 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Serğüžeş, 1:69.
In general, this campaign followed much the same pattern as the campaign to take ‘Asīr. The Ismā‘īlī leader possessed seven major fortresses, of which the most important were Manākhā and ‘Attāra; and the capture of these fortresses accordingly became the primary military objective of the Ḥarāz expedition.³⁴²

Ahmet Muhtar Paşa again was careful to gather substantial intelligence from reliable local sources before beginning the campaign. First he had a map of the route to Ṣan‘ā’ drawn up with the aid of people who knew the country well. Then a spy by the name of Nāṣir ‘Asīrī was sent to Ḥarāz in the guise of a messenger to the Ismā‘īlī leader, to get information concerning the roads, fortresses, and garrisons in the country.³⁴³

When he realized the inevitability of a confrontation, Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl adopted a purely defensive strategy, much as Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā‘īḍ had done. He increased the garrisons in his fortresses, and had the Ismā‘īlī peasants (ahl al-bilād) keep watch over the roads (tartīb at-ṭuruqāt wa ḥifẓizāh). Likewise, he shut himself up with his relatives in the citadel of ‘Attāra, which he believed to be impregnable.³⁴⁴

Ahmet Muhtar Paşa would again attempt to employ the combination of speed, surprise, and deception which had been so successful in the march on Sūghā. The objective for the Ḥarāz campaign was ‘Attāra; Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, however, intended the expeditionary force to proceed initially as though they were marching directly on Ṣan‘ā’. There were three routes which could be used to reach Ṣan‘ā’: the Wādī Ṣanqūr, Wādī Ḥār, or ‘Attāra

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³⁴² Ibid.
³⁴³ Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzept, 1:69-70; Atıf Paşa, Yemen, 2:61. This man was an ‘Asīrī Arab who had been a long-time member of the irregular cavalry stationed in Ḥudayda. He was described as “open-eyed and courageous” by Ahmet Muhtar Paşa.
roads. The Paşa’s plan called for the force to proceed up the Wādī Ḥār until they came to the point where the ‘Attāra road branched off. There, they were to turn and make a rapid night march to the above-mentioned citadel. ‘Attāra was built at the head of an ‘aqaba, just as Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ’s fortresses had been; and thus it was important for the expeditionary force to complete the march before the Ismā‘īlī leader had time to prepare the defenses of the pass.\footnote{Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Sergüzeş*, 1:69-70.}

In the actual execution of this plan, however Ahmet Muhtar Paşa failed to achieve the strategic surprise at which he was aiming. He did not initially go to ‘Attāra himself, but instead sent Major-General Veli Paşa on 16 March 1872, with five battalions and four Whitworth mountain guns. The march was supposed to be completed in approximately 24 hours. Because of the heat in the Tihāma, however, Veli Paşa’s force took five days to reach Ḥuwayṭa at the foot of the ‘Attāra ‘aqaba. By that time the Ismā‘īlī leader understood the intentions of the Ottomans, and had stationed men in the pass to block the soldiers’ advance.\footnote{Ibid.}

Apart from the Ottoman failure to achieve strategic surprise, moreover, the Ismā‘īlīs refused to submit as easily as the ‘Asīrīs had done. The expeditionary force had to fight its way up from Ḥuwayṭa to ‘Attāra; and in these battles, the Ottoman troops encountered greater resistance and suffered more casualties than in the ‘Asīr campaign. Of necessity, hypotheses as to why this was so must be partially speculative. I submit, however, that the most likely reason was primarily that the *dāʾī* could not have been caught off guard by Ottoman firepower in the same manner that the ‘Asīrīs had been. The Ismā‘īlīs had

\footnote{Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Sergüzeş*, 1:69-70.}
had ample time to learn of events in ‘Asīr and to absorb its lessons. In consequence, we can see the beginnings of adaptation to the new military realities, however inadequate.

In the battles at Ḥuwayṭa, the Ismā‘īlīs do not seem to have recklessly exposed themselves as the ‘Asīrīs had initially done. Instead, small parties of Ismā‘īlīs entrenched themselves among the high rocks of the pass, and in its towers and fortified buildings. From there, they rolled stones down on the Ottoman forces and directed musket fire against them. Control of the terrain and effective use of cover thus partially compensated for their inferiority in firepower. It would take four days for the Ottomans to expel the Ismā‘īlī leader’s men from the ‘aqaba. The Ismā‘īlī forces, concealed among the rocks and towers of the pass, could not be driven away by a single grand burst of artillery fire. Rather, they had to be dislodged through a grueling series of small assaults. The Ottomans had to send several companies of soldiers at a time to dislodge the Ismā‘īlī bands, covering their advance with fire from the mountain guns.347

Despite the Ismā‘īlīs’ stiffer resistance, however, the end result was not fundamentally different. The rifles and artillery of the Ottomans once again did their work; and the defenders were driven out of their positions with heavy losses, although the expeditionary force also took significant casualties in the process.348 As in ‘Asīr, Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl’s partisans were defeated in consequence of the Ottomans’superior weaponry. The will to resist of the Ismā‘īlīs apparently was destroyed by the defeat at Ḥuwayṭa, for like the ‘Asīrīs, they began to flee or submit shortly thereafter.

Even before the Ottomans had reached ‘Attāra the Ismā‘īlī leader’s eldest son, who had apparently been charged with defending Manākha, had abandoned that city after

347 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:63-65.
348 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:63-65; al-Ḥarāzī, Fatrat, 172.
plundering the people and blowing up its ammunition depot.\textsuperscript{349} When the expeditionary force reached ‘Attāra and began setting up its siege lines, a number of delegations from the tribes and towns in the area came to offer their submission. The day after ‘Attāra was invested, small detachments were sent to several of Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl’s other major fortresses-Shibām, Masār, and Mitwaḥ-and their defenders fled without offering any resistance whatsoever.\textsuperscript{350}

Similarly, the resistance of Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl and his remaining partisans in ‘Attāra did not continue for long. As in ‘Asīr, the swift surrender of the fortress was due more to fear and demoralization, adroitly exploited by Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, than ‘Attāra’s actual vulnerability. The citadel was, in fact, impregnable. ‘Attāra was constructed atop a single isolated rock 60-80 meters high, whose sides consisted solely of sheer precipices. The only way to enter was by means of two winding stairways cut directly out of the rock, which joined together at the fortress gates.\textsuperscript{351} It was clearly impossible to capture the citadel by assault, and probably impossible even to breach it with the small mountain guns the Ottomans had with them. Accordingly it was decided simply to blockade the fortress and bombard it, in the hope that Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl would thereby be intimidated into surrendering.\textsuperscript{352}

The bombardment of ‘Attāra continued for several days. While it is doubtful that it did any real damage to the citadel’s fortifications, it did cause casualties to the defenders within, and the moral effect of this seems to have been tremendous. The constant

\textsuperscript{351} Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeş}, 1:70.
explosion of shells, the deaths, and the screams of the women and children who had taken refuge in the citadel would have demoralized the defenders considerably; and as before, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa was well aware of this effect and knew how to exploit it to the full.\footnote{Atuf Paşa, \textit{Yemen}, 2:67.}

In a pompous and intimidating letter to Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl, the Paşa wrote the following: “Up to now the artillery bombardment has not been particularly severe, and the reason for this has been to spare the unfortunate wretches within the citadel...but if you remain stubborn and persist in your rebellion God will hold you accountable for the blood of these helpless ones. We give you until tomorrow [to surrender], and if you do not surrender by then no plea for quarter will be accepted, and your fortress will be brought down over your head.”\footnote{Atuf Paşa, \textit{Yemen}, 2:67-68.}

The letter had its desired effect, and on 2 April 1872 white flags were raised over ‘Attāra.\footnote{Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 1:71.} Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl was taken captive and sent to Ḥudayda, where he would die shortly thereafter. ‘Attāra was destroyed by order of Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, who had arrived in Ḥarāz shortly after the surrender of ‘Attāra. The Paşa then proceeded to concentrate his forces in Manākha for the march on Ṣan‘ā’.\footnote{Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 1:73. It was rumored in Yemen that Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl had been poisoned; Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, however, makes some effort to exonerate himself from these charges. Since elsewhere he uses the disingenuous explanation that captive Yemeni leaders were “shot while trying to escape,” his protestations of innocence cannot be discounted.}

\textbf{B. The Conquest of the Ṣan‘ā’ Region.} The conquest of the central and southern highlands was the easiest part of the Yemen campaign. The complete degeneration of war and politics in that region meant that the Ottomans did not have to confront even the
semblance of a unified resistance, as in ‘Asīr and Ḥarāz. The collapse of the Zaydī imamate meant that the tribal warlords of the region had no organization, no popular support, and no ideological vision around which to rally resistance. Furthermore, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa conducted the Şan‘ā’ campaign with the same precision and decisiveness which he had shown previously, and the ‘Callwellian’ features of this campaign were particularly pronounced. Faced with a determined, energetic, and heavily armed invader, the tribal armies of the region simply abandoned their positions and fled.

The disturbed condition of the region initially gave the campaign the character of an intervention in a civil conflict, rather than an outright invasion. The advantage of this, of course, was that Ahmet Muhtar Paşa had a significant base of local allies on which he could rely at the outset of the campaign. The immediate political context of the intervention was the tension between the actual ruler of Şan‘ā’, the shaykh al-balad Muḥsin Mu‘īd, and the nominal Imām, al-Mutawakkil Muḥsin ash-Shihārī. These two had had a serious falling out prior to the Ottoman invasion. As a result, Muḥsin ash-Shihārī had been banished to the district of al-Ḥadda outside the city walls and forbidden to enter Şan‘ā’, although it had been agreed that the khutba* in the city would be read in his name.357

Muḥsin Mu‘īd and his partisans represented the interests of the merchant class of San‘ā’. As a result of the prevailing anarchy trade was at a standstill; and the shaykh al-balad seems to have felt the Ottomans could help him in restoring some semblance of

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* The khutba is the sermon read after the Friday prayer in Muslim societies, and contains an invocation for God’s blessings on the current ruler.

order in the country, so that the caravans could move freely once again.358 His partisans among the sayyid elite accordingly had written to the sultan through the medium of the Sharīf of Mecca, requesting that the sultan send troops to aid them in restoring order around Ṣan‘ā’.359 The understanding of Muḥsin Mu‘īd’s party was that this aid was to be of a temporary nature, but the Ottoman government chose to interpret this message as a request for direct Ottoman control.360

The movement of the Ottomans into the interior deepened the rift between the shaykh al-balad and the nominal Imām. Muḥsin ash-Shihārī wanted the Ṣan‘ānīs to resist the Ottomans, while Muḥsin Mu‘īd was preparing to welcome them. The shaykhs around Ṣan‘ā’ generally sided with the latter, despite Muḥsin ash-Shihārī’s efforts to form a tribal alliance to oppose the Ottoman invaders. The major exception was ‘Āmir al-‘Idharī, paramount shaykh of the Arḥab tribe.361 With the Arḥab tribesmen preparing to march on Ṣanʿā’ and the prospect of another civil war looming, Muḥsin Mu‘īd’s partisans sent a delegation to Ahmet Muhtar Paşa in Manākha, where they urged him to hurry on to Ṣanʿā’.

The presence of local allies thus allowed Ahmet Muhtar Paşa to achieve his major objective in the way he preferred, that is, without fighting. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa came to Ṣanʿā’ in late April, accompanied by five battalions of infantry and four mountain guns, and occupied the city without resistance.362 In military terms, his only remaining task was to suppress the Arḥabī resistance. Initially, he was asked by Muḥsin Mu‘īd to take

358 Harris, Journey, 99.
359 al-Wāṣī’ī, Tārīkh, 122.
360 al-Wāṣī’ī, Tārīkh, 259.
361 al-Ḥarāzī, Fatrat, 175.
362 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sorgüzeşt, 1:76.
care of Abdullah ad-Dafi‘ī, the bandit chief mentioned in the previous chapter, who possessed a castle just outside the northern wall of the city. As a member of the Arḥab tribe, ad-Dafi‘ī had allied with Muḥsin ash-Shihārī against Muḥsin Mu‘īd and the Ottoman forces.

Minor as this operation was in the military sense, politically it was very important. Muḥsin Mu‘īd’s party had realized that the Ottomans had come to stay shortly after Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s arrival in Ṣan‘ā‘, and were having second thoughts. They refused to turn over the administrative records of the country (dafā‘tir) to Ahmet Muhtar Paşa unless he destroyed ad-Dafi‘ī first. It was evident that the chief men of Ṣan‘ā‘ were testing the will and capability of the Ottoman commander, and might well abandon him if he failed.

Accordingly, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa executed the operation against ad-Dafi‘ī in the same rigorous fashion as his previous campaigns. As before, the operation was preceded by careful planning and full utilization of local intelligence sources. First, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa enlisted the aid of a local shaykh, ensuring his cooperation through characteristic brutal intimidation. Abdullah ad-Dafi‘ī’s castle was located in the territory of the Banī Ḥārith tribe, and surrounded by their fortresses. Accordingly, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa summoned Ṣāliḥ Dughaysh, the shaykh of the Banī Ḥārith, and asked his advice: in the operation against ad-Dafi‘ī should he have his troops march through the city and out the northern gate, or should he send them around the wall, among the fortresses of the Banī Ḥārith?

“‘I don’t know, you know’ he said.

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363 al-Wāṣī‘Ī, Tārīkh, 260.
364 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzəşt, 1:77.
‘You will act as a guide and proceed in front of the troops, and if perchance a musket should be fired from some place on my soldiers you will be bayoneted at once. Think about it that way!’”

The shaykh saw that he had no choice except to help the Ottomans. He thus advised Ahmet Muhtar Paşa that the troops should go out the northern gate, Bāb ash-Shu‘ūb. The shaykh’s own fortress was located just opposite that gate, and could accordingly cover the soldiers’ advance to ad-Dafi‘ī’s castle. Ad-Dafi‘ī had followed the “strategy” of his more important predecessors and shut himself up there, which would turn out to be an even greater mistake for him than it had been for them.

Having thus planned the operation in such a manner as to minimize his own casualties, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa proceeded to its execution. As before, the operation was conducted with a ruthless aggressiveness designed to have the maximum psychological impact on the local population. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa was certainly aware of the fate that had befallen Tevfik Paşa’s troops in 1849, and of the delicacy of his own position. Only speedy and crushing victory, he believed, would create the necessary fear that would induce the highlanders to submit.

Previously Ahmet Muhtar Paşa had sent ad-Dafi‘ī several written summons to surrender, to which he had replied with a letter “full of empty words.” Şāliḥ Dughaysh told Ahmet Muhtar Paşa that ad-Dafi‘ī was relying on the supposed impregnability of his small mud castle. Solid cannon balls, apparently the only kind with which ad-Dafi‘ī was familiar, could not break down a fortification of this kind; the ball would simply sink into the earthen wall. Ad-Dafi‘ī’s stubbornness meant that Ahmet Muhtar Paşa would deal

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365 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 1:77-78.
366 Ibid.
with him by force, in keeping with his general policy of refusing to negotiate. The day after his conversation with Şâlih Dughaysh, he dispatched a battalion of troops with two mountain guns to ad-Dafi‘ī’s castle. When he arrived there later, he found the colonel commanding the battalion attempting to negotiate with ad-Dafi‘ī. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa put a stop to this immediately, and informed ad-Dafi‘ī’s messenger that unless a white flag was raised on the castle within five minutes he would level it to the ground. No white flag appeared, and in consequence the artillery bombardment was begun.

As we have noted, in previous sieges the defenders had usually been intimidated into flight or surrender. Ottoman firepower, however formidable, was not always sufficient to breach a well built Arabian fortress. In this case, however, Ottoman firepower really was the key to victory; ad-Dafi‘ī’s small fortification did not stand a chance even against the light Whitworth guns. The howitzer shells employed by the Ottomans sank about a foot into the mud wall of the castle and exploded, making large holes. Within the space of an hour the castle had been half destroyed, at which point Ahmet Muhtar Paşa launched a final infantry assault. The soldiers entered the fortification without difficulty, and ad-Dafi‘ī surrendered with his men. The operation, which had been conducted with an eye to impressing the Şan‘ānīs with the power of the Ottoman army, had been a resounding success.367

The suppression of ad-Dafi‘ī thus consolidated Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s control over the city of Şan‘ā in both the physical and psychological sense. In order to firmly secure the surrounding region, however, it was necessary to deal with Muḥsin ash-Shihārī and ‘Āmir al-‘Idharī. ‘Āmir al-‘Idharī had gathered a number of warriors from Arḥab and

Dhū Muḥammad at the fortified village of Sha‘b. Al-‘Idharī’s son had been killed in the bombardment of ad-Dafi‘ī’s castle and he was anxious for revenge. For understandable reasons, however, the tribesmen were reluctant to march on Ṣan‘ā’.368

As in ‘Asīr, Ottoman victory had inevitably affected the tribesmen’s will to fight, causing them to hesitate. In doing so, they again left the initiative to Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, and he was quick to seize it. Understanding the value of maintaining momentum in victory, he had Major-General Veli Paşa make a night march to Sha‘b with two infantry battalions and two mountain guns, with Śāliḥ Dughaysh acting as a guide. This force arrived at Sha‘b in the morning. The tribesmen had fortified themselves in the towers and stone houses near the village, and some of these were taken by assault on that day.369

The confrontation at Sha‘b, like the suppression of ad-Dafi‘ī, was essentially won by superior Ottoman firepower. Al-‘Idharī was given a summons to surrender (istiμan etmesi teklif olunmuş), which he refused. The next day his house and a neighboring tower were bombarded with the two mountain guns. A group of tribesmen then apparently tried to surround the Ottoman forces, but were driven off by heavy rifle and artillery fire; and the soldiers pursued them for some distance, killing many with bullets, shells, and bayonets.370 Over 200 of the Arḥab tribesmen were killed and wounded, while the Ottoman casualties numbered no more than ten. After this defeat resistance among the Arḥab tribesmen collapsed, and their shaykhs submitted to the government. In

368 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:80-81.
369 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:81.
370 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:81; al-Ḥarāzī, Fatrat, 180.
the words of one chronicler, the Arḥab “became raʿāyaʾ”, paying taxes like the peasant class of Yemen.371

The operations in the Ṣanʿāʾ region were thus won in substantially “Callwellian” fashion, by careful planning, rapid and decisive campaigning, and victory through firepower. With the conquest of Ṣanʿāʾ and Ḥarāz, the most important areas of the highlands were secured: the route to the coast and the capital. Minor military operations to take control of the south would soon follow. Upper Yemen was left alone, for the region was considered too poor and infertile to justify the expense of occupying it.372 While this would have momentous consequences for the future, the tribes of that region could not pose a significant threat to Ottoman power at this time.

IV. The Siege of Kawkabān

There remained, however, the lush principality of Kawkabān to the northwest of Ṣanʿāʾ, which was dominated by the Sharaf ad-Dīn sayyids. The campaign to take Kawkabān was the final episode of major military importance in the conquest of Yemen, and this campaign was the major exception to the pattern of swift and easy victories in the Ottoman takeover. In essence, the Kawkabān campaign would reveal the limitations of the “Callwellian” paradigm, both as a tool of analysis and as a means of making war. Initially, the operation proceeded in much the same manner as the previous ones. Local

371 Atuf Paşa, Yemen, 2:81-82; al-Ḥarāzī, Fatrat, 180.
372 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergûzeş, 1: 86.
alliances were formed, intelligence carefully gathered, and positions seized by speed and deception rather than fighting.

After this, things went badly awry. Like their predecessors, the Sharaf ad-Dīn sayyids would adopt a strategy of static defense and shut themselves up in the citadel of Kawkabān. Unlike them they would put up a determined resistance; in consequence, the Ottoman siege would last six months before the defenders finally gave in. In short, the defenders of Kawkabān did not behave like Callwell’s “irregular warriors.” In this situation, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s belief in the efficacy of force and firepower over negotiation proved to be his downfall. He would not consider anything other than a military victory. The expenditure of blood and treasure which he undertook in consequence might have been saved by a degree of flexibility and willingness to wait.

By virtue of its position alone, Kawkabān was the most formidable military objective of the campaign. The citadel of Kawkabān was built on an isolated “mesa” about 300 meters high, 2 kilometers long, and one kilometer wide. The sides of this mesa were all sheer precipices, and on its top there were several hundred houses and a spring of water. The route to Kawkabān went up an ‘aqaba, which ascended a mountain standing opposite the mesa. The head of this ‘aqaba was held by a castle known as Bayt ‘Izz.

For an assaulting force the only means of entrance to Kawkabān was by way of a bridge, which stretched from the above-mentioned mountain to the citadel. Below this bridge there was a natural trench which was about 200 meters long, 12-20 meters wide, and 15-20 meters deep. This trench separated the mountain from the mesa on which Kawkabān was built, and its sides consisted of sheer rock. Walls with upper and lower
embrasures were built along the length of this trench on the Kawkabān side, exposing the bridge to gunfire from the citadel.\textsuperscript{373}

For the Ottomans, then, that it was eminently preferable that Kawkabān be surrendered peacefully. Taking the citadel by assault would be difficult, if not impossible. Accordingly, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa prepared for the campaign with his customary carefulness and skill. At the beginning, he built up a base of local allies who could provide him with good intelligence. The capture of Bayt ‘Izz was the necessary preliminary to the conquest of Kawkabān; and Bayt ‘Izz was held by the men of Sayyid ‘Abd al-Karīm Sharaf ad-Dīn, a nephew of the ruler of Kawkabān Sayyid Aḥmad, who nursed a secret enmity toward him. Accordingly Sayyid ‘Abd al-Karīm was summoned to Ṣan‘ā’ by Ahmet Muhtar Paşa; and the two men formulated a plan in conjunction with Shaykh Ṣāliḥ, shaykh of the Hamdān tribe, who was also an enemy of Sayyid Aḥmad.

This plan relied on Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s typical combination of deception, surprise, and intimidation, calculated to deal a blow to the opposing forces’ morale before fighting had even begun and convince them of the futility of resistance. In order not to alert Sayyid Aḥmad to the planned attack on Kawkabān, the expeditionary force would initially set off in a different direction; otherwise, Sayyid Aḥmad would almost certainly send men to hold Bayt ‘Izz. Meanwhile Shaykh Ṣāliḥ’s men were to seize Bayt ‘Izz, in collusion with the men of Sayyid ‘Abd al-Karīm who were already in the castle, and hold it until the arrival of the Ottoman troops.\textsuperscript{374}

This part of the plan went off without a hitch. An Ottoman force of several battalions under Colonel Musa Bey was dispatched to Kawkabān in middle of May 1872, taking

\textsuperscript{373} Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeş}, 1:87-88.
\textsuperscript{374} Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeş}, 1:88; Atif Paşa, \textit{Yemen}, 2:89

along several mountain guns and mortars. Bayt ‘Izz was seized by the men of Shaykh Şâliḥ in accordance with the plan; and the expeditionary force arrived shortly thereafter, emplacing their guns opposite the citadel.  

Evidently, Ahmet Muhtar Paşa hoped that the exposure of Kawkabān to the feared Ottoman artillery would persuade the Sharaf ad-Dīn sayyids to submit without fighting. At Kawkabān, however, he would have to deal with a much stronger personality than any of his previous opponents. The titular ruler of Kawkabān was Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Sharaf ad-Dīn. It appears, however, that the leading spirit of resistance at Kawkabān was actually Sayyid ‘Alī, Sayyid Aḥmad’s brother and the commander of his troops (raʿīs al-juvāyš). Sayyid ‘Alī was described by Ahmet Muhtar Paşa as an “extremely harsh, hard and evil man” (gayet ḥaṣīn ve sert ve şerir), who was very dangerous. This may have meant, among other things, that Sayyid ‘Alī had the same driving and forceful personality as Ahmet Muhtar Paşa himself, and did not like to lose any more than he did.

Initially, however, the capture of Bayt ‘Izz seemed to have destroyed the confidence of the two brothers in the expected manner. After the arrival of the expeditionary force, they had come out to the camp and met with the Ottoman commanders, agreeing to surrender themselves and turn over the citadel. It was at this point that Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s plans went awry. His instructions to Musa Bey had stated explicitly that if Sayyid Aḥmad and Sayyid ‘Alī surrendered voluntarily they were to be detained in the camp, and troops sent to occupy Kawkabān.

Musa Bey, however, agreed simply to hold a third brother, Sayyid ‘Abdullah, as hostage; and Sayyid ‘Abdullah was a negligible person in terms of intelligence and

376 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 1:89.
political power. Sayyid Aḥmad and Sayyid ‘Alī were then allowed to return to Kawkabān, accompanied by two companies of troops assigned to occupy the citadel. As soon as these two companies had crossed the bridge and entered Kawkabān, the gates were shut, and the soldiers taken captive. Sayyid Aḥmad and Sayyid ‘Alī prepared to defend the citadel. Ahmet Muhtar Paşa relieved Musa Bey of his command, replacing him with Major-General Veli Paşa, and the siege of Kawkabān was begun.

In this siege, while the Ottomans had the advantage in weaponry, the Kawkabānīs had an overwhelming advantage of position. While the total resources on which the Ottomans could draw were inevitably much greater than those of the Kawkabanis, the latter were amply supplied with food and water, and did not have to transport their supplies over great distances as the Ottomans did. The commanders on both sides were capable and determined, and the individual men skilled and disciplined. With a rough equality of force on both sides, the siege turned into a war of attrition, something which was relatively rare in the early stages of the Ottoman occupation of Yemen.

It was in this war of attrition that the dysfunctional potential of Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s command style became apparent. The siege seems to have turned into a contest of wills between two men who were dynamic, egotistical, and authoritarian, who had the ability to motivate or terrorize their subordinates into performing. In the particular circumstances of the siege, this seemed to worked best for Sayyid ‘Alī, who was commanding his troops in person, and fighting for his life and independence.

Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, by contrast, was unable to direct the siege in person, as he had to stay in Ṣan‘ā’ to organize the administration of the province. Despite his absence, he

377 Ibid.
insisted on controlling the smallest details of the operation. In his own words, “Every morning I would write...a long letter in my own hand to the commander in charge of conducting the siege, containing the necessary explanations with regard to the details of how our positions were to be set up every day, and how the level of the moat was to be raised...and how the bridge was to be raised and lowered; and every day I received an answer detailing that day’s events.”\(^{379}\)

In this fashion, the officer actually commanding the siege was deprived of virtually all initiative. At the same time, he was held entirely responsible for any failures of the besieging force, and sometimes relieved of his command in consequence. Many individuals, treated in this fashion, would tend to respond with sullen resentment and passivity; and this may have hindered the efficiency of operations at Kawkabân.

Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s authoritarian personality, so effective against a certain type of enemy, was thus not necessarily an asset in the command situation at Kawkabân. Nor was the strategy he adopted, which was based on his preference for the use of force. He was determined to carry the fortress by breach and assault, believing that a passive blockade would make the Ottomans look weak in the eyes of the Yemenis and undermine their authority.\(^{380}\) He seems not to have even considered the third alternative, that of concluding a temporary agreement and waiting for a more favorable opportunity.

There may have been some validity to Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s belief that negotiation would make the Ottomans look weak, and in a situation of imperial conquest, reducing all competing power centers was probably a good idea. In fact, however, the situation was probably less clear-cut than he imagined. In the Arabian Peninsula, negotiation and


compromise was an integral part of warfare, and it is by no means certain that such a policy would have been viewed as negatively as he supposed. It is more likely that it was Ahmet Muhtar Paşa’s preference for humiliating and destroying his opponents that was viewed in a negative light. The Yemenis had been appalled by the Ottomans’ murder of Muḥammad ibn ‘Ā’iḍ, and they also suspected foul play in the death of Ḥasan ibn Ismā‘īl in Ḥudayda.381 Sayyid Aḥmad and Sayyid ‘Alī may have considered that their lives were forfeit even if they surrendered peaceably, and this may have played a role in stiffening their resistance.

A brief account of the siege will serve to illustrate the ingenuity and determination of both sides. The Ottomans would try all kinds of methods to carry the citadel by breach and assault, all of which ultimately failed. First the Ottomans tried to launch a surprise attack by night over the bridge, which was unsuccessful because they could not break down the gate. The defenders of Kawkabān then destroyed the bridge, so that when the soldiers returned the next day with pickaxes and crowbars, there was no way to cross the trench.382

After this siege lines were set up all around the mesa on which Kawkabān was built; and two 6-pound [German weight] Krupp guns brought up from Ḥudayda.383 The citadel was then subjected to a heavy bombardment, which did a great deal of damage to its fortifications, and opened up gaps in the wall wide enough for an assault. Meanwhile the Ottomans sought to move their positions down from the mountain to the level of the

381 al-Wāsi‘ī, Ṭārīkh, 122-123; Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüçeş, 1:73.
382 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüçeş, 1:89.
383 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüçeş, 1:89-90.
trench, from which point some means of assault against Kawkabān could be devised.\textsuperscript{384} This was not easy, however, for the defenders of Kawkabān were excellent marksmen, and directed constant musket fire on the besieging force below. Accordingly, the Ottomans built “mobile shields” (\textit{siper-i seyyare}), a sort of covered iron cart.\textsuperscript{385} To advance their positions the Ottoman soldiers would go into the mobile shield and wheel it forward to the desired point, where they would build stone and sandbag entrenchments under its shelter.\textsuperscript{386}

In this manner the siege lines of the Ottomans inched forward at the rate of 4-5 meters a day, so that it was near the beginning of August by the time they reached the trench. Here it was necessary to find a means of crossing over to the citadel. At first the Ottomans tried to fill up the trench with sacks of dry straw; but the defenders of Kawkabān threw down lances with flaming rags tied to them, and the straw was all burnt up.\textsuperscript{387} The besiegers then tried a new tack. The positions were advanced to the place where the destroyed bridge was, since this was the narrowest and shallowest part of the trench. This was done using the same slow and painful method outlined above, again under constant fire from the enemy; men who happened to stick their fingers outside the mobile shields while working often lost them.\textsuperscript{388}

The plan now was to set up a portable bridge at this point, from which an assault could be launched into the citadel. A wooden bridge about 15 meters long was accordingly constructed, raised into an upright position by means of pulleys and ropes, and then

\textsuperscript{386} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{387} Atif Paşa, \textit{Yemen}, 2: 95-96.
\textsuperscript{388} Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeş}, 1:89.
lowered across the trench. The Kawkabān end of the bridge, however, came to rest on the rubble piled up from months of artillery bombardment. In consequence the bridge leaned to one side, and could not be securely positioned.\textsuperscript{389}

Despite this, the Ottomans went ahead and launched an assault over the bridge. This operation, however, went awry when one company commander lost his nerve and refused to leave the Ottoman entrenchments. In consequence he held up all the men behind him, and the few men who did get across were driven back by the fire of the defenders. That night, the defenders of Kawkabān threw down oily rags on the bridge, which had been knocked even further askew during the day’s fighting. A second attack was clearly impossible under the circumstances. The bridge was taken away for repairs, and the Ottoman commanders pondered their next move.\textsuperscript{390}

By this time, however, there was a growing sentiment among the notables of Kawkabān that it would be foolhardy to continue to resist; accordingly they made overtures for surrender to the Ottomans, and Sayyid Aḥmad was forced to follow suit.\textsuperscript{391} The citadel was turned over to the Ottomans on 15 November 1872; and Sayyid Aḥmad and Sayyid ‘Alī were brought to Ṣan‘ā’, together with some of the other notables of Kawkabān.\textsuperscript{392} Sayyid Aḥmad was given a salary and allowed to settle in Ṣan‘ā’ with his family; Sayyid ‘Alī was exiled to Ḩudayda and murdered on the road.\textsuperscript{393}

With the conclusion of the siege of Kawkabān the conquest of Yemen was essentially complete. Hemmed in by the desert to the north and east, and the English-protected

\textsuperscript{389} Ahmed Muhtar Paşा, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 1:89-90.
\textsuperscript{390} Ahmed Muhtar Paşा, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 1:90.
\textsuperscript{391} al-Ḥarāzī, \textit{Fatrat}, 183.
\textsuperscript{392} Ahmed Muhtar Paşा, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 1:90.
\textsuperscript{393} Ahmed Muhtar Paşा, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 1:91. Sayyid ‘Alī was also supposedly shot while trying to escape.
amirates to the south, the Ottomans had reached the practical limits of expansion in the region. They would not attempt to seize any more territory, and hence the war of conventional battles and sieges had ended. Guerrilla resistance, however, was just beginning; and we shall analyze the initial character of this resistance in the next chapter.

Conclusion.

In this chapter, we have attempted to analyze the conquest of Yemen in the context of the technological, organizational, and strategic features of war in the nineteenth century. First, we have shown that the conquest was made possible in large part due to a sweeping program of military reform instituted by the Sultan Abdülaziz, under whom the Ottoman army was equipped with modern weapons and reorganized along the Prussian model.

Second, we have attempted to explore the conquest of Yemen as an outgrowth of processes which were set in motion by the firepower revolution of the 1860’s, which affected both the internal and external politics of the Ottoman Empire. On the international level, the Ottomans were pushed into the conquest of Yemen as a result of the heightened international tensions and colonial competition of the late nineteenth century. As we have seen, the firepower revolution played a major role in all these developments. On the internal level, the firepower revolution made possible the subjugation of autonomous tribal populations which had historically existed on the periphery of Ottoman state control, and the conquests in southern Arabia were part of this process.
In other words, in the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire participated fully in what we have described as the “first phase” of the nineteenth century firepower revolution. That is, new military technology tended initially to foster a rise in state power and increased interstate competition, leading to the conquest of weaker political entities and a tightening state grip on previously autonomous populations. The conquest of ‘Asir and Yemen took place in this context.

Finally, we have attempted a critical analysis of Ottoman generalship and the defense strategies of the Yemeni tribesmen, in the light of the general features of colonial war in this period. Here, our main reference point has been Colonel Callwell’s observations about the conduct of “small wars.” The training and experience of the Ottoman officers had elements in common with Callwell’s, and in the Yemen campaign they did what he and other European officers were doing at the time. That is, they adapted a particular way of thinking about strategy, derived from the Napoleonic wars, to the colonial and guerrilla wars which were the most common type of military operation in this period.

The result was a strategy which in its essentials was broadly similar to that recommended by Callwell. The role of fortified citadels as centers of political power in Yemen and ‘Asir supplied the Ottomans with well-defined military objectives, simplifying their task in that regard. These objectives were seized in a series of bold, sweeping moves whose net effect was to destroy the confidence of the tribesmen, making them amenable to surrender. The use of deception, surprise, and calculated intimidation kept the Yemenis off balance, multiplying the demoralizing effect of superior Ottoman firepower.
These, then, were the military-strategic factors on the Ottoman side which influenced the course of the campaign. On the Yemeni side, we may say that in the confrontation with the Ottomans the tribesmen generally followed the customary military patterns we have outlined in Chapter One, patterns which tripped them up at every turn and played into the hands of their adversaries. To briefly recapitulate the points made in Chapter One, the customary patterns of war in Yemen included the following: emphasis on the display of conspicuous bravery in battle, withdrawal into fortresses in the event of defeat or attack by a superior force, and the resolution of sieges by negotiation or subversion of the enemy’s partisans.

Attempts to display conspicuous bravery in battle were most evident at the outset of the campaign, in the suicidal attacks of Muḥammad ibn ʿĀʾid’s partisans on Ḥudayda, and the battles which took place on the Ottomans’ march to Sūghā. The tribesmen in Yemen proper generally did not try to meet the Ottomans in open battle, possibly because they knew of the defeats the ‘Asārīs had suffered, and realized that it would be folly to do so.

In any case, in both regions the response to defeat or anticipated defeat was similar: the tribesmen retreated into their fortresses, and hoped that the Ottomans would go away. This was a logical response to a poorly armed and organized force of fellow tribesmen; it was clearly a mistake in confronting an enemy with the discipline, cohesion, and heavy armament of the Ottomans.

As we have seen, heavy artillery did not give the Ottomans quite the same advantage in siege warfare that it did in battle. Nonetheless it was much more formidable than
anything the Yemenis had seen previously, and its psychological effect was as important as its actual physical capability to destroy fortifications.

The Ottoman commanders refused to negotiate, and their men were not vulnerable to bribery or subversion. On the other hand, the supporters of the Yemeni leaders were highly susceptible to subversion by the Ottomans. The fissiparous character of Yemeni military organization; the making and breaking of alliances on the basis of short-term advantage; the corresponding tendency to abandon military leaders who were clearly losing; all these things tended initially to prevent the mounting of sustained resistance to the Ottoman invasion.

That such resistance was possible may be seen from the siege of Kawkabān; and it is probable that the determined resistance of the defenders of Kawkabān was due to the exceptionally forceful personality of Sayyid ‘Alī ibn Sharaf ad-Dīn. Kawkabān, however, was the exception. In most of the other cases the demoralization caused by defeat, anticipated defeat, or abandonment by their supporters caused the Yemeni military leaders to capitulate within a relatively short period of time. As in other societies with rudimentary political and military organization, it was very difficult for a military leader to achieve long-term goals unless he had more than the ordinary measure of energy, ruthlessness, and courage.

As such, then, Callwell’s basic thesis about the fighting patterns of “irregular warriors” proved to be correct in the case of the Yemeni tribesmen: in the short term, at least, they did not have the organizational cohesion to regroup after a series of defeats by a force armed and organized in the European manner. The relatively swift collapse of Yemeni resistance tended to encourage a belief among the Ottoman military officers in
the efficacy of force and firepower, and to eschew political negotiation as a sign of weakness. The flaws in these assumptions appeared as early as the siege of Kawkabān, and became more and more glaring as the highland tribesmen developed increasingly effective means of resistance.

For the time being, however, the Zaydī and ‘Asīrī tribes seemed to be cowed by the Ottomans’ superior force. In Yemen, the political fragmentation of the pre-conquest era would initially exercise a determining influence on the post-conquest culture of rebellion. Military resistance to the Ottomans would remain fragmented in the first twenty years of the Ottoman occupation, carried out by individual tribes, shaykhs, and claimants to the Imamate without significant attempts at coordination. Ottoman control of Yemen was thus never seriously threatened in this period, despite a multitude of problems in the arenas of logistics and manpower. We will analyze this guerrilla resistance and the Ottoman response to it in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4

LIMITED REBELLION AND “COUNTERINSURGENCY,” 1872-1891

The period 1872-1891 in Yemen was characterized by an uneasy stalemate between the Ottoman administration and the emerging movements of resistance to Ottoman authority. First, the Ottoman infrastructure of control in Yemen was comparatively weak. This was a period of great financial difficulty for the Empire in general, and the provincial administration of Yemen in particular. As a result, the Ottoman administration could neither maintain adequate military forces in Yemen, nor undertake the infrastructural improvements necessary to ensure its grip on the region. We will analyze the weaknesses of the Ottoman forces in detail in the first section of this chapter.
Second, it may be stated that despite these problems Ottoman control of Yemen was never seriously threatened in this period. This was because from 1872 to 1891 war and rebellion in Yemen remained generally limited in character. In this chapter, we will analyze the reasons for the limitations on warfare in this period. At the same time, we will lay the conceptual foundation for showing how this limited war would ultimately assume a more total character, on both the Zaydī and Ottoman sides. The seeds of the more total conflict of the 1890’s were sown in this period, even though the effect was not
immediately apparent. The transformations which the Zaydī and Ottoman political systems were undergoing in this period pushed them inexorably from a limited toward a total form of conflict.

We will show how the military resistance of the Zaydī tribes was initially limited by the constraints of intertribal war and the tribal system, as well as the survival of the military methods of the period before the occupation. At the same time, we will discuss the reformulation of the Imamate as a “tribal quasi-state” on the Gellner model; this state was led by the sayyid holy lineages of Yemen, and organized for the purpose of waging jihād. This was the beginning of the transformation of war in Yemen, from fragmented tribal resistance to long-term jihād organized at the supra-tribal level. During the period in question, however, the jihād was still hampered by the divisions among the Zaydī tribes, and remained a form of short-term warfare.

On the Ottoman side, we will see that during this period methods of curbing rebellion derived from Perso-Islamic political thought tended to prevail in Yemen, based on limited coercion and manipulation of intra-elite rivalries. Such methods included encouraging intertribal warfare, coopting powerful shaykhs, and conducting intermittent punitive expeditions. They were employed in consequence of the Ottomans’ lack of resources and the limited character of rebellion in Yemen in this period. Despite this, centralizing, progressive, and reformist methods of dealing with unrest were not entirely absent. In this period, such policies did not remotely approach any kind of totalizing conflict. They were, however, associated with progressive and pan-Islamist policies which demanded an exclusive loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate by all Ottoman subjects.
Ultimately, this would bring the Ottoman state into a deep ideological conflict with the Zaydī Imamate.

I. The Infrastructure of Control in Yemen.

The Military Forces. As stated, the prevalence of “limited” methods of dealing with rebellion was rooted partially in the weakness of the Ottoman military forces in Yemen. Shortly after the conquest, the expeditionary force to Yemen was reorganized as the Seventh Army. The infantry arm of this army consisted of eight regiments with four battalions apiece.\(^\text{394}\) The Seventh Army also had a permanent artillery arm, consisting of mobile gunners (\textit{seyyar topçu}), and artillerymen stationed in the major fortresses (\textit{kale topçu}).\(^\text{395}\) Sharpshooters (\textit{nişanci}) and cavalry units appear to have been attached in the 1880’s.\(^\text{396}\) There was a single regiment of locally recruited gendarmerie (\textit{zaptiye}) in Yemen, which collected taxes and performed police duties in the rural areas. The regiment was divided into four battalions of mixed cavalry and infantry, which were stationed in the four subprovinces (\textit{sancak}) of Yemen.\(^\text{397}\)

These units were generally badly understrength. Technically, a battalion in the Ottoman military was supposed to number 800 men. Because of the high death rate among the soldiers in Yemen, however, it soon proved impossible to keep the battalions of the Seventh Army at this strength. In the early 1880’s, infantry battalion strength in

\(^{394}\) Hamid Vehbi, \textit{Yemen Salnamesi} 1298 (Ṣanʿā’: n.p., 1298/1880-1881 ), 108.
\(^{395}\) \textit{Yemen Salnamesi} 1303/1305 (Ṣanʿā’: Sanaa Matbaası, 1305/1887-1888 ), 58-59.
\(^{396}\) \textit{Yemen Salnamesi} 1303/1305, 59.
\(^{397}\) \textit{Yemen Salnamesi} 1303/1305, 45-48.
the Seventh Army was officially fixed at 300 men. There were repeated proposals to increase this strength, but nothing seems to have come of them.\textsuperscript{398} A rough calculation on this basis for the land forces of Yemen, as they appear in the yearbook for the Rumi year 1303 (1887-88), yields a figure of approximately 12,000 men.\textsuperscript{399}

Such figures as exist indicate, however, that due to the death rate from disease military units in Yemen were often anywhere from 20-60\% understrength;\textsuperscript{400} taking the death rate into account gives us an actual strength of 5,000-10,000 men for the Seventh Army. Based on other official figures and contemporary estimates, we can reasonably put the total number of troops in Yemen at between 8,000 and 10,000 men at any given time.\textsuperscript{401}

The strength of such a force must be considered in relative terms. In earlier centuries, the Ottoman troops permanently stationed in each of the principal Arab provinces often numbered only around 2,000 men.\textsuperscript{402} By comparison with these armies, then, the Seventh Army appears as a fairly considerable force. By twentieth century standards, at a time when in some countries tens of thousands of troops have been stationed in insurgent

\textsuperscript{398} BBA, Y.Mtv 8/52 1 Rebiyülevvel 1299/20 February 1882. Minutes of the General Committee of the General Staff; BBA, Y.Mtv 16/86 31 Kanun-ı Evvel 1300/12 January 1885. Minutes of the Bureau of Artillery, presented to the Minister of War.

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\textsuperscript{400} See Ahmed Muhtar Paşaa, Sergüzeşt, 97; Harris, Journey, 266.

\textsuperscript{401} Minutes of the provincial administration of Yemen sent to the Ministry of War in put the total strength of the regular troops in the sancak of ‘Asır at 2,132. Multiplied by four, this would give about 8,500 for the province as a whole. See BBA, Y.Mtv 8/52 1 Rebiyül-evvel 1299/20 February 1882. Minutes of the Provincial Administration, sent to the Minister of War. Atıf Paşaa puts the total troop strength of the Seventh Army in the late 1890’s at 8,000 men, a figure which he says represents a low due to the soldiers’ decimation by cholera. For the Seventh Army, however, this would not have been an unusual situation. See Atıf Paşaa, Yemen, 2: 172.

\textsuperscript{402} Luigi Marsigli, L’Etat Militaire de L’Empire Ottoman (Graz: Akademische Druck-u Verlagsanstalt, 1972), 135.
regions on a permanent basis, the Seventh Army does not seem particularly impressive. From 1872 to 1891 the forces in Yemen seem to have been adequate to garrison the major cities, provide a modicum of security in the adjacent rural areas, and furnish troops for periodic punitive and tax collecting expeditions. Events were to show, however, that they were incapable of holding on to the country in the event of a major insurrection.

**Communications and Transport Infrastructure.** The communications and transport infrastructure in Yemen presents a picture similar to that of the military forces; that is, it was adequate but vulnerable. There was a reasonably good network of telegraph lines in Yemen proper, connecting Ṣan‘ā’ to Ta‘izz and Ḥudayda, and Ḥudayda to Luḥayya, Bayt al-Faqīh, Zabīd, and Ta‘izz. ‘Asīr had a line from Qunfida to Abhā, but was isolated from the telegraph networks in both Yemen and the Ḥijāz. As a result, the mutasarrifs (sub-governors) of ‘Asīr had to resort to camel courier and post to maintain communications with these places, a slow and outdated method by nineteenth century standards.

The telegraph network, then, was not entirely satisfactory. The road network was barely adequate. There were three routes of major military significance: Ṣan‘ā’-Ḥudayda, Qunfida-Abhā, and ‘Amrān-Ṣan‘ā’-Ta‘izz. Of these, the most important was the Ṣan‘ā’-Ḥudayda route, by which troops and supplies were sent from the coast into the interior. Major improvements on this road, however, were not made until the governorship of Osman Nuri Paşa (1888-1889), although work was begun somewhat

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404 Ahmet Ziya, “Çografya.”

405 BBA, Y.Mtv 8/16 1 Safer 1299/23 December 1881. Letter from the Governor of the Ḥijāz and the Amīr of Mecca to the mutasarrif of ‘Asīr.
earlier.\textsuperscript{406} Even then, the condition of the road was very uneven. Walter Harris, who traveled from Ṣanʿā’ to Ḥudayda in 1891, noted that in some places the road showed “signs of the repairs of the Turkish engineers, [and] in others [it was] merely a foothold in the mountainside.”\textsuperscript{407}

The key strategic points on these roads were sometimes fortified. At Manākha, the “key to Ṣanʿā’,” there was a fortress with three guns commanding the road from the left side.\textsuperscript{408} It does not appear, however, that the Ṣanʿā’-Ḥudayda road had the number of permanent military posts which were constructed after major insurrections had begun to break out. The infrastructure of control in Yemen was thus not particularly impressive in the context of a troubled region, and its deficiencies become even more evident when we examine the logistical difficulties of the Seventh Army.

\textbf{Problems in Supply and Manpower.} The first major problem with which the Seventh Army had to contend was disease. The primary problem was cholera epidemics. Cholera first broke out in the Yemen expeditionary force. According to Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, of the 4,000 deaths among the soldiers in Yemen between 1870 and 1873, 1,800 were caused by cholera.\textsuperscript{409} Cholera also broke out in the Seventh Army at the end of the 1880’s, decimating the troops just before the major rebellion of 1891.\textsuperscript{410} The overall death rate for the forces in Yemen given by Ahmet Muhtar Paşa for this period is about 18%,\textsuperscript{*} and in individual units it could be much higher. On his visit to the town of Dhamār in 1891,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{406}Ali Galib Bey, \textit{Yemen Salnamesi 1308} (Ṣanʿā’: Sanaa Matbaası, 1308/1890-1891 ), 86.
\item \textsuperscript{407} Harris, \textit{Journey}, 329.
\item \textsuperscript{408} Ahmet Ziya, “Çografya.”
\item \textsuperscript{409} Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeş}, 97.
\item \textsuperscript{410} Harris, \textit{Journey}, 102.
\item * 4,000 out of 22,000.
\end{itemize}
Walter Harris noted that as a result of deaths from illness, the garrison had dropped from 400 to 150.411

The soldiers were vulnerable in part because they were malnourished, for the transport of supplies in the province of Yemen was slow and unreliable. The needs of the soldiers could not be met from the revenues of the province alone; and therefore supplies had to be sent by steamship from other parts of the Empire, through the Suez Canal and south through the Red Sea to the port of Ḫudayda. Once in Ḫudayda, where foodstuffs rotted quickly in the extreme heat and humidity, there were formidable problems of distribution. Yemen had no railroads or roads suitable for carts, and therefore military supplies were transported by means of mule or camel caravan. Pack animals were always scarce. In the conquest, the initial departure of the expeditionary force into the interior of ʿAsīr had to be delayed for almost a month owing to the shortage of transport animals. Camels had to be brought from Mecca, and mules from Kavalla in Albania, before the force was able to proceed.412

Even apart from the scarcity of animals, caravan transport was always fraught with difficulties. The poor condition of the roads in Yemen was one problem. The Ṣanʿā’-Ḥudayda route, for example, actually consisted of two roads for a long stretch in the highland region. The shorter route, the Manākha road, passed through more difficult terrain. As a result, caravans generally took the longer Sanqūr road, which went by way of a wādī. Unfortunately, during rainy periods the wādī was subject to flash floods,

411 Harris, Journey, 266.
412 Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 46.
which frequently swept men and pack animals away.\(^{413}\) This would have made the efficient transport of supplies a particular problem during the summer monsoon season.

The Ottoman logistical system, then, was very vulnerable. The flow of supplies was always subject to hindrance by inclement weather, difficult terrain, a lack of animals, or tribal unrest. Problems such as these stemmed in large part from the difficulties of the natural environment, and were not necessarily insurmountable. The role of human and organizational factors was undoubtedly as significant in the supply problems of the Seventh Army as natural ones, although these are more difficult to document.

One gets the general sense that Abdülhamid’s military bureaucracy was pervaded by corruption, negligence, and inefficiency, which trickled down to the bureaucracy of the Seventh Army. The bureaucratic process involved in the dispatch of men and supplies from Anatolia to Yemen was clumsy and overcentralized. Requests for supplies from the governor of Yemen to the Minister of War would, of course, have to circulate among the bureaucracies concerned: the Bureau of Artillery, the Bureau of Supplies, the Porte, or the General Staff. This process inevitably caused delays and infighting.

When a course of action was finally agreed on, a request for permission to act (\textit{istizan}) had to be submitted to the Yıldız Palace before anything could be undertaken. Even when permission was granted by the Palace, the supplies were not always sent. A letter from the governor of Yemen to the Minister of War in 1881 complains that the grain which was to be dispatched from Iraq to supply the Seventh Army had never arrived, and as a result the soldiers were in dire straits.\(^{414}\)

\(^{413}\) Ahmet Ziya, “Çografya.”
\(^{414}\) BBA, Y.Mtv 8/52 10 Kanun-ı Evvel 1297/22 December 1881. Minutes of the Provincial Administration of Yemen, presented to the Ministry of War.
Peculation by officers with access to military funds was a problem as well. The 1870’s was a period of acute financial crisis in the Ottoman Empire, when the salaries of all state employees were reduced or delayed.\(^{415}\) We know from al-Wāsi‘ī that corruption among Ottoman officials was widespread in this period, probably in consequence of this crisis.\(^{416}\) I have not found any direct references to the embezzlement of military funds until Walter Harris’ account of his journey in 1891,\(^{417}\) but there is no doubt that it went on earlier.

As a result of all these factors, the military units in Yemen were always short of virtually everything. A telegram from the governor of Yemen to the Grand Vizier in 1884 indicates that the Seventh Army had no money, the military units were badly understrength, and the soldiers were poorly clothed.\(^{418}\) A table drawn up by the Bureau of Artillery in 1885 indicates that the distribution of ammunition among the units of the Seventh Army was extremely skewed. One box of ammunition for every two men was considered an adequate supply. The second battalion of the 51st regiment possessed 5,532 boxes, while the remaining battalions had an average of 86 boxes of ammunition; in other words, less than one box for every three men.\(^{419}\) The most likely reason for this imbalance was the difficulty of maintaining the steady circulation of matériel among the scattered garrisons of Yemen, even when supplies did arrive from Istanbul. Documents


\(^{417}\) Harris, *Journey*, 317-318.

\(^{418}\) BBA, Y.A. Res. 24/32 24 Haziran 1300/6 July 1884. Telegram from the Governor of Yemen to the Grand Vizier.

\(^{419}\) BBA, Y.Mtv 16/86 31 Kanun-ı Evvel 1300/12 January 1885. Table drawn up by the Bureau of Artillery.
from later periods indicate that supplies sometimes piled up in Ḫudayda or Qunfīda because of the difficulties of transport.\textsuperscript{420}

The conditions of service in the Seventh Army inevitably had a negative effect on the morale of the men. They had to watch their higher officers enrich themselves from peculation while they themselves were deprived of every necessity, and had an excellent chance of dying before they returned home. One can only imagine the feelings of bitterness and despair which must have arisen in this situation, and this in turn affected the way they dealt with the people of Yemen.

II. Conflict Between the Administration and the Population.

Blaufarb and Tanham emphasize that a lack of professional and correct behavior by the officer corps has a profound effect on the behavior of the enlisted men. Where officers use their positions to make money, military discipline and effectiveness breaks down. The enlisted men are likely to vent their anger on the population, and following the example of the officers, misuse what little power they have to profit at their expense. They may rape, extort money, or commit atrocities to compensate for overall feelings of powerlessness.\textsuperscript{421} Such behavior, of course, has a tremendous impact on the attitude of the population toward the government.

The chronicler al-Wāsi‘ī indicates that corruption and violence was widespread among Ottoman personnel, and he describes the process of tax collection as follows:\textsuperscript{422}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{420} BBA, Y.Mtv 180/35 9 Temmuz 1314/21 July 1898. Telegram from the Commander of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War.
\item \textsuperscript{421} Blaufarb and Tanham, \textit{Who}, 21-22.
\item \textsuperscript{422} al-Wāsi‘ī, \textit{Tārīkh}, 274.
\end{itemize}
When a kaymakam or some other official would go out to a kaza or nahiye* to collect the tithe, he would take the sum assessed for himself, without helping [the villagers] to write a receipt (sanad) for what he had taken. Then he would go to the government and say that they had paid nothing; and the government would order that they be plundered, and their houses destroyed and burned. And when the regular troops arrived, they would violate the honor [of the people] . . .

Al-Wāsi‘ī may, of course, be generalizing from the worst cases. No doubt there were Ottoman officials who were honest, and tax-collecting expeditions which were not accompanied by rape and pillage. Nonetheless, al-Wāsi‘ī probably accurately reflects the way in which the behavior of Ottoman personnel was perceived; and with regard to the question of gaining popular support, the exact nature and extent of atrocities would have been less important than the perception of the government as brutal and unjust.

Anthropological analyses of Zaydī tribal culture, moreover, indicate that the extension of Ottoman state authority would probably have been viewed as unjust whether it was accompanied by gross atrocities or not. Steven Caton has noted that among the Bakīl tribesmen of Khawlān, “injustice” has the connotation of imposition of a decision by coercion. This can be by man against man, tribe against tribe, or state against tribe. Disputes are resolved by displays of ritualistic violence, which are ideally brought to a close through mediation by a respected shaykh or sayyid.423 In this manner, the honor and autonomy of both parties are affirmed. Similarly, Paul Dresch stresses the centrality of autonomy in the preservation of tribal honor. The word honor (‘ard)* is coterminous with one’s house, land, women,

* Administrative districts in the Ottoman Empire.

423 Caton, Peaks, 175-176.

* The Yemeni vocalization of the classical Arabic ‘ird, “honor.”
or tribal border. The preservation of one’s honor depends on keeping these things inviolate from outsiders, including the forces of the state.424

In this context, the Ottoman government would not have had to commit significant atrocities for its actions to be viewed as tyrannical and dishonoring. The entry of troops into tribal territory to collect taxes would have been enough. If atrocities did take place, the event could be conceptualized in Islamic as well as tribal moral terms, as the action of an immoral and un-Islamic government.

That there was growing hostility between significant elements of the Yemeni population and the Ottoman administration is indicated by al-Wāsiʿī. One governor arrived in Ṣanʿāʾ at a time when there was “estrangement” (al-qulūb mutanāfīra) between the “Arabs and the Turks”. Likewise, he notes that “the common people” (al-ʾāmma) “believed that it was lawful to fight [the Ottomans]” (istaḥallu qitālahum), because of what was seen as their tyranny and un-Islamic behavior.425

In sum, we may say that the position of the Ottomans in Yemen became increasingly dangerous over the twenty years from 1870 to 1891. The military forces were not particularly strong, and the population was growing more and more hostile. Yet despite the regular occurrence of localized rebellions, Ottoman control of Yemen was never seriously threatened until 1891. In the main, this was because the patterns of war in Yemen remained substantially similar to those that had prevailed before the Ottoman occupation. That is, they were limited, short-term, and outmoded in weaponry and tactics. Understanding the relative stability of

424 Dresch, Tribes, 54-56.
425 al-Wāsiʿī, Tārīkh, 264-265.
Ottoman rule in this period, then, requires an analysis of the limitations on warfare in Yemen at the same time.

III. War and Rebellion Among the Zaydī Tribes, 1872-1891.

In the introduction, we argued that in tribal quasi-states such as the Zaydī Imamate, there was an inherent tension between tribal and Islamic values. Likewise, we showed that such tensions were associated with conceptually opposed “types” of conflict: jihād and intertribal war. By its nature, intertribal war tended to be limited, localized, and short-term. The ideology of jihād, by contrast, had the potential to make it a form of long-term, totalizing and state-forming warfare. Here, we shall argue that the political fragmentation associated with the ascendance of tribalism in the “time of chaos” tended to keep rebellion limited in the period under discussion.

At the same time, we will discuss the reformulation of the Zaydī Imamate in this period, as a tribal quasi-state on the Gellner model which would ultimately lead the jihād as a long-term struggle against the Ottomans. The goals of this resistance were defined in Islamic terms rather than those of the tribal honor system, overthrowing tyranny and establishing the just Islamic society. The Imām’s state both transcended tribal divisions and drew on elements of the tribal ethos in order to wage this war effectively, providing a means for the various lineages of Ḥāshid and Bakīl to unite against a powerful outside foe. The success that the Imamate would ultimately enjoy in this regard, however, was not immediately apparent. In this period, the tribes remained almost as disunited as they had been in the “time of
chaos,” and followed substantially the same military practices. As a result, Ottoman control of Yemen was never seriously threatened in this period.

Accounts of war in the highlands by Ottoman officers serve to illustrate the persistence of pre-occupation military techniques. The tribes of the highlands were armed with matchlock muskets, *janbiyyas*, and spears about 3½ feet long called *harbas*. Fortresses continued to play a prominent part in highland warfare. In the event of a tribal conflict, the weaker party would shut themselves up in their castles, while the stronger devastated their country. The tribesmen followed the same course when Ottoman punitive expeditions were sent out. They might cause considerable trouble to the expeditionary force by sniper fire, but in the end, they nearly always sought refuge in their fortresses. If the Ottoman commander was skilled he could usually breach the fortress by artillery fire, and in that case the rebels would surrender.426

The type of warfare characteristic of the segmentary tribal society continued in this period. In battles in the highlands, a force would advance after sending out skirmishers and fire a single musket volley in unison. If the opposing side seemed strong, the force would scatter, and continue firing from behind high rocks for about an hour. After this, they would signal their readiness to “give what is demanded.” If they sensed weakness, small parties of the bravest men would advance and make sudden attacks on the enemy with their spears and *janbiyyas*. Hand to hand combat of this kind was what was principally desired, because it provided the best arena for

426 Esat Cabir ibn Osman, “Yemen,” 142, 144. Esat Cabir ibn Osman’s work was written some time after this period, at a time when war in Yemen had changed dramatically. It seems, however, to reflect the conditions of this earlier period.
the display of individual prowess.\textsuperscript{427} Here, we see the general patterns of war characteristic of a segmented tribal society: battle as ritual, the battlefield as an arena for the demonstration of heroic prowess, and the importance of negotiation as the means of finally resolving the dispute in question.

Intertribal war of this kind continues to the present; and the fact that it continued under the Ottoman occupation was not, of itself, particularly significant for the development of resistance to Ottoman rule. The Zaydī tribes, however, were initially unable to get beyond the limitations of this type of war in their first confrontations with the Ottomans. In addition to their inferior armament and outmoded tactics, they were handicapped by the divided political loyalties and narrow military objectives characteristic of the segmented tribal structure. Rebellion against the government tended to be undertaken by individual tribes in their own territories, and was usually not sustained for very long.

A large number of minor rebellions occurred during the first decades of Ottoman rule. In the 1870’s and 1880’s, there were a series of rebellions by the tribes of al-Ḥadā’, the inhabitants of Jabal al-Bukhārī south of Ṣan‘ā’, the Khawlān tribe, the tribe of Arḥab, and so on.\textsuperscript{428} The tribe of Arḥab rose up because Ahmet Feyzi Paşa had had their grain stocks confiscated for the army’s use.\textsuperscript{429} In ‘Asīr, we hear of quarrels between tribesmen and soldiers which led to violence,\textsuperscript{430} and armed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{427} Ahmet Ziya, “Çografya.”
\item \textsuperscript{428} al-Wāsi‘ī, \textit{Tārīkh}, 261-65; \textit{Yemen Salnamesi 1308}, 84.
\item \textsuperscript{429} al-Wāsi‘ī, \textit{Tārīkh}, 265.
\item \textsuperscript{430} Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, \textit{Sergüzeşt}, 85.
\end{itemize}
clashes during the tax-collecting expeditions undertaken by the Ottoman troops.⁴³¹ Similar events probably occurred in Yemen. Likewise, disagreements between shaykhs and Ottoman personnel over the assessment of taxes could result in fighting.⁴³²

These causes seem to indicate that the rebellions were reactions against the encroachments of the Ottoman state, reflecting the particularly tribal ethos of maintaining political autonomy and territorial inviolability. They were usually brought to an end by the dispatch of a punitive column to the troubled region. In the sources, they have the appearance of the tribe defending itself as the tribe, without reference to a larger ideology or political authority.

At the same time, it cannot be stated with certainty that these rebellions were undertaken on the basis of tribal values alone (although it is obviously difficult to determine the exact motivations of the participants). This groundswell of resistance took place in tandem with the reestablishment of the Imamate in Upper Yemen and the launching of the first jihāds; and it may have had some connections with these developments. While initially the Imāms could not overcome the limitations of tribal rebellion in this period, the state organization that they established would eventually do so.

What we see here, again, is the emergence of Ernest Gellner’s tribal quasi-state in the peculiar form which it took in Yemen. It had the major characteristics of this type of state as listed by Gellner: a base of tribal military manpower, a religious

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⁴³¹ BBA, Y.Mtv 21/61 18 Şaban 1303/22 May 1886. Memorial from the Commandant of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War.
⁴³² Harris, Journey, 96-97.
class which served to mediate between the tribes’ segments and hold them together, a charismatic/religious leader, a rudimentary central state staffed by ‘ulamā’, and a militant ideology of jihād.

The establishment of a base of tribal manpower for this state first took place when the Imām Muḥsin ash-Shihārī took refuge in the territory of Ḥāshid after his defeat by the Ottomans. There is not much information about Muḥsin ash-Shihārī’s actions in our sources. It is clear, however, that his principal accomplishment was to establish an alliance between the Imamate, the Bakīl tribe of Arḥab, and Ḥāshid.433 The alliance remained firm throughout this period, and the above-mentioned tribes served as the essential base of military support for the Imamate.

Muḥsin ash-Shihārī died in 1878, and was succeeded by Sharaf ad-Dīn Muḥammad [al-Hādī]. Under Sharaf ad-Dīn Muḥammad, the tribal quasi-state of the Imamate began to take shape in earnest. First, there was a rebuilding of the traditional close links between the Imām and the religious classes. Sharaf ad-Dīn had made his da‘wa in Jabal Ahnūm, where he was later buried. A telegram from the governor of Yemen to the Minister of the Interior dated 18 July 1884 indicates that Jabal Ahnūm was an important center for the Zaydī sayyids and religious scholars involved in Sharaf ad-Dīn’s resistance movement.434

The Qāḍī al-‘Arashī indicates that an earlier governor, Mustafa Asım Paşa, had treated the Zaydī ‘ulamā’ particularly badly.435 It is possible that as a result, many

433 al-‘Arashī, Bulūgh, 77, 79; al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 262.
434 BBA, Y.A. Res. 24/39 6 Temmuz 1300/18 July 1884. Telegram from the governor of Yemen to the Minister of the Interior.
435 al-‘Arashī, Bulūgh, 77.
members of the Zaydī religious elite had put aside the doctrinal quarrels of the pre-occupation period to concentrate on the struggle against the Ottoman government. Sharaf ad-Dīn had at least one rival for the Imamate. Nonetheless, the supporters of the respective Imāms seem to have largely confined themselves to verbal argument (or at least refrained from large scale war); and the rival did not compete seriously with Sharaf ad-Dīn for leadership of the jihād.436 Similarly, Sharaf ad-Dīn’s supporters among the ‘ulamā’ acted as kingmakers in the election of his successor, the Imām al-Manṣūr;437 and al-Manṣūr would lead a jihād in which the Zaydī ‘ulamā’ as a whole displayed a real unity of purpose.

The reestablishment of the traditional close relationship between the elected Imām and the Zaydī religious elites permitted the Imamate-state to take form once again. The sayyids played their traditional role in this state, serving as a link between the tribes and the the Imām, and urging them to jihād on his behalf. The above-mentioned telegram states that the men of religion in the mountains of Ahnūmzalima [sic] and Shihāra “harass the government” (hükümeti işgal) by means of the tribe of Ḥāshid and others.438

The ‘ulamā’ also served in the Imām’s judiciary. Shortly after his election, Sharaf ad-Dīn moved to the city of Ṣa‘da. There, he “put the affairs of the region [of Ṣa‘da] in order (aşlaţa aḥwāl bilādiha)439 and “revived... the laws of the

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436 al-‘Arashi, Bulūgh, 79.
438 BBA, Y.A. Res. 24/39 6 Temmuz 1300/18 July 1884. Telegram from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of the Interior.
religion of [God], the Lord of mankind."440  This seems to have involved the appointment of qāḍīs to act as judges and administrators in the tribal regions of Ṣa‘da.441  Furthermore, he also seems to have organized some type of taxation system for the purpose of waging war.  It is recorded that he left a substantial sum in the public treasury (bayt al-māl) to his successor al-Manṣūr, who used it to finance a major rebellion against the Ottomans.442  Finally, he built a fortress near Ṣa‘da, which served as his residence and the center of his government.443

In other words, a loosely organized but fairly stable state emerged at this time in Upper Yemen, whose leaders were ultimately able to implement a long-term program of military resistance to Ottoman rule. The rebellions led by the Imāms in this period, however, were sporadic and limited. An examination of these early jihāds shows that, while the military sophistication of the Imām’s partisans was increasing, they were unable to overcome the general limitations of warfare in this period.

The first major rebellion was instigated by Muḥsin ash-Shihārī among the tribes of Arḥab and Ḩāshid during the governorate of Mustafa Âsim Paşa. This necessitated a major campaign by this governor in the territory of Ḩāshid. There is not much information in our sources about this rebellion, but it is clear that the Mustafa Âsim was generally victorious on the battlefield. The Qādī Ḥusayn ibn

442 al-Jirāfī, al-Muqtaṭaf, 276.
443 al-‘Arashī, Bulūgh, 79.
Aḥmad al-‘Arashī notes that “most of [these wars] went against [the Imām’s] followers.”444 After these campaigns the tribes “entered into obedience,” according to al-Wāṣi‘ī, and their shaykhs and elders (‘uqqāl) came to Ṣan‘ā’ to receive gifts.445

This rebellion was clearly abortive, although the Qādī also notes that Mustafa Asīm and his successor were unable to permanently settle the affairs of Ḥāshid (lam yuṇdanaṭ lahum fi akthar ad-diyyār al-Ḥāshidiyya amr).446 The fighting took place mainly in the territory of Ḥāshid. The rebels were defeated on the battlefield, no doubt due to their inferior weapons. As a result, the rebel tribes were compelled to make a show of submission, at least outwardly.

This submission, however, was merely temporary. The next major rebellion was organized by Sharaf ad-Dīn in the summer of 1884. The tribes of Arḥab and Ḥāshid were again the major participants, and this time the uprising was not limited to their home regions. Rather, it seems to have been a grab for territory by the Imām in the well-watered region northwest of Ṣan‘ā’.

This area was located on the frontier of Ottoman territory, and most of it was encompassed by the kaza (district) of Ḥajja. The course of events suggests that the rebels had a defined strategic objective and a plan of operations. Sharaf ad-Dīn’s aim was apparently to seize the kaza of Ḥajja and its surroundings, and he may have hoped to spark a larger insurrection by dealing a blow to the Ottomans in this fashion. The invasion of Ḥajja began when the fighters from Ḥāshid and Arḥab

444 al-‘Arashī, Bulūgh, 79. Al-‘Arashī mistakenly gives ʿİsmail Hafız Paşa as Mustafa Asīm’s successor.
445 al-Wāṣi‘ī, Tārīkh, 262.
446 al-‘Arashī, Bulūgh, 79.
seized the fortress of Ẓafīr on the northwest frontier. After this, the rebel forces spread out throughout the kaza and the surrounding regions, cutting the roads and taking the garrisons of Ḥajja, ‘Affār, Miswār, and Ẓafīr under siege. All this took place around the middle of June 1884.447

The rebellion, however, was contained before it had a chance to spread. Several battalions were sent to the region of the fighting toward the end of June. This force, proceeding north through the kaza, was able to scatter the rebel armies without difficulty. By 18 July 1884 the governor was able to report that the expeditionary force had delivered the four garrisons under siege; reopened the Sūda, Miswār, and Ḥajja roads; and cleaned the rebels out of all the kaza of Ḥajja except for Ẓafīr, whose recapture was expected within five days.448 This estimate proved to be overly optimistic. In fact, the siege of Ẓafīr would last for seven months before the rebels finally decided to abandon the fortress. Nonetheless, the rebellion had been contained, at least for the time being.

Several aspects of this rebellion stand out. First, it was evident that the military sophistication of the rebels was increasing. They had launched an attack which seems to have caught the Ottomans off guard, seizing the initiative and putting the Ottomans on the defensive. The Ḥāshid and Arḥab fighters had, with considerable swiftness, deprived the Ottomans of whatever control they had in the rural areas and cut the internal communications of the Ḥajja region. In the process, the major

* Apparently Ottoman troops continued to occupy a portion of the fortifications of Ẓafīr, however, as it is also recorded that a battalion of troops was besieged there while the rebellion was at its height.

447 BBA, Y.A. Res. 24/32 24 Haziran 1300/6 July 1884. Telegram from the Governor of Yemen to the Grand Vizier.

448 BBA, Y.A. Res. 24/39 6 Temmuz 1300/18 July 1884. Telegram from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of the Interior.
garrisons of the area were isolated and surrounded by the rebel armies. This could not have taken place without advance planning, although we cannot know what the precise plan of operations was. Furthermore, at least some of the Imām’s soldiers were armed with modern rifles. The bitter and prolonged character of the siege of Zaffīr was due partially to the fact that the Imām’s partisans in the fortress had rifles, and were better marksmen than the Ottoman soldiers.449

At the same time, the Imām and his partisans had obvious limitations. The rebellion was localized in scope, and undertaken by a limited number of tribal sections (although they were operating outside their own territory). The Ottomans were able to quickly contain the uprising and isolate the rebels in Zaffīr. The bitter and bloody siege which ensued could hardly be called a “short-term” form of warfare. Nonetheless, the rebellion did not ignite a major insurrection, as the Ottomans feared and the Imām probably hoped. If Sharaf ad-Dīn made efforts to ally with tribes and shaykhs beyond his own immediate sphere of influence, they were not sufficient to ensure that a coordinated uprising would take place.

In other words, while we can see the beginnings of a more purely “jihadic” form of warfare in this uprising, it was not sufficient to overcome the military limitations of rebellion in this period. It seems to have had a degree of planning and focus, but it was still essentially localized. Sharaf ad-Dīn and his partisans could not overcome the fragmentation of the Zaydī tribes.

On the continuum between full-fledged jihād and segmentary-tribal war in this period, then, the latter tended to predominate. A similar dichotomy characterized

449 al-Ḥibshī, Hawlīyyāt, 343.
war on the Ottoman side in this period. The division here was between the limited methods of containing rebellion employed by the Ottoman state between the classical age and the eighteenth century, and the more totalizing methods of modern counterinsurgency. The beginnings of the latter were emerging in this period. Nonetheless, limited methods tended to prevail in Yemen, in large part because the resistance faced by the Ottomans was fragmented and limited itself.

IV. Ottoman Methods of Dealing with Rebellion in Yemen, 1872-1891.

Ottoman methods of rule in the nineteenth century were in a constant state of flux, in which the old and new mingled in ways which were both complementary and contradictory. The Ottomans dealt with rebellion in a context where the classical principles of Ottoman state legitimacy were being interwoven with European liberal political ideas; where the need to maintain political legitimacy among the Muslim population clashed with the need to create a secular political order which Ottoman Christians would support; and where “divide and rule” policies survived alongside efforts at state centralization and reform. The vigorous implementation of the latter depended on the seriousness of the crisis in question, the level of foreign pressure for reform, and the initiative of individual governors.

The factors specific to Yemen tended, on the whole, to militate against a stable and modernizing counterinsurgency policy. The global strategic significance of the
Red Sea region was growing in this period, but Ottoman territories there were not
directly threatened to the same extent as the Balkan regions. The Zaydī rebels were
not well organized or armed in this period, and therefore no major crisis seriously
threatened Ottoman control of the country. The administration in Yemen was
militarily weak and financially unstable, with little money to spend on state
expansion and development. Likewise, there was no stability in the governorship of
the province. Governors of widely varying character and ability succeeded one
another in rapid succession in Yemen, each undoing the work of his predecessor.

What we see in Yemen in this period, then, are methods of dealing with rebellion
similar to those used in places like Syria in the early Tanzimat period: a practical
predominance of “divide and rule” tactics accompanied by intermittent displays of
force, together with halting progress toward reform and social development.
Yemen was valuable for its strategic position and not its intrinsic economic worth.
Therefore, it was easier to allow the tribes their autonomy and play them off against
one another when necessary. From the point of view of the government in Istanbul,
investment in centralization and development in Yemen was a luxury the Empire
could ill afford.

That is not to say that Ottoman policy in Yemen was entirely “traditional” or
colonial in the purely cynical sense. Officials who served in Yemen were well
aware of the necessity of bringing the Zaydī and Tihāma tribes under more direct
military control.\footnote{See Mehmet Emin Paşa, “Yemen,” 1-2 (my pagination).} Governors motivated by a belief in Tanzimat or Islamist
progressive thought struggled to reform the administration, implement development policies, and gain the willing support of the population.

These efforts toward centralization and reform, limited as they were, nonetheless represented the beginnings of the more totalizing conflict that would eventually engulf Yemen. The Ottoman state was attempting by means of these policies to create a legitimacy opposed to that of the Zaydi Imamate. The Hamidian state, whose reforms were accompanied by the demand for exclusive loyalty from Ottoman Muslims, would be drawn into an increasingly bitter conflict with the Imamate as the military sophistication of the latter increased.

 Nonetheless, government policy in this period was weighted more toward indirect and limited methods of dealing with rebellion, similar to those historically used in the Arab provinces. These included coopting powerful shaykhs and clan leaders through gifts of money, titles, and tax collecting privileges; manipulating clan and tribal rivalries to isolate rebellious groups; and periodic military expeditions to punish rebels and display the power of the state. The tribes and their shaykhs were not necessarily to be permanently humbled and destroyed. Rather, the government would act as a participant in the endless game of alliances and counteralliances among the tribal sections, in such a manner as to maintain its own overall control. In this manner, a stable if unequal balance of power between the tribes and the state could be maintained, much as segmentary conflict served to maintain the balance of power among the tribal sections.

This meant, of course, doing the opposite of what had been done in places like the Adana region. As we have seen, the Furka-i Islahiye had destroyed the power of
the Turkmen potentates and the fiction that they were appointees of the government, setting up a centralized administration in their place. In Yemen, a similar attempt to bring the powerful tribes and shaykhs of Upper Yemen under government control resulted in failure. Led by Mustafa Asım Paşa and his chief of staff İsmail Hakkı Paşa, the expedition defeated the Ḥāshid tribes in battle, but was unable to bring the region under the direct authority of the government. Thus, after the conclusion of this expedition Mustafa Asım invited the shaykhs and elders (‘uqqāl) of that tribal confederation to Şan‘ā’, where he “bestowed gifts and favors on them.”\footnote{al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 262.} The chief of Ḥāshid ‘Alī ibn ‘Ā‘id Shawīt was appointed as müdir of the Ḥāshid tribes, other chieftains were also given administrative posts, and tribesmen were enrolled as gendarmes (presumably under their chieftains’ command).\footnote{Caesar Farah, The Sultan’s Yemen (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 103.}

After this, it appears that de facto recognition of the shaykhs’ autonomy became a cornerstone of Ottoman policy. When Mehmet İzzet became governor several years later, he attempted to solve the problems between Yemenis and Ottoman personnel by “winning over the chiefs of the tribes and the notables” (ashrāf).\footnote{al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 265.} Despite proposals to bring Upper Yemen under government control, this was never done. The state, in other words, was never able to impose central control in Yemen in the preferred manner of Tanzimat or Hamidian policy. Instead, it reverted to the practice of surface incorporation of local potentates into the government structure. The state recognized the de facto power of the tribal potentates, gave them titles, and delegated state authority to them, because it was too weak to do anything else.
When rebellion broke out despite efforts to win over the shaykhs, the preferred course of action was to incite the rivals of the rebel tribe to attack it, or play off the rebel leaders against one another so that the rebellion would come to nothing. As we have noted, this type of strategy had historically been used by the Empire in a wide variety of contexts; and sometimes, in the texts relating to its employment in Yemen, we can hear echoes of the Perso-Islamic political thought which justified it.

This is evident in Major Esat Cabir ibn Osman’s discussion of “divide and rule” tactics in his description of war in Yemen. The tribesmen, he says, assemble for war at the behest of their shaykhs, without knowing why they are fighting. Therefore, it is necessary to consider that “these innocent wretches (biçaregan) will become the target [of military operations] simply because of the evil actions of one person” (i.e., the shaykh or rebel leader). Thus, in order to avoid shedding the blood of Muslims and taxpayers, the commander should try to sow discord (nifak) among the “bandit” leaders by various means. The Arabs, he notes, make an alliance one day and break it the next; and this would aid the commander in playing off the rebel leaders against one another.454

Certain classical ideas stand out in this passage. The Arab tribesmen, although obviously not defined by as reaya, are described in a manner reminiscent of the classical concept of the reaya. They are not political beings. Instead, they are defined primarily as “taxpayers,” people from whom the government derives its revenue, and who therefore must be protected. They should also be protected because they are Muslims. Protecting Muslims had always been a function of the

Ottoman government, and we have seen that this idea received renewed emphasis under Abdülhamid. In order to achieve the moral end of protecting these Muslims and taxpayers, the government must employ the amoral means of deception and intrigue, which were justified in Perso-Islamic political thought to the extent that they succeeded in maintaining the security of the state and the population.

A strategy of this type was employed successfully by Ahmet Feyzi Paşa in 1886, to avert a second rebellion by the partisans of Sharaf ad-Dîn; and a brief review of this episode is instructive for our purposes. In June and July of 1886, Sharaf ad-Dîn was constructing an alliance of Ḥāshid, Yām, and the Tihāma tribe of the Banī Marwan to attack the coastal town of Abu ‘Arîsh. Accordingly, Feyzi Paşa concentrated troops on the borders of the kaza of Abu ‘Arîsh, the Banī Marwan territory, and the Ḥāshid territory. Troops were sent in support of the Masāraḥa tribe, which had been attacked by the Banī Marwan, and ordered to make preparations for a joint operation with the Masāraḥa against the aggressors. At the same time, intrigues were set afoot to stir up the tribes near Ṣa’da against the Imām. Finally, on 8 September 1886, Feyzi Paşa was able to report that the danger of an attack on Ottoman territory by Sharaf ad-Dîn had passed. The incitement

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455 Singer cites a ferma which expresses sentiments similar to those of Major Osman. The sultan forbade a punitive expedition to be carried out, because “it is inevitable that many obedient and inoffensive Muslims...will...perish on account of a few rebels.” See Singer, Peasants, 106.

456 See Nizām al-Mulk’s story of the Kuch Baluch, where Sultan Mahmūd is said to have dealt with a party of Balūch bandits by tricking them into eating poisoned apples. This was after he had been reproached by a woman who had been robbed by these bandits for not being able to “protect the sheep from the wolves;” that is, not being able to protect the subjects entrusted to him from the “evildoers” (mufsedān) of the Kuch Balūch. Nizām al-Mulk, Book, 64-70; Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsat-nāmah, 76-84.

457 BBA, Y.Mtv 21/46 5 Haziran 1302/17 June 1886. Memorial from the Commandant of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War; BBA, Y.Mtv 22/81 20 Şevval 1303/22 July 1886. Memorial from the Commandant of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War; BBA, Y.Mtv 22/86 19 Temmuz 1302/31 July 1886. Telegram from the Commandant of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War.
(tesvikat) of the tribes had been successful, and the tribes of Sahhâr and the Şa‘da region were warring fiercely with the supporters of the Imam.458

What we see in this episode, then, is a classic case of manipulation of the tribal-segmentary system to contain rebellion. Sharaf ad-Dîn was forming a tribal alliance to attack the government, so Ahmet Feyzi Paşa formed a counter-alliance and threw his own military forces behind it. The coalition of forces thus assembled was too much for Sharaf ad-Dîn. With soldiers guarding the Ottoman border and a tribal uprising close to his capital, he was unable to launch the military assault he had planned.

When “divide and rule” strategies were not sufficient, the government would often send a punitive expedition to the region of the uprising. The manner in which these expeditions were conceived and conducted was generally reminiscent of Ottoman methods of dealing with rebellion before the Tanzimat. The rebels had engaged in “banditry” (şekavet) or “sedition and evildoing” (fitne ve fesat). Therefore, they were in need of “punishing and disciplining” (te‘dib ve terbiye) so that they would obey the government and keep within their proper bounds. The rebels were punished by the destruction and looting of their property, together with the suppression of any armed resistance they might offer. This punishing could be carried out with great brutality.

Ahmet Muhtar Paşa notes that when the people of a given locality took up arms against the government, he would have no choice but to send a military force against them; and by the time the expedition was concluded “much blood would

458 BBA, Y.Mtv 23/67 27 Ağustos 1302/8 September 1886. Telegram from the Commandant of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War.
have been shed, and property destroyed.”\footnote{Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Șergedzeșt, 95.} The column sent against Jabal al-Bukhārī drove the people out of their homes, destroyed their qāt trees, and plundered their possessions.\footnote{al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 262.} On an expedition against the Arḥab tribe, Ahmet Feyzi Paşa is said to have “punished and disciplined [the tribesmen] in such a manner that they would be prevented from daring to repeat their rebellious actions ever again” (bir daha ahval-i șekavetkaranelerini mani bir surette tedib ve terbiye ederek).\footnote{Yemen Salnamesi 1307/1309, (San‘ā’: Sanaa Mabaası, 1307/1889-1890) 50.} Here again, we see the recurrent theme of Perso-Islamic political thought, that exemplary brutality is necessary to protect the security of state and society from “bandits.”

Brutal as they were, however, it must be stressed again that punitive expeditions were a limited means of using force. They could not impose anything other than intermittent control. While the fear inspired by these expeditions might deter rebellion for a time, the government could not permanently garrison every troubled region; and when the punitive column withdrew, the administration would have no more control of the situation than before.

In the main, then, the means used by the Ottoman state to control the tribes of Yemen were those of the weak state, the state which can only maintain an uneasy superiority by divide-and-rule tactics, cooptation of local elites, and intermittent displays of force. These tactics were necessitated by the weakness of the Ottoman administration, and made feasible by the fragmentation of the Yemeni resistance. Some governors, in particular Ahmet Feyzi Paşa, seem to have been inspired by the

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459 Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Șergedzeșt, 95.
460 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 262.
461 Yemen Salnamesi 1307/1309, (San‘ā’: Sanaa Mabaası, 1307/1889-1890) 50.
same brutal cynicism that Ahmet Muhtar Paşa had displayed in the conquest of Yemen. Others were corrupt and indifferent to the needs of the population. The combination of unpredictable violence and de facto weakness inherent in this type of policy did nothing to endear the government to the Zaydī tribes.

Nonetheless, the centralizing, progressive, and reformist elements of the Tanzimat and Islamist political thought had become an inherent part of Ottoman political culture; and these ideas did have an effect in Yemen. First, it was recognized by some Ottoman officials that the government would have to gain the active support of the population of Yemen, which could be lost by ill-considered policies. In the Hamidian period, this was conceived as reinforcing a “natural” loyalty which the Yemenis as Muslims felt toward the Ottoman caliphate. One text concerning Yemen speaks of the Yemenis’ “love for and obedience to the Abode of the Majestic Caliphate, as is obligatory in Islam” (İslamiyet icabı),” despite their rebelliousness against the provincial administration.

In Hamidian thought, the goal was to make this latent loyalty manifest itself in active support for the government. Various measures were proposed to accomplish this. There were efforts to educate a select group of the Yemeni youth as Ottoman Muslims on the Hamidian model, to incorporate them into what we may very loosely term the “national” life of the Ottoman Empire. The author of the above-mentioned text proposed that primary and secondary schools should be founded where Yemeni pupils should be taught that obedience to and love for the caliph was a duty of each individual Muslim under Islamic law (farz-i ayn). Likewise, they

should be subjected to a barrage of propaganda concerning the greatness of
‘Abdülmehmet and the Ottoman Empire. A number of schools were founded in
Yemen during this period, and there is no reason to believe that they did not teach
this curriculum.

The hope was, apparently, that a Yemeni elite educated in the Ottoman fashion
would influence the population at large to support the Empire.

Within the various policies and proposals of this period, we can also see the
general “counterinsurgency” theme that we have outlined for the Tanzimat period.
This was the idea that the support of the population could be ensured by the
following equation: government reform, which would facilitate the establishment
of security and justice, which would in turn permit development and progress.

The concept of **_Islah_** was used early on in the writings on Yemen, in its various
senses relating to military pacification, government reform, and development.
**Ahmet Muhtar Paşa** is said to have completed “the necessary pacification” (**_Islah-i Lazime_**) in the region by the military subjugation of ‘Asır. **Mustafa Asım Paşa**’s
construction of roads and schools was described as **_Islah-i Nafia_**, improvements
relating to public works. **Osman Nuri Paşa** engaged in **_Islah-i Ahval-i Memurin_**,
“reforming the condition of the public officials,” meaning that he forbade
bribery.\(^{464}\)

The most salient example of a governor who implemented this type of policy
was Ísmail Hakkı Paşa, whose policies focused on reform in both the bureaucracy
and the military. First, he sought to prevent corruption. This measure won him

\(^{463}\) Mehmet Emin Paşa, “Yemen,” 6-7.

\(^{464}\) *Yemen Salnamesi* 1307/1309, 46, 48, 51.
some support among the people, as he came to be seen as a “just” ruler in the Islamic sense. “After the arrival of this governor in Yemen rejoiced...for he unfurled the banner of justice...(liwā’ al-‘adal wa’l-inṣāf) and broke the back of bribery and oppression.”

Second, İsmail Hakkı Paşa attempted to organize a locally recruited force to undertake security duties in Yemen. This force, referred to as the Hamidiye, reflected the progressive-reformist focus of Abdülhamid’s regime. It was founded specifically to “strengthen...the natural bonds of the people with the Exalted Sultanate and Glorious Caliphate,” and because “the people of Yemen are both capable and prepared to strive to increase their level of civilization and discipline.” There is no doubt that İsmail Paşa was aware of the corruption and miserable conditions of service in the Seventh Army, and the role of these factors in causing conflict with the local population. He thus established the Hamidiye as the nucleus for a reformed military force, modelled on the army of the British raj in India. The Hamidiye would have better training, pay, and discipline than the regular troops; and as locals, they would not have to make a difficult physical and social adjustment to an alien place.

The Hamidiye consisted of several infantry battalions stationed in Şan‘ā’, who wore the traditional dress of the Yemeni highlanders, but were given the training of Ottoman regular infantry. The members of the Hamidiye were well trained. The

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466 BBA, Y.Mtv 3/58 20 Mart 1296/1 April 1880. From İsmail Hakkı Paşa the Governor of Yemen, type of document unspecified, recipient unspecified.
467 BBA, Y.Mtv 8/101 16 Cemaziyülevvel 1299/5 April 1882. Note (tezkire) from the Ministry of War to the Yıldız Palace.
Paşa “took such care of their training and education (ta’līm wa tarbiyya) that they became known as the sons of İsmail.” Unlike the Ottoman soldiers, moreover, they were paid regularly and well cared for. All this was undoubtedly done to make them an effective fighting force loyal to the state, and to avoid the problems caused by the abuses in the Seventh Army.

As a reformed military force, the purpose of the Hamidiye was to put down rebellion and establish security. It appears that İsmail Paşa did enjoy some success in this regard. The soldiers of this corps were loyal, had high morale, and performed well in battle. After their training was complete, the Hamidiye were sent on several punitive expeditions on a trial basis; and on these expeditions they “showed extraordinary courage in putting down disorders, so that one battalion of these men was worth many battalions of Turks.”

Security in this sense also seems to have included the concept of protection of the population from arbitrary violence by the government. The Hamidiye soldiers apparently refrained from employing the brutality which characterized many Ottoman punitive expeditions. The members of the corps were Yemenis themselves and shared the values of the population; and undoubtedly the care and attention bestowed on them by İsmail Paşa inspired a high standard of personal conduct.

As a result, they won the respect and admiration of the population at large; and often rebellious tribes would submit merely on the appearance of these troops,

468 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 264.
469 Ibn Hayrūlla Ahmet Şevki, Yemen Muharipleri, 5.
470 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 264.
because “they were of the people of Yemen,” and “the rebels feared to kill their brother Muslims.” The Ottoman troops were not viewed in the same way, because of their personal behavior. By employing the Hamidiye in this fashion, İsmail Paşa thus seems to have gained a degree of popular support, as reform and security policy in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire was supposed to do.

The establishment of security through reform was also supposed to create the conditions for development and the advance of civilization. Apparently this was one of İsmail Paşa’s goals as well. In his report on the establishment of the Hamidiye, he states that because Yemen is a Muslim region, it is necessary to “increase the means of its [becoming] civilized and developed” (esbab-ı medeniyet ve mamuriyetin tezyidi). İsmail Hakkı Paşa’s main achievement in this regard appears to have been the founding of a number of schools.

In sum, Ismail Paşa’s policies reflected the progressive Ottoman concept of “counterinsurgency” that first emerged in the Tanzimat. The “good order” (intizam) of the government, security (asayiş, emniyet), development or economic growth (mamuriyet), and the loyalty of the population were inextricably linked. Good government would create a secure environment in which progress and economic growth could take place. The population would be grateful for the safety and justice provided by the state, and begin to identify with it.

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471 Ibid.
472 BBA, Y.Mtv 3/58 20 Mart 1296/1 April 1880. From İsmail Hakkı Paşa, type of document unspecified, recipient unspecified.
473 al-Wāsi‘ī, 264.
İsmail Paşa’s goals for the Hamidiye also reflected the absolutist and Islamist philosophy of the Hamidian regime. The corps was to serve as the vehicle for socializing Yemenis as Ottoman Muslims loyal to the caliph, directing their loyalties away from the Imam. The force, as a rhetorical extension of the sultan’s authority, would then serve as the vehicle for bringing peace, civilization and progress to Yemen. The reason, in fact, that it was necessary to make Yemen “civilized and developed” was because it was one of the largest “pillars of Islam” (erkan-ı İslamiyet) in the Empire. Development would strengthen the loyalty of the Yemenis to the Ottoman state, implicitly making Yemen a bulwark against European colonialism rather than a source of weakness.

It would hardly be correct to describe this as the beginning of the totalizing conflict with the Imamate, for the Hamidiye corps was very small, and conflict with the Imamate comparatively limited during Ismail Hakkı Paşa’s tenure as governor. What we may say is that Ismail Hakkı Paşa’s policies were based on the Hamidian ideas which would eventually push the Ottomans into a totalizing conflict with the Imamate; that is, the concept that Abdülhamid as caliph was owed the exclusive loyalty of Ottoman Muslims, and that only under his leadership could the Muslim world achieve progress, development, and security from the European powers. In consequence, there was no place for the Zaydī Imamate as an alternate source of political legitimacy. This theme would remain consistent throughout the vagaries of Ottoman policy in Yemen until the Young Turk era.

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474 BBA, Y.Mtv 3/58 20 Mart 1296/1 April 1880. From İsmail Hakkı Paşa, type of document unspecified, recipient unspecified.
The effect of the *Hamidiye* corps itself, however, was relatively limited. As with many well-intentioned reforms of the Ottoman Empire, İsmail Hakkı Paşa’s aspirations were frustrated by the hard political and financial realities of the time. First, the administration ran out of money to fund the *Hamidiye*. Second, the experiment foundered on the pathological suspicions of Abdülhamid. İsmail Paşa wanted to expand the corps and have them take over some of the duties of the regular army, at least partially. Abdülhamid, however, apparently feared that the corps might serve as a vehicle for sedition and loosen the Empire’s grip on Yemen; accordingly, he ordered it to be disbanded.\footnote{al-Wāṣīṭ, *Tārikh*, 264-265; BBA, Y.Mtv 8/101 16 Cemaziyülevvel 1299/5 April 1882. Note (*tezkire*) from the Ministry of War to the Yıldız Palace.} In the dictatorial government of Abdülhamid, *realpolitik* was more important than ideology.

Ottoman methods of dealing with rebellion in Yemen in this period, then, present a decidedly mixed picture. Aspirations toward centralizing, reformist, and progressive policies always ran up against the military and financial limitations of the administration. The administration could not afford to bring Upper Yemen under government control, pay its officials enough to prevent them from taking bribes, engage in extensive road construction, or even keep its soldiers in good health. The centralization and development associated with modern counterinsurgency were necessarily slow in this context, although by no means absent.

The Ottoman Empire therefore had to concede a large measure of autonomy to the tribes and notables of Yemen, and deal with rebellion by the means traditionally used in the Arab provinces: “divide and rule” measures accompanied by periodic
punitive expeditions. The disorganization of the Yemeni resistance and the relative absence of great power pressures (at least by comparison with the Balkan provinces in the Tanzimat era) made these policies relatively effective, or at least not completely disastrous.

At the same time, the seeds of the totalizing ideological conflict of the Ottoman state with the Imamate were sown in this period. The Hamidian state’s focus was on centralization, dictatorial absolutism, and unquestioned Muslim loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate. The Zaydī Imamate represented a rival concept of the leadership of the Muslim community, and drew its support from Zaydī tribes and notables who wished to remain autonomous. In the reign of Abdülhamid, compromise with the Imām would not be possible; and as the military sophistication of the Imamate increased, the conflict with the Ottomans would become increasingly bitter and bloody.

**Conclusion.**

In the first years of the Ottoman occupation of Yemen, then, war between the government and the Zaydī tribes remained limited and intermittent. At the same time, those elements which would create a more totalizing conflict were taking shape and gathering strength. On the surface, the conflict between the Ottoman state and the tribes seemed to follow the archaic patterns characteristic of the Zaydī Imamate or the Ottoman Arab provinces before the Tanzimat. The Ottoman government was plagued with problems of money and manpower. It could not
extend its authority in the aggressive manner of some wealthier colonial states, such as the French in Algeria. The Zaydī tribes and the Imāms, for their part, could not instantly overcome the political fragmentation of the pre-occupation period.

The wars which took place in consequence had the appearance of clashes over the boundary between Ottoman state power and tribal autonomy, conducted according to the familiar pattern in the Middle East: a constant merry-go-round of alliances and counteralliances, uprisings and punitive expeditions, and reconciliation followed by renegotiation of the tribe-state relationship. All this served to maintain an uneasy equilibrium of force between tribe and state.

Nonetheless, deeper trouble was brewing beneath the surface. The Zaydī tribes did not even give a grudging acceptance to Ottoman legitimacy, as Arab tribes elsewhere in the Empire had historically done. The Ottomans had replaced a state with an ideology just as Islamic as their own, but incompatible with it. The exclusive claims of ‘Abdülhamid’s Pan-Islamic caliphate created the potential for deep ideological conflict with the Zaydī Imamate. Under the pressure of Ottoman expansionism, the Zaydī Imamate was reforming itself as a tribal quasi-state organized for the purpose of waging war, as had happened among Muslim tribal societies elsewhere. In Yemen as in Libya or Algeria, the concept of jihād provided a means to unify segmentary tribal societies against colonial states and overcome the inherent limitations of intertribal war. Coupled with the exigencies of waging war against the well-armed forces of the modern state, this would eventually result in a long-term and totalizing rebellion in Yemen organized along guerrilla lines.
CHAPTER 5

THE 1891 REBELLION

The 1891 rebellion represented the maturing of the resistance movement led by the Imāms, and the failure of Ottoman divide and rule tactics to achieve peace and security on a long-term basis. Considering the war in Yemen as a struggle by both sides to achieve the control of the population, this was a round which the Ottomans clearly lost. After the death of Sharaf ad-Dīn, Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā Hamīd ad-Dīn was elected as the Imām al-Manṣūr. Al-Manṣūr proceeded to raise a major rebellion against the Ottomans, and enough of the population went over to him to ensure that the rebel forces had overwhelming numerical superiority to the Seventh Army garrisons. This led to the temporary loss of most of the highland region to the Imām. How was the Imām able to achieve this?

First, we will show that this was accomplished through the extension of the tribal quasi-state formed by Sharaf ad-Dīn into the region under Ottoman control, and its transformation into an effective instrument for raising rebellion. To do this, the Imām had to have a coherent ideology around which to rally resistance; he had to convince the population, by persuasion or coercion, to support the rebel cause instead of obeying the
government; and he had to have mechanisms for mobilizing men and money for the rebellion.

What we will try to do, then, is to explain how the specific tasks necessary to raise rebellion were accomplished within the dynamics of the segmentary lineage social order of the Zaydī tribes. The essential problem faced by the Imām al-Manṣūr was that of political leaders in many segmentary tribal societies: how to get the tribes to move beyond the particularistic interests embodied in the honor code to unite for a larger political purpose.

Historically in the Middle East, this had been done by formulating a vision of the ideal Islamic society to be achieved through *jihād*. The ideology of *jihād* provided a moral vision transcending the bounds of the tribal honor code. Therefore, under the proper circumstances this could permit the development of long-term, state-forming, and total modes of warfare to achieve this vision. Accordingly, in this chapter we will first analyze al-Manṣūr’s ideology of *jihād* as an essential motivating force in the rebellion. Specifically, we will show that the ideas of *jihād* presented in al-Manṣūr’s *da’wa* were conducive to the emergence of the long-term and total military resistance in question.

Likewise, we will focus on the means by which the Zaydī tribes and shaykhs were persuaded to support this *jihād*. Al-Manṣūr’s ideology of *jihād* was not new, and the simple existence of an ideology conducive to long-term and total war did not mean that this kind of war would emerge of itself. The Zaydīs would have to be persuaded to support the *jihād* through propaganda. Here, we will discuss the role of both the Imām himself and the network of Zaydī *‘ulamā’* in Ottoman territory. The Imām sent out notices of his *da’wa* and letters to tribal shaykhs urging them to take part in the *jihād*. 
Prominent ‘ulamā’ of the Zaydī sayyid and qāḍī families in Ottoman territory likewise used their local influence to persuade the people to support the Imām. By means of propaganda, the Zaydī qāḍīs and sayyids were able to put into operation one of the primary principles of a segmentary lineage society such as that of Ḥāshid and Bakīl: the ability of men of the holy lineages to unite the tribes around themselves by means of their religious authority and mediatory powers. This would pave the way for the extension of the authority of the Imām’s state, itself dominated by the sayyid class and organized for the purpose of waging jihād.

Thirdly, we will analyze the role of this propaganda in what we may very loosely term the competition for the support and control of the Zaydī population between the Imām and the Ottoman government. Here, we will focus on the game of gaining the allegiance of powerful tribes or shaykhs as a means of keeping them quiet or achieving an immediate political objective, engaged in by both the Imām and the Ottomans.

We will show that in the 1891 rebellion the Imām won this game by an astute understanding of the concept of honor, and the means by which authority could be effectively exercised among Ḥāshid and Bakīl. The Ottomans had a top-down view of this process, believing that the tribes could be kept quiet by gaining the allegiance of the shaykhs, and that the shaykhs would obey the Ottoman government in exchange for material inducements. The Imām, by contrast, targeted both the tribes and the shaykhs in his propaganda. He understood that the Ḥāshid and Bakīl shaykhs did not “control” their tribesmen per se, and that the attitudes of their tribesmen would influence the shaykhs’ political decisions. He appealed not merely to their material interests of his audience, but to the complex of honor and Islamic piety which formed their core system of values.
Supporting the Ottomans was made to seem dishonorable, while waging *jihād* was honorable.

Skillful propaganda of this type enabled the Imām to exploit the kind of crisis situation in which segmentary lineage societies such as Ḥāshid and Bakīl may unify politically: severe economic pressures as a result of drought, combined with mounting resentment against a powerful state. The Imām was able to create an alliance composed of virtually all the powerful tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl, and use it against the Ottomans. The lesser Zaydī tribes, and some of the powerful shaykhs of Lower Yemen, soon followed suit.

Likewise, we will analyze the Imām’s state itself and the manner in which it functioned during the rebellion. The state essentially represented the unifying, mediatory, and scriptural-Islamic authority of the *sayyids* among the tribesmen; for most of the men who acted in an official capacity for the Imām were *sayyids*. In the Zaydī regions, the state tended to function by means of persuasion and collaboration with locally powerful tribes and shaykhs, rather than coercion. Likewise, the Imām’s state in Ottoman territory did not have a highly developed independent capacity to mobilize men and money for the rebellion. This function was largely performed by the tribal shaykhs.

At this early date, the representatives of the Imām’s state tended to limit themselves to leading military operations against the Ottomans in conjunction with the local shaykhs. That is, they played the military role that men of the holy lineages in a Middle Eastern tribal society often play when that society is threatened by powerful outsiders: that of providing leaders above intertribal jealousies, around whom hostile tribes could temporarily unite to resist the invader. The manner in which this state was established, in
fact, made it difficult for them to do anything else. The Imâm’s representatives would usually arrive in an area immediately prior to, during, or after hostilities had broken out. There was not time to establish a system of administration among the allied tribes.

In this context, we will emphasize another important feature of the 1891 rebellion, its high level of spontaneity. The ideology which underlay the 1891 rebellion was that of jihâd, which was conducive as an idea to long-term and state-forming warfare. This was not, however, the well-organized guerrilla warfare of the later 1890’s. It had, rather, the character of a tribal uprising on a grand scale. The rebellion began when the Imâm’s forces won an important victory against the Ottomans in the Ḥajja region. After this, the tribes joined in alliance with the Imâm one after another as his prospects of success seemed to increase; the effect was rather like that of a string of firecrackers setting off one another in a chain reaction.

The uprising had many of the features that we have defined as characteristic of short-term, intertribal war. It came together as an ad hoc set of alliances for the purpose of what seemed to be an immediate military objective, the expulsion of the Ottomans from Yemen; and the members of the alliance multiplied with the successes of the instigators. In the flush of the Imâm’s early victories, it is doubtful that it occurred to many of the participants just how difficult the permanent expulsion of the Ottomans would prove to be.

Finally, we will analyze the strategic and tactical aspects of the rebellion. The 1891 rebellion showed that the Imâm’s forces had both important strengths and limitations. The scale of the rebel armies in the field, coupled with sophisticated employment of the ambush tactics of the Zaydî tribes, initially allowed the Imâm to narrow the gap between
the battlefield capabilities of his partisans and the Ottomans. The Imam’s forces had superior manpower and better control of the terrain, and this enabled them to win important victories in the field.

Because of their outdated weaponry, however, the Imam’s partisans had greater difficulties in the capture of fortified cities. Moreover, they were still unable to defeat a well-equipped Ottoman expeditionary force in the field, provided that the generals were reasonably competent. This, coupled with the fissiparous character of the tribal social structure, led to the relatively swift dissolution of the tribal armies after the arrival of reinforcements from Istanbul. These forces were able to reconquer the Yemeni highlands with what seemed a reprise of the Callwellian strategy of the first conquest: swift and decisive action accompanied by superior firepower.

Nonetheless, this was not really the end of the rebellion. A lengthy guerrilla war ensued, in which the weaponry and tactics of the Imam’s forces became more sophisticated, and his state acquired increasing control over the process of mobilization. The 1891 rebellion thus marked the essential transition point between short-term tribal rebellion and jihad waged as long-term, state-forming, and total war. What had been a disconnected series of rebellions suddenly came together in a major social explosion. The Imam had instigated this explosion, although he did not fully control it; and he proved adept at harnessing it to his needs, and using it to extend the authority of his state. The lessons learned and the organization established would serve as the foundation for the jihad of the 1890’s; and the next major uprising would be much better organized, and much more devastating to the Ottomans.
I. Al-Manṣūr and Sharaf ad-Dīn’s “Tribal Quasi-State.”

The leader of the 1891 rebellion was the Imām Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā Hamīd ad-Dīn [al-Manṣūr]. Al-Manṣūr was elected to the Imamate shortly after the death of Sharaf ad-Dīn [al-Hādī] in the late spring of 1890. Imām al-Manṣūr’s first action was to take over Sharaf ad-Dīn’s state in the north, with the major elements that served to constitute it as a tribal quasi-state on the Zaydī model: a base of tribal military manpower, a small non-tribal army and administration, and a body of supporters among the ‘ulamā’. Al-Manṣūr appears to have been favored by Ḥāshid and Bakīl from the outset. Al-Jirāfī states that the Imām was accompanied by many tribesmen on his journey from Šan‘ā’ to Ša‘da to make his da‘wa; and that his election was a severe blow to the government “in view of his authority (nufūd) among the tribesmen and the love [which they had for him].”

Once in power, al-Manṣūr proceeded to cement this general support by formal alliances. The Ḥāshid tribes in the region outside Ottoman control, the supporters of Muḥsin ash-Shihārī and Sharaf ad-Dīn, made an alliance with al-Manṣūr early on. In a letter to the al-Gharbī shaykhs in the summer of 1890, al-Manṣūr states that he has received a letter from the men of Ḥāshid communicating their submission and alliance, and he plans to set out for the region of Ḥāshid and Bakīl in the near future. Al-

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476 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 269.
478 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh ‘Alī 22/2003 ibn Murshid al-Gharbī, Shaykh Nāshir [err. for Nāsīr?] ibn Murshid ibn Ḥusayn al-Gharbī, Shaykh ‘Alī ibn Jābir as-Sindī, and Qāsim ibn Sa‘d Abū Hādī, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.
Manṣūr, then, was apparently able to take over Sharaf ad-Dīn’s base of tribal manpower with comparative ease.

At the same time, al-Manṣūr was strongly supported by Sharaf ad-Dīn’s partisans among the ‘ulamā’ in the north. It was they, in fact, who had engineered his election. In a letter to Shaykh ‘Alī Murshid al-Gharbī, al-Manṣūr notes that the men of religion and notables of both Ḥāshid and Bakīl are with him, “praise be to [God], I have brought the ‘ulamā’ and sayyids into the circle of alliance, removing the discord...which causes the appearance of strife and the abandonment of the holy war.” Al-Manṣūr’s imamate thus had the support of the two powerful groups which historically had formed the social core of the “tribal quasi-state” in Yemen and elsewhere: the tribes, who provided it with military manpower, and the ‘ulamā’, who provided it with literate officials and religious legitimacy.

Al-Manṣūr also took over the rudimentary governmental institutions which served as the core of the network of alliances among these powerful social groups. First, he took possession of Sharaf ad-Dīn’s treasury and its associated sources of income (bayt al-māl). Second, al-Manṣūr took over or established a body of military retainers. In a letter to the Ghashmī shaykhs of Hamdān, al-Manṣūr states that he has set the affairs of the Ṣa‘da region in order; and all that is required now is to provide its strong points (noktalar) with soldiers and commanders” (ümere ve asker). The 1891 rebellion was touched off

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479 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh ‘Alī Murshid al-Gharbī, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.

480 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh Jibrīn ibn ‘Alī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh ‘Alī [ibn ‘Alī al-Ghashmī], Shaykh Aḥsan [Ḥasan?] ibn ‘Alī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh Qā’id Riyād al-Munqīḍī, and Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Mukhtāra, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.
in part by clashes between the Imām’s “retainers” (avene) and Ottoman troops. While the organization of the Imām’s army is obscure, the evidence at least suggests that they had some special status outside the ordinary tribal military structure.

Finally, al-Manṣūr took over or established a small body of judicial and administrative officials in the regions under his control. In the same letter to the Ghashmī shaykhs, al-Manṣūr states that he has appointed a governor and judge* to the city of Ṣaʿda, where “by the grace of God my commands are obeyed.” The governor was Sayyid Muḥammad, son of Sharaf ad-Dīn, and the judge Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullah al-Ghālibī. A governor (ʿāmil) was also appointed to the tribal area of Khawlān near Ṣaʿda, and a qāḍī to administer the region of Jabal Rāziḥ. Large-scale support among the tribes and Zaydī ʿulamāʾ thus allowed al-Manṣūr to take over the state institutions that Sharaf ad-Dīn had established essentially intact, without significant opposition.

The Imām’s state in Upper Yemen provided what we may very loosely term a “base of operations” for the 1891 uprising. It was a remote region outside the effective control of the Ottoman government, from which operations could be planned and agitators dispatched into Ottoman territory. It would provide, in essence, the political nucleus from which the tribal quasi-state of the Imāms could be expanded into Ottoman territory as a counter state; that is, an instrument for depriving the government of control of the Zaydī tribes and raising them in rebellion.

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481 BBA, Y.Mtv 50/97 23 Mayis 1307/4 June 1891. Note from the Minister of War to the Yıldız Palace.  
* The terms used (in Arabic transliteration) are hākim and nāẓir, for judge and governor respectively.  
482 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh Jībrān ibn ʿAlī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh Ṭalî [ibn ʿAlī al-Ghashmī], Shaykh Aḥsan [Ḥasan?] ibn ʿAlī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh Qāʾid Riyāḍ al-Munqīṭī, and Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Mukhtāra, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.  
483 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:257-258.
The first steps of this process involved an intense period of agitation and propaganda in support of the *jihād*. As we explained in Chapter One, *jihād* was the basic principle on which military action at the supra-tribal level could be carried out, and the authority of a tribal quasi-state such as the Imamate established. The moral concepts associated with *jihād* allowed the Imam to overcome the inherent limitations of war based on the tribal culture of honor, together with the internecine hostilities of the tribal system and its resentment of state authority. Therefore, before we discuss the the Imam’s counter state in more detail we must first understand the character of *jihād* as an idea.

**II. The Ideology of *Jihād*.**

*Jihād* as an idea, that of legitimate resistance to an oppressive state authority, was what allowed the Imāms to organize actual military resistance of a long-term and state-forming character. The ideology of *jihād* underpinning al-Manṣūr’s rebellion was set forth explicitly in what the Ottomans called his *davet-name*, the letter sent out to Ḥāshid and Bakīl announcing his accession. The summons to the holy war in this letter is made on the basis of an appeal to purely Islamic moral concepts, without reference to tribal ethics of honor. Three themes are prominent in this summons. The Ottoman government is illegitimate, because its actions are evil. The Imamate is legitimate, because it strives to achieve the transcendent Islamic ideals of justice and morality. To achieve these ideals, the believers must engage in *jihād*, conceived as a long-term struggle to overthrow the Ottoman government.
The summons begins with the traditional Zaydi theme that the present governing authority is tyrannical and un-Islamic. The Ottoman officials are defined as “enemies of the faith” who “oppress (zulūm, Arabic ẓulm)” the worshipers of God.” This theme is expanded in later sections of the summons. “The property of the Muslims has been unlawfully seized, those possessing rank and nobility have been humiliated, and the divine laws have been changed.” The administration is associated with tyranny, corruption (fesat, Arabic fasād), unbelief (küfür, Arabic kufr), and even “rebellion against God” (Allah’a isyan). It is not merely illegitimate, but irredeemably evil.

This denunciation of the Ottomans was paralleled by an equally forceful assertion of the Imam’s legitimacy. An essential criteria for the legitimacy of al-Manṣūr’s authority is, of course, his descent from Muḥammad. At the same time, the Imam’s legitimacy is also defined by the moral and Islamic quality of his actions as a ruler. Al-Manṣūr is careful to establish the probity of his government in this regard. “I guide (irṣat, Arabic irshād) you in the straight path and the upright ways of the Prophet (sünnet, Arabic sunna)...I do not take the property of the subjects (reaya, Arabic raʿāyā), nor let justice and equity escape from my hand. I am hard to the enemies of the faith, and merciful and compassionate to the believers.” The probity of the Imam’s rule is thus contrasted directly with the wickedness of the Ottoman government. The absolute moral opposition

* This summons was probably intended for distribution among literate persons of the ‘ulamā’, to read aloud during the Friday prayer or tribal assemblies. A copy of it came into the hands of the governor Ismail Hakki Paşa, who had it translated into Turkish and forwarded to the Minister of War. The translation is of this summons is somewhat problematic, insofar as it is third-hand. The original letter is in Arabic, while our version is in Ottoman Turkish. The likelihood is, however, that the Arabic religious terminology has been retained in the Turkish version.

484 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Announcement of al-Manṣūr’s accession to the Imamate and summons to the jihād, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.

485 Ibid.
that this implied, between light and darkness, was one factor in pushing the Zaydīs toward a total form of conflict with the Ottomans.

In making his claim to the Imamate, the Imām also makes a summons (daʿwa) to the Muslim community to act in obedience to the principles of Islam. They are to fast, pray, perform the pilgrimage, pay the tithe, and give alms to the needy. The social ideals of Islam, however, cannot be realized under an unjust and tyrannical government. Therefore, above all else the Imām summons the Muslim community to jiḥād to overthrow this government.

As we have stated, jiḥād in this particular document is defined in strictly Islamic terms, without reference to the tribal culture of honor. Thus defined, it is eminently suitable as the basis for a bitter ideological conflict transcending the ordinary limits of intertribal war. Jiḥād in the military sense is part of a broader Islamic concept indicating “striving, struggle, endeavour.” In the individual sense, this may indicate the believer’s struggle to reform himself or herself, to resist the downward pull of the baser instincts and lead a righteous life before God.486 Such a struggle is inevitably prolonged and difficult. If undertaken in the proper fashion, it will occupy the believer’s entire life. Likewise, it is also associated with efforts undertaken to improve the moral condition of the Muslim community.487

Now, historically jiḥād in Zaydī Islam was defined as a struggle to achieve this moral purification of society through military means. The conduct of jiḥād in the military sense thus demands the same qualities required for individual moral purification: perseverance,

486 Edwards, Heroes, 143; Peters, Jihad, 1.
487 Peters, Jihad, 1.
self-denial, faith in a transcendent ideal which gives meaning to the suffering of the present. Such ideas were well suited to the waging of a hard and protracted guerrilla struggle, although not every jihad undertaken in the Islamic world had this character.

In our document, the example of personal self-denial is set first by the Imām. The Imām has renounced a life of worldly ease to deliver the Muslims from oppression. “When I saw this great calamity I tore the halter of ease (rahat) from my neck and hastened to deliver the religion of my Creator.” The Imām expects a similar sacrifice of his followers, who are to renounce the ordinary concerns of life to pursue the transcendent ideals of the jihad. They must willingly sacrifice their lives and possessions. “God has purchased from the believers their lives and property, that they may have paradise and fight in the path of God, killing and being killed.”

To achieve the goals of jihad requires zeal, courage, and perseverance. The Imām exhorts the Muslims to “lift the forearm of zeal (himmet) to make war on the foreigners with valor.” They must struggle against the enemies of the faith with “diligence and fortitude” (cidd-ü-metanet). They must persevere in the face of immediate suffering. “Compel yourselves to steadfastness and perseverance (sabr-u-sebata cebr-i nafs ediniz), for the reward of perseverance is pleasant.” Willingness to endure immediate hardship will eventually result in long-term reward and the achievement of their goal, the overthrow of the Ottoman state. “God willing, we will be victorious. We will take

488 See for example the ideas associated with jihad in the letter of the Imām al-Manṣūr Aḥmad ibn Hashim to a prominent partisan of his rival for the Imamate in 1850. Al-Manṣūr contrasts the man who is subject to his own passions with the man of self-discipline, implying that he is the latter. Such discipline enables him to bear the burdens of jihad, including the “heat of the sun”, “sleeplessness,” and leaving his home and country. See al-Wāsi’ī, Tarīkh, 244-245.

489 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Announcement of al-Manṣūr’s accession to the Imamate and summons to the jihad, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.
whatever they possess by force and power, and uproot them by the favor of God the Most High.”

The concept of *jihād*, then, provided the essential framework for a quasi-total form of war: a struggle for the destruction of the enemy as a means of achieving a universal moral goal, requiring complete commitment from the participants. The Muslims would have to pour their energies into the *jihād* until the forces of evil were destroyed, and the social order embodying the transcendent ideals of Islam established. In this manner, war was defined as a hard struggle to achieve a social and moral idea; and the first step toward achieving the vision of *jihād* would be the dissemination of these ideas through propaganda.

### III. Propaganda in the 1891 Uprising.

Propaganda was the essential first step in gaining the support of the Zaydī tribes for rebellion, and in laying the foundation of the Zaydī counter state as a viable institution for waging war. As such, it had some very broad similarities to the role of propaganda in modern guerrilla war. If we are not to distort the meaning of Zaydī propaganda in the rebellion, however, we must discuss its role in the context of the segmentary lineage social order we have outlined. Propaganda served as a means of constructing a set of tribal alliances held together by a loose supra-tribal state structure, not as a means of regimenting the population into a set of quasi-bureaucratic institutions.

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490 Ibid.
Propaganda served to knit together the various tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl in alliance against an enemy from outside their segmentary lineage structure, the Ottomans. Propaganda was mainly spread by the Zaydī ‘ulamā’, both sayyids and qāḍīs, whose role in instructing the tribesmen in Islam was extended to exhorting the tribesmen to jihād. In doing this, they were able to reinforce their authority and their role as a kind of social “cement,” serving as the mediatory social group which could unite the tribal segments against a common enemy. They were also able to strengthen their links with the Imamate and the powerful group of Zaydī ‘ulamā’ who supported him. In short, propaganda allowed the Zaydī ‘ulamā’ to pave the way for the dominance of a state based on their own moral authority and that of the sayyids in general.

The keystone of this state was, of course, the Imām. The Imām was a sayyid and ‘ālim himself. Thus, he was not merely the leader of the state, but also its chief initial propagandist. In the first year of his reign, al-Manṣūr sent out a stream of letters to the various Zaydī tribes and shaykhs, urging them to answer his da’wa and support the jihād. The initial goal of this propaganda was to create a system of tribal alliances for an uprising against the Ottomans; the Imām could not extend his authority into a tribal area until such an alliance had been made.

To create this system of alliances, the Imām would have to appeal both to Islamic moral precepts and the tribal code of honor. In his analysis of the rhetoric of jihād in the Tirah uprising of 1897 on the Northwest Frontier of British India, David Edwards notes that Islam provided the only ideology which could overcome the fiercely competitive Pashtun culture of honor and enable the tribes to unite. At the same time, Islam “could do so most effectively when those in charge were able to implicate honor and tribe to the
cause of Islam, rather than drawing attention to the differences between them.\footnote{Edwards, Heroes, 191-193.} The Mulla of Hadda, the leader of the \textit{jihād}, would thus appeal to the tribesmen’s honor as well as their Islamic piety in his letters summoning them to the holy war; and al-Manṣūr employed the same tactics.

First, the Imām appeals to the presumed piety of the shaykhs. In the letter to Shaykh ‘Alī Murshid al-Gharbī, he makes the following quotation from the Qur’an: “For if you give aid to God he will render you victorious and make your feet firm.” Therefore, he must support “righteousness and piety” (\textit{birr ve takva}). That is, he must side with the Imām in his war against the tyrannical and ungodly Ottoman government.\footnote{BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh ‘Alī Murshid al-Gharbī, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.} In the letter to the al-Gharbī shaykhs, he notes that the shaykhs’ ancestors were known for their love for the family of the Prophet; and it is incumbent on them to follow their example.\footnote{BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh ‘Alī ibn Jābir as-Sindī, and Qāsim ibn Sa’d Abū Hāḍī, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.}

Second, the Imām appeals to the shaykhs’ sense of honor. In the letter to the al-Gharbī shaykhs, he reminds them that it was the family of the Prophet who gave them their “honor” (\textit{seref}) and “power” (\textit{izzet}). He thus draws an implicit connection between honor and support for the Imāms; and to arouse their sense of honor further, he refers to the zeal that the men of Ḥāshid have shown in their support of him. Edwards has shown in his analysis of a similar summons to the \textit{jihād} written by the Mulla of Hadda that reference to the deeds of other tribes is a means of goading the tribe to whom the
summons is addressed to similar deeds of honor; it is a “challenge” requiring a response.\textsuperscript{494}

It is evident that the Imām’s summons had a similar purpose. “I am gratified that the people are showing the desire for action which will make them honored (aziz) in this world and the next. Since you are among the great men (akabir) of the people, it is hoped that you will surpass all others in this regard.”\textsuperscript{495} The da‘wa is thus both a “summons” to righteous action in accordance with the principles of Islam and a “challenge” to deeds of honor in the competitive spirit of the segmentary tribal system.

The Imām’s propaganda, then, is focused on channeling the competitive energies of the tribal system toward a goal transcending the honor culture of this system. This requires the tribes to submit to his moral authority as a sayyid and ‘ālim. The mediatory role of the Imām as a sayyid is important in this context. It is implicitly recognized in the letters that the tribes and shaykhs are in competition as social groups, competition which may turn violent.

As a sayyid who stands outside this structure and mediates between tribes, however, the Imām can act as the keystone of an alliance structure where competition focuses on the attempt to outdo one another in loyalty and service to himself. This enables the tribes to unite, however briefly, to achieve a moral and political goal. Since by birth, education, and action the Imām represents an Islamic principle of authority above the competitive honor system, submission (itaat, Arabic itā‘a) to him does not involve loss of honor (as it

\textsuperscript{494} Edwards, Heroes, 192.

\textsuperscript{495} BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh ‘Alī/9/22/2003 ibn Murshid al-Gharbī, Shaykh Nāshir [err. for Naṣīr?] ibn Murshid ibn Husayn al-Gharbī, Shaykh ‘Alī ibn Jābir as-Sindī, and Qāsim ibn Sa‘d Abū Ḥādī, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.

253
might to another tribesman). Rather, it is honor-enhancing; the “submission and alliance” (*ittifak ve itaat*) of the Ḥāshid tribes redounds to their honor. To persuade the tribes and the shaykhs to accept this was to lay the foundation for an effective state which could mobilize them against the Ottomans.

If the Imām was the keystone of this alliance structure, other sayyids and qāḍīs served as the lesser links holding it in place. The Zaydī qāḍīs and sayyids constituted a vast network of families related by marriage, located throughout the interstices of the tribal structure of Yemen. At the local level, they mediated tribal disputes, instructed the tribesmen in the principles of Islam, and preached the Friday sermon. The Imām drew on the resources of this network to make propaganda for his *da‘wa*. The Zaydī ‘ulamā’ did this as an extension of their role as instructors in Islam, preaching the Friday sermon in his name and, we can safely assume, arguing for the Islamic obligation to support the Imām and the *jihād*. Intense propaganda of this type helped to prepare the ground for the conclusion of an alliance with the tribes of a given locality and the arrival of the Imām’s representatives; for the establishment, in other words, of a state authority based on the principles of Islam and the moral authority of the sayyids.

A list of persons arrested for seditious activities, drawn up after the suppression of the 1891 rebellion, provides some clues to the workings of this process. The largest number of persons arrested come from Ṣan‘ā’ and its environs, the “epicenter” of the rebellion and the place where Ottoman authority was strongest. Socially, the persons arrested here fall into a fairly neat pattern: tribal shaykhs who actually led men in battle,

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496 Ibid.

497 BBA, Y.Mtv 74/99, 24 Kanun-1 Evvel 1308/5 January 1893. List (*defter*) of persons arrested for sedition in the 1891 rebellion and after, drawn up by the Administrative Council of Yemen, and sent to the Minister of War.
and Zaydī ‘ulamā’ who prepared the ground for rebellion by making propaganda for the Imām.

The most prominent of the latter were members of the az-Zubayrī, al-Ḥarāzī, and Zāhir qaḍī families. These families were connected to the Imām and each other by marriage ties and property interests. All of them held property in the village of Qābil west of Ṣan‘ā’, and were influential persons in that region. The list describes them as having engaged in intensive propaganda for the Imām in the 1891 rebellion.

Qāḍī Yahyā Zāhir, shaykh of the village of Qābil in the nahiye of Hamdān, read the Friday sermon in the name of the Imām in his village and stirred up sedition in the environs of Ṣan‘ā’. Qāḍī Muḥammad al-Ḥarāzī of Ṣan‘ā’ had likewise engaged in reading the khutba* in the name of the Imām (hutbe kira’at), “secret incitements” (teşvıkat-i haфиye), and “assembling people” (cemiyet) before the outbreak of the rebellion.498 This kind of religious propaganda established an essential link between the moral authority of the Imām and that of the ‘ulamā’ among the tribes of their own localities. The ability of the sayyids and qaḍīs to mediate between the tribes and the Imāms smoothed the way for the acceptance of an outside authority, the representatives of the Imām’s government, into the local tribal structure.

There are some clues to the way this process worked in the sources concerning the raising of rebellion in the Ṣan‘ā’ region. What we see here is an effort by local ‘ulamā’ and tribal shaykhs to raise rebellion in conjunction with a prominent sayyid dispatched by

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* The khutba is the sermon preached at the Friday noon prayer in Muslim societies. Historically it was read in the name of the incumbent ruler, thereby asserting his legitimacy. To read the khutba in the name of the Imām, rather than the Ottoman sultan, therefore constituted an act of rebellion.

498 BBA, Y.Mtv 74/99, 24 Kanun-ı Evvel 1308/5 January 1893. List (defter) of persons arrested for sedition in the 1891 rebellion and after, drawn up by the Administrative Council of Yemen, and sent to the Minister of War.
the Imām. Qāḍī Yaḥyā Zāhir, the headman (shaykh) of the village of Qābil in the tribal territory of Hamdān, was a friend of al-Manṣūr and had personally accompanied him on his journey to Ṣaḍa. Upon his return, he had read the khutba in the name of the Imām in his village and worked actively to stir up sedition in the region of Ṣan‘ā’. Most of the other qāḍī families mentioned above had done the same.499

In this context, it does not seem coincidental that the tribal shaykh of Hamdān should have also played a pivotal role in inciting rebellion in the Ṣan‘ā’ region; for both the qāḍī families and the Imām had property in the Hamdān region. After a period of “incitement” by these qāḍīs, the Imām sent a military commander (muqaddamī) to get the formal agreement of the Ṣan‘ā’ tribes to participate in the rebellion. This commander was a prominent sayyid who had grown up in Ṣan‘ā’, Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ash-Shar‘ī. His principal local ally in this enterprise was the shaykh of Hamdān Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā Dūda, who was “the chief person among them [the tribes] in urging them to those admirable aims.” In consequence of this “urging,” these tribes made a collective decision (ijmā‘) to support the Imām.500

Propaganda thus played a key role in making the set of relationships between the Imām and the local elites of the Ṣan‘ā’ region politically effective. Men of the qāḍī families were connected to the Imām by friendship and marital ties; and they must also have had friendly or at least mutually self-interested relationships with Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā Dūda. Their propaganda activities on behalf of the Imām paved the way for the arrival of

499 BBA, Y.Mtv 74/99, 24 Kanun-i Evvel 1308/5 January 1893. List (defter) of persons arrested for sedition in the 1891 rebellion and after, drawn up by the Administrative Council of Yemen, and sent to the Minister of War.

500 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:271 ff.
a representative of the Imām’s government in that region, followed by an even more intensive campaign to persuade the tribes to support the jihād.

Sayyid Aḥmad was thus able to establish the Imām’s authority in large part due to the persuasive powers of the local ‘ulamā’ and tribal shaykhs. The moral support of his local allies made him acceptable to the tribes as a representative of an “outside” state authority. At the same time, as a sayyid representing a higher authority “outside” the local structure of intertribal rivalries, he was able to get the tribes to act in concert without arousing their mutual hostilities. Propaganda on behalf of the Imām, then, permitted the establishment of the tribal quasi-state as a counter state in Ottoman territory: a network of tribal alliances held together by a militant ideology of jihād, the mediatory role of the sayyids, and the moral authority of the ‘ulamā’ who represented the supra-tribal principles of Islam.

To establish a counter state in this fashion meant to compete with the established authorities for the support and control of the population. The use of these terms, however, conjures up the bureaucratized system of controls characteristic of modern guerrilla war. What we mean in the context of the 1891 rebellion is something quite different: the “game” characteristic of many of the tribal societies of the Middle East, of making often short-lived alliances to gain an immediate political objective. The 1891 rebellion took place only because the Imām won this game, which previous Imāms had tended to lose.

IV. Competition for the “Support and Control” of the Zaydī tribes.
In the context of the game of alliances, we have noted that a first step toward *jihad* in many of the tribal societies of the Middle East has been the unification of the competing tribal segments in response to extraordinary social and economic pressures. Often, these pressures have been related to the intrusion of a powerful outside force into the tribal society. Alternatively, they may be related to economic distress resulting from overpopulation or a shortage of land or pasture in the tribal homeland, coupled with opportunities to prey on social groups outside the tribal structure.

In Yemen, this particular combination of pressures did obtain at the beginning of the 1890’s. The unification of the tribal segments of Ḥāshid and Bakīl, however, did not take place automatically. The Ottoman authorities had superior resources, and were skilled in using them to exploit the rivalries inherent in the tribal social structure. In tribal politics, there was always a strong element of immediate self-interest. This had enabled the Ottomans to buy the loyalty of powerful shaykhs and prevent the formation of a united alliance of the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes against them.

To create this united alliance, the Imām would have to find ways to outmaneuver the Ottomans politically in this regard. He did this in part by exploiting the mistakes the Ottomans made in attempting to impose their own conception of authority on their dealings with the tribal shaykhs. The Ottomans had an authoritarian view of their relationship with the shaykhs, and of the shaykhs’ relationship with their tribesmen. Such a view, combined often with a willful contempt for the Yemenis, led them into actions which could be considered as “dishonoring” to the tribes or shaykhs in question.

The Imām constantly referred to these actions in his summons to *jihād*, appealing to the tribes’ sense of honor as well as their Islamic piety. He extended his own authority
by the process of persuasion which was acceptable to the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes, and he did not fail to make subtle appeals to self-interested motives as well. In short, the Imām won the “game of alliances” through his better understanding of the political culture of Ḥāshid and Bakīl; that is, by means of skilled manipulation of the concepts of honor, piety, and self-interest in the context of the social crisis facing those tribes at the beginning of the 1890’s.

As stated, a basic mistake of the Ottoman government was its attempt to impose an authoritarian concept of social relations in a context where coercion of any kind was anathema. The specific policy that the Ottomans adopted in Yemen was that of gaining the support of the “shaykhs” for the government. This included both the tribal shaykhs of Ḥāshid and Bakīl, and the landlord shaykhs of Lower Yemen. The inducements the government offered for this support were heavily material, and were described in purely cynical terms even by the idealistic İsmail Hakkı Paşa; “arousing their greed by presenting them with money as ‘gifts of honor,’” (ikramiye tertibinden akçe itasıyla itma). The Ottomans distributed stipends, titles, tax-collecting privileges, and positions in the administration. One shaykh, ‘Abdullah ad-Dul’i, held the rank of Paşa and served on the Administrative Council of Yemen. More commonly, shaykhs held administrative positions at the nahiye level in the rural areas, which offered lucrative opportunities to profit from the tax collection process.

501 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.
502 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 266.
503 Naqīb Nāji ‘Abdullah Juzaylān of Dhū Muḥammad, for example, served as the deputy (vekil) for the müdir of a nahiye in the kaza of Ḥajja. See BBA, Y.Mtv 74/99, 24 Kanun-ı Evvel 1308/5 January 1893. List (defter) of persons arrested for sedition in the 1891 rebellion and after, drawn up by the Administrative Council of Yemen, and sent to the Minister of War.
When it became clear that the Imam was trying to raise a general rebellion, the government intensified its efforts to gain the support of the shaykhs. In September 1890 Ḫāsim Hakkı Paşa wrote to the Minister of War that he had summoned the shaykhs of Ḥāshid to Ṣanʿā‘; and after having “honored” (taltif) them in the appropriate fashion, he sent them back after obtaining the necessary promises (mevaid, teminat) [to the effect that they would not join the rebellion]. This “honoring,” so far as we can determine, consisted in the distribution of gifts of money and stipends to the shaykhs.

To distribute stipends and positions in this fashion had been an accepted practice of the Zaydī Imāms, and the Ottomans were in part simply following their example. At the same time, the Ottomans brought an authoritarian conception of this practice which was ill suited to the actual realities of the shaykhly position among the Ḫāshid and Bakīl tribes. First, Ottoman documents tend to speak in terms of gaining the support of the “shaykhs,” rather than that of the tribes. The Ottomans assumed that the tribesmen were blindly obedient to their shaykhs. Therefore, all that was necessary to assure the Ottoman grip on the country was to win over the latter. This was a partially accurate conception of the role of the shaykhs in Lower Yemen, but not among Ḫāshid and Bakīl. As we have seen, among their tribesmen the Ḫāshid and Bakīl shaykhs acted as war

504 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.
505 Dresch, Tribes, 220.
506 The recommendations of Mehmet Emin Paşa, author of a short treatise on the means of ensuring the security of Yemen, provide a good example of this view. In order to ensure the grip of the Ottoman government on Yemen, he writes, the conquest of Upper Yemen is necessary. The best means of preventing rebellion thereafter is to “honor” (taltif) the shaykhs by means of gifts of money, stipends, and lower level offices in the administration. This was “so that they would not be deprived of their income and means of livelihood, and thus sow sedition among their tribes when the opportunity presented itself.” See Mehmet Emin Paşa, “Yemen,” 4-5 (my pagination).
507 See Esat Cabir ibn Osman, “Yemen,” 152, where the view is expressed that the tribesmen follow their shaykhs blindly, and are therefore not really responsible for their participation in rebellion.
leaders and mediators. In the intensely honor-driven culture of those tribes, they could not simply impose a decision on the tribesmen.

Beyond this, it appears that the Ottoman conception of the shaykhs’ role was ideally that of obedient functionaries of the government, accepting orders and taking abuse from superiors in the manner of the Ottoman bureaucracy under Abdülhamid. Yemeni culture was considerably less authoritarian than that of the Ottomans, and this could create clashes. Hamid Vehbi, the author of the Yemen yearbook of 1298 (1880-1881), noted with wonder that the Yemenis were “very free in their speech,” so much so that “when they come into the presence of the governor...they even address him by name, saying, ‘O İsmail!’”\(^\text{508}\) If ordinary individuals would not adopt the deferential posture expected by the Ottoman authorities, the tribal shaykhs could not be expected to do so.

The terms in which the relationship was defined by the Ottoman government, however, tended to be authoritarian and hierarchical. The terms \textit{taltif} and \textit{ikramiye}, employed by the Ottomans for the distribution of stipends to the tribal shaykhs, have the general sense of “honoring.” The term implies, however, the gracious favor of persons in authority toward their subordinates; the emphasis is on the receiving of honor from one’s superiors, rather than the possession of it in and for oneself. This was not a concept likely to appeal to the shaykhs, particularly if it was accompanied by condescending or arrogant behavior on the part of Ottoman officials.

The behavior of many Ottoman officials, moreover, was not merely condescending, but viciously abusive. ‘Alî Miqdâd, a supporter of the Ottoman government and shaykh of the \textit{kaza} of Anis, was tied to the wheel of cannon by an Ottoman officer and left in the

\(^{508}\) Hamid Vehbi, \textit{Yemen Salnamesi 1298}, 81.
sun until he fainted. Abuse of this type was also accompanied by sudden reversals of
time at the will of the sultan, which remained a feature of Ottoman political life in this
period. As a result of the intrigues of his enemies among the Ottoman officials, an
imperial order was issued for the exile of ‘Abdullah ad-Dul‘ī. He was brought into the
presence of the governor and roundly abused, while soldiers were sent to plunder his
property; and after this, he was exiled to Acre. Actions such as this were partially due to the relatively authoritarian traditions of
government among the Ottomans. Under Abdülhamid and earlier, Ottoman officials
themselves were subject to exile and imprisonment at the hands of the sultan. Arbitrary violence was not condoned historically in classical Ottoman political thought,
or in its specific interpretation under Abdülhamid. Where the line between legitimate
absolutism (istibdat) and illegitimate tyranny (zulüm) was not always clearly drawn,
however, it could be difficult to avoid.

To the Zaydī tribal shaykhs, accustomed to a political culture of mediation,
compromise, and respect for individual autonomy, such practices were particularly
offensive; and the quasi-colonial attitudes of many Ottoman officials worsened the
situation in this regard. Concerns about affronts to one’s personal dignity, which could
not be tolerated in the culture of honor, combined with self-interested fears for their own

510 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 267-68.
511 The most famous example was that of Midhat Paşa, the champion of constitutional government in the
Ottoman Empire, whom Abdülhamid had imprisoned and murdered shortly after his accession. See Sir
Edwin Pears, Life of Abdulhamid, Makers of the Nineteenth Century Series (London: Constable and
Company Ltd., 1917), 57.
position and influence under the centralizing state of the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{512} Nāṣir Mabkhūt al-Aḥmar of the ‘Uṣaymāt tribe, whose family would later become the paramount shaykhs of the Ḥāshid confederation, joined the Imām’s rebellion in part because his property had been attacked by the Ottoman governor of Ḥajja.\textsuperscript{513} Naqīb Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyā Shāyif of Dhū Ḥusayn, and Naqīb Nājī ‘Abdullah Juzaylān of Dhū Muḥammad, are reported to have joined the rebellion because they wished to regain the influence in the Ḥajja region that they had lost under the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{514}

As we have seen, the boundary between honor and self-interest was not really firm in the tribal culture of Yemen. Honor constituted one’s personal dignity and autonomy, one’s moral qualities, and one’s possessions which had to be defended.\textsuperscript{515} To allow trespass against any of these things was to invite social, moral, and economic ruin. In its position as a powerful but capricious patron, the Ottoman state constituted a threat to the shaykhs at all these levels of honor. The implications of the code of honor thus tended to force the shaykhs of Ḥāshid and Bakīl into opposition to the Ottomans.

The Imām was more skilled at appealing to motivations of honor than the Ottomans, and at respecting the boundaries which the concept of honor entailed. In his letters to the al-Gharbī shaykhs, the Imām states that they have received their honor from the “family

\textsuperscript{512} In recent decades, the shaykhs of Yemen have tended to consistently oppose the extension of the central government’s power, even though they have benefited from the occupation of government offices. See Peterson, Yemen, 110-111.

\textsuperscript{513} Dresch, Tribes, 220-21.

\textsuperscript{514} BBA, Y.Mtv 74/99, 24 Kanun-ı Evvel 1308/5 January 1893. List (defter) of persons arrested for sedition in the 1891 rebellion and after, drawn up by the Administrative Council of Yemen, and sent to the Minister of War.

\textsuperscript{515} Dresch, Tribes, 54-55, 81-82; Caton, Peaks, 27-28.
of the Prophet,” i.e., from the former Imāms.  From the point of view of the shaykhs, however, the concept of honor as received from a higher authority may have been softened by the terms employed (assuming that the actual Arabic terminology was adopted in the Ottoman translation). The terms ızzet (Arabic ‘izza) and şeref (Arabic sharaf) have the connotations respectively of honor as might or strength, and honor as nobility; that is, lofty qualities of character or descent. These terms would thus emphasize the might and nobility of the shaykhs, rather than the subtle connotations of dependence and subordination implied by the term taltif.

In these letters, moreover, the Imām did not fail to point out the dangers to the shaykhs’ honor in siding with the Ottomans. The Ottoman administration at this time was distributing large sums of money among the shaykhs of Ḥāshid and Bakīl in the hope of averting rebellion. The Imām thus warned the shaykhs against accepting these stipends in terms emphasizing the moral themes of both Islam and honor. The al-Ghashmī shaykhs were warned not to give in to “temptation” (iğra); the al-Gharbī shaykhs were admonished to abandon “greed” (tama). To give in to temptation was to expose oneself to the well-known caprice of the Ottoman administration, and therefore to risk losing one’s honor.

Both the al-Gharbī and al-Ghashmī shaykhs were reminded of the fate of ‘Abdullah ad-Dul‘ī in this context. The purpose of the “foreigners” was to take them captive and

516 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh ‘Alī 9/22/2003 ibn Murshid al-Gharbī, Shaykh Nāshir [err. for Naṣir?] ibn Murshid ibn Husayn al-Gharbī, Shaykh ‘Alī ibn Jābir as-Sindī, and Qāsim ibn Sa’d Abū Hādī, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.

517 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh Jibrān ibn ‘Alī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh ‘Alī [ibn ‘Alī al-Ghashmī], Shaykh Aḥsan [Hasan?] ibn ‘Alī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh Qā’id Riyyād al-Munqīd, and Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Mukhtāra, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.
boast (iftihar) about it. The Ottoman government would destroy their honor in order to aggrandize its own. The al-Ghashmī shaykhs were advised that since they possessed “a noble zeal” (himam-i aliye) they would not accept ihanet, or humiliation. The Arabic term ihāna was used by Zaydī writers in Ottoman times in reference to the government’s “bringing low” of those who possessed sharaf, nobility or high station. In other words, the choice between support for the Imām or the Ottomans was presented as a moral one, between honor and material advantage. To side with the Ottomans was to trade one’s honor for money, and risk losing even the material inducements they offered.

At some level, appeals of this kind must have been effective. The most powerful shaykhs of Ḥāshid and Bakīl joined the Imām, as well as a number of the shaykhs of the lesser Zaydī tribes to the south. Prominent members of this alliance included shaykhs from the traditionally powerful families of the northwest, among them Nāṣir Mabkhūt al-Ahmar (al-‘Uṣaymāt), Ahmad Ḥubaysh (Sufyān), Naqīb Nājī ‘Abdullah Juzaylān (Dhū Muḥammad), and Naqīb Ṣāliḥ ibn Yahyā Shāyif (Dhū Ḥusayn). Among the Bakīl tribes of the northeast, the Imām was able to obtain the support of Nājī Abu Ra’s, of a

518 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh ‘Alī/22/2003 ibn Murshid al-Gharbī, Shaykh Nāshir [err. for Nāṣir?] ibn Murshid ibn Ḥusayn al-Gharbī, Shaykh ‘Alī ibn Jābir as-Sindī, and Qāsim ibn Sa’d Abū Hāḍī, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.

519 BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām Jibrān ibn ‘Alī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh ‘Alī [ibn ’Alī al-Ghashmī], Shaykh Aḥsan [Hasan?] ibn ‘Alī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh Qā’id Riyāḍ al-Munqīdī, and Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Mukhtāra, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.

520 In a letter to one of the representatives of the Ottoman government, al-Manṣūr accused the Ottoman officials of having “humiliated every noble person” (ahānu kul sharīf). Similarly, ‘Alī Miqdād is said to have been subjected to “unsurpassed humiliation” (al-ihāna ma la mazyad ‘alayhi) when he was tied to the wheel of the cannon. See al-Wāṣī’ī, Tārīkh, 281, 288.

521 BBA, Y.Mtv 74/99, 24 Kanun-ı Evvel 1308/5 January 1893. List (defter) of persons arrested for sedition in the 1891 rebellion and after, drawn up by the Administrative Council of Yemen, and sent to the Minister of War; Dresch, Tribes, 221.
powerful shaykhly family of Dhū Muḥammad.\textsuperscript{522} The major tribal shaykhs of the Ṣan`ā’ region also participated in the rebellion. These included Jibrān al-Ghāshmī and Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā Dūda of Hamdān, Ṣāliḥ Musā’id and Qā`id al-Ahjarī of the Bānī Ḥushaysh, Muḥsin Ṣāliḥ Nīnī of Khawlān, and Aḥmad ar-Rammāḥ of Bilād Bustān.\textsuperscript{523} In short, the most powerful shaykhs in the major regions of Ḥāshid and Bakīl went over to the Imām.

In this manner, al-Manṣūr won the intense competition for the loyalty of the Zaydī tribal shaykhs which began shortly after his accession to the Imamate. To speak of gaining the support of the “shaykhs,” however, was inaccurate to a degree. Inevitably, the Imām’s letters tended to be addressed to the tribal shaykhs or other influential persons. The Imām, however, understood what the Ottomans apparently did not; that is, the authority of the shaykhs was limited, and they had to live up to certain expectations from their tribesmen as well as the state. As community leaders, the shaykhs worked through mediation and consensus (“gathering the word of all”), rather than authoritarian decree.\textsuperscript{524} The shaykhs were expected to be effective war leaders, providing opportunities for plunder and military glory for their tribesmen. They were also required to keep the tribal territory inviolate from outside authority, even the Imamate. The office of shaykh was elective, although the candidates were restricted to certain families; and a shaykh who was perceived as ineffective might soon be faced with rivals for his power.\textsuperscript{525}

\textsuperscript{522} Dresch, \textit{Tribes}, 221. Nājī Abu Ra’s was one of the shaykhs with whom Ahmet Feyzi Paşa conducted extensive negotiations on his reconquest of the highlands.


\textsuperscript{524} Dresch, \textit{Tribes}, 99-102.

What the Ottomans had done was to attempt to win over the shaykhs while treating the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribesmen as “raʿāyā,” in Yemeni terms, persons subject to the authority and violence of the state. The chronicler al-Ḥarāzī states that after the conquest, the tribe of Arḥab “became raʿāyā,” paying taxes to the Ottoman government.\footnote{al-Ḥarāzī, Fatrat, 180.} Harris, speaking of the Yemeni tribes in general, notes that under the Ottomans the tribes lost the relative independence they had enjoyed under the Imāms; instead they were “oppressed”, “heavily taxed,” and found themselves “little better than slaves.”\footnote{Harris, Journey, 99-100.} For the tribes around Ṣanʿā’, who would have felt the weight of the government most heavily, the loss of their status must have been bitterly resented.

What were seen as repeated and gross violations of tribal honor went far toward creating the united opposition of which segmentary lineage societies are capable when threatened by powerful outsiders. Due to social, economic, and psychological pressures which are still not fully understood, the Zaydī tribes must have been “ready” at the beginning of the 1890’s for a major insurrection; that is, to employ the cultural resources at their disposal to unite against the foreign intruders (‘ajam). This would have created tremendous political pressures from below, which the shaykhs would have had to take into account in choosing between the Ottomans and the Imām. Events such as these have their own psychosocial logic, which the shaykhs were no doubt sensitive to. They had to be, in order to survive.

They were expected, in their role as shaykhs, to defend their tribes against those who would oppress them and violate their territory. When resentment among their tribesmen reached the boiling point, they would have had little choice except to side with the Imām.
Harris does cite one tribe, the “Kabyla al-Oud,” who killed their shaykh on the outbreak of the 1891 rebellion; the shaykh was reportedly cut into pieces and distributed in the surrounding country as a warning against siding with the Ottomans.\(^{528}\) This event took place in the far southeast of the country, in Shâfi‘î territory. There can be little doubt, however, that the Ḥāshid and Bakīl shaykhs were faced with a similar explosive anger from their own tribesmen.

The pressures to unite against the outside authority represented by the Ottomans were exacerbated by severe economic pressures, which affected the tribes inside and outside Ottoman territory alike. Since the seventeenth century, at least, the fertile regions of the south and west had constituted a profitable source of income to the northern tribesmen, through raiding and the seizure of lands and fortresses.\(^{529}\) As a result of the Ottoman occupation of these lands, their income from these sources had been cut off to a great extent; and the subsequent pinch was felt most acutely in periods of drought, when raiding their wealthier neighbors was often the only means of survival.\(^{530}\)

As it happened, in 1890 the rains failed, and the sorghum crop was ruined by locusts in the summer.\(^{531}\) Economic crises such as drought have historically fostered the conditions wherein tribes in the arid regions of the Middle East can unite politically for \textit{jihād} against peoples in wealthier areas; that is, unification of the segmentary lineage society for the purpose of invasion, rather than defense. The existence of social and

\(^{528}\) Harris, \textit{Journey}, p. 220. After the outbreak of the rebellion, the shaykhs of Dhamār did go over to the Imām because of popular pressure. See al-Iryānī, \textit{Sirāt}, 1:305.

\(^{529}\) “Yemen Hattrat,” Manuscript No. 653, Ali Emiri History Section, Millet Library, Istanbulç

\(^{530}\) The major rebellions in Yemen tended to coincide with periods of drought. See Sinan Kuneralp “Military Operations During the 1904-1905 Uprising in the Yemen,” \textit{Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations} 2 (1987): 63.

\(^{531}\) Dresch, \textit{Tribes}, 220.
economic crisis was not a sufficient condition for this unification to take place. The possibilities for successful jihād, however, were greatly increased when these crises were combined with skilled and motivated leadership.

For the thousands of hungry and desperate tribesmen, the Imām’s call to jihād would have provided a means to survive and escape the humiliations of economic hardship. They would have pay, plunder, and the opportunity to struggle and die for a worthy cause. This in turn would have placed enormous political pressures on the shaykhs. They were expected to provide for the tribesmen in their role as war-leaders, and the Imām’s summons to jihād gave them the opportunity to do so. Therefore, they would have had to side with the Imām simply to ensure their own political survival. This would have outweighed any blandishments from the government in Ṣan‘ā’, as it became clear that a major social explosion was in the offing.

The Imām and his advisors understood the dependence of the shaykhs on their tribesmen. References in his letters to the enthusiasm with which the tribesmen responded to his call to jihād thus may have been a means of putting political pressure on the shaykhs, as well as appealing to their sense of honor. In the letters to the al-Gharbī and al-Ghashmī shaykhs, al-Manṣūr notes that “the people” (nās) are responding to his summons “in droves” (fevc fevc); therefore, he implies, it would be prudent for the shaykhs to answer his summons as well.\footnote{BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh ‘Alī ‘Alī İbni Murshid al-Gharbī, Shaykh Nāșir [err. for Nāṣir?] İbni Murshid İbni Ḥusayn al-Gharbī, Shaykh ‘Alī İbni Jābir as-Sindī, and Qāsim İbni Sa’d Abū Hāḍif, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War. BBA, Y.Mtv 45/107 22 Ağustos 1306/3 September 1890. Letter from the Imām to Shaykh Jibrān İbni ‘Alī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh ‘Alī [İbni ‘Alī al-Ghashmī], Shaykh Ahşan [Hasan?] İbni ‘Alī al-Ghashmī, Shaykh Qā’id Riyād al-Munqidif, and Shaykh Ahmad İbni Mukhtāra, translated into Ottoman Turkish and enclosed with a memorial from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.}
Likewise, in Zaydī writings the process through which the Imām gained support for his rebellion is described in terms of persuading the “tribes” to support him, rather than the shaykhs. In al-Iryānī’s description of the raising of rebellion among the Ṣan‘ā’ tribes, Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ash-Shar‘ī is said to have gone to the Ṣan‘ā’ region to raise the rebellion among the “tribes” (qabā’il) of that area, including Banī Ḥarrīth, Sanḥān, Khawlān, Arḥab, and Banī Bahlūl.533

As a result of Sayyid Aḥmad’s letters, a tribal assembly (ijtimā’) was held in Darb Hizam. Here, as stated above, the man who played the chief role in inciting the tribes to rebellion was the shaykh of Hamdān Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā Dūda. As a result, the tribesmen came to a consensual agreement (ijmā’) to support the Imām.534 We see, then, that on some level the decision to support the Imām had to be made by the tribesmen as a whole. Both the shaykh and the sayyid exercise their authority in the manner acceptable to Ḥāshid and Bakīl: mediating between the tribesmen and the Imām, persuading, using their influence, and fostering the discussion which leads to consensus (ijmā’, or what Dresch describes as to “gather everyone’s word”).535 They could not order the tribesmen to “enter into obedience” to the Imām, although they could urge them to do so.

The contrast between this process and the actions of İsmail Hakkı Paşa is considerable. İsmail Hakkı Paşa had summoned the shaykhs to Ṣan‘ā’, given them gifts, and sent them on their way. Like other Ottomans, he may have reasoned that the shaykhs controlled their tribes, therefore winning over the shaykhs would keep the tribesmen quiet. The Imām, by contrast, had his own men participate alongside the shaykhs in the process of

534 Ibid.
535 Dresch, Tribes, 100.
discussion by which political decisions were made among the tribesmen. The shaykhs and the Imām depended on the tribes. Therefore, the rebellion would only succeed if the tribesmen were won over on their own terms.

What we have described as a process that was (very) roughly analogous to the competition for the support of the population between the government and the rebels in modern guerrilla warfare was therefore won by the Imām, owing in part to his more astute understanding of the culture of honor. At least half the constituent tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl are listed as having participated in the rebellion: al-ʿUṣaymāt, Khārif, Hamdān, Sanḥān (Ḥāshid), Dhū Muḥammad, Dhū Ḥusayn, Sufyān, Arḥab, Nihm, ʿIyāl Surayḥ, Banī Ḥushaysh, and Khawlān (Bakīl). These were the most powerful tribes of Upper Yemen, the region of the northeast; and this list does not even include the lesser Zaydī tribes of the northwest and the central plateau, who also gave enthusiastic support to the Imām. The divide and rule tactics of the Ottomans failed completely for the first time, and they found themselves confronted with a major insurrection.

To lead this rebellion, the Imām had to have a state at his disposal which would function in some regards as a counter state; that is, as an instrument to oppose the authority of the established state and wage war against it. Such a state, however, could not regiment the population in a bureaucratic fashion. To lead a supra-tribal alliance effectively, it would have employ its authority in the same fashion as it had established it: by processes of collaboration and mediation, which could be performed most effectively by the sayyids.

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536 Dresch, *Tribes*, 220-21; BBA, Y.Mtv 53/67 1 Ağustos 1307/13 August 1891. Telegram from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.
V. The Imām’s Tribal Quasi-State as Counter State.

In this context, the Imām’s state was distinguished by three key features. First, it was based on collaboration between local elites and the representatives of the Imām, rather than regimentation. Second, it had the structural features of the tribal quasi-state: a relatively undifferentiated body of officials drawn largely from the holy lineages, whose purpose was to “coordinate” a larger system of tribal alliances. Third, in the 1891 rebellion the role of these state functionaries was primarily to lead men in battle, rather than mobilize men and money directly for war. That function largely remained in the hands of the local shaykhs and religious leaders. Among Ḥāshid and Bakīl, the function of the Imām’s state was to persuade and lead, rather than to control. This was the only kind of leadership that was acceptable among these tribes, although more coercive measures were used against elements of the Shāfi‘ī population in the south.

In the 1891 rebellion, the Imām’s state extended its authority largely by means of the processes of persuasion, consent, and alliance which characterized political endeavour among the Zaydī tribes. Correspondence would first be exchanged with local leaders, and an alliance agreed on. After the conclusion of an agreement, the local tribes would send hostages (raḥāʾin) to the Imām and perform a tanšīra. In the tanšīra, fires would be lighted on rooftops or other elevated places, and the people would shout “God give victory to the Imām!”* After this ceremony was performed, a delegation of the Imām’s

* See the description of the tanšīra performed for the Ottoman sultan in Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Sergüzeşt, 1:75.
officials would arrive. In the confusion of the fighting, we cannot be sure that this protocol was always followed to the letter. In very general terms, however, this was the manner in which an alliance was supposed to be made.

Typically, the delegation would consist of three elements: a governor (‘āmil, pl. ‘ummāl), a military commander (muqaddamī, pl. maqādimā), and a body of soldiers (jund, ‘askar), usually recruited from the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes. We have noted that when the segmentary tribal societies of the Middle East united for jihād, men of the holy lineages who are above intertribal rivalries often assumed roles of military leadership. This was the case in the Imām’s state. The ‘ummāl and maqādimā tended to be sayyids. Sayyid Ibrāhīm ibn Qāsim ash-Sharafl acted as a muqaddamī in the Sharaf region; Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ash-Shar’ī was the muqaddamī of the Şan‘ā’ region in the initial stages of the rebellion; and Sayyid Ḥusayn ibn Ismā‘īl ash-Shāmī was appointed as ‘āmil of the Ibb region. Locally powerful shaykhs would sometimes serve as maqādimā in the areas where they were influential, but the body of persons acting in an official capacity for the Imām tended to be dominated by the sayyids.

The key supra-tribal element of the Imām’s state was thus provided by the sayyids, who provided a mediatory and sacral authority which the tribes of the alliance could accept. The men at their disposal, called “soldiers of the Imām” (‘askar al-Imām) were recruited from among the tribes, and may have retained their tribal organization at least in part. Little is known about their recruitment, pay, or conditions of service in the 1891

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537 See for example BBA, Y.Mtv 57/3 10 Tişrin-i Evvel 1307/22 October 1891. Report (‘ariza) from the Kaymakam of Radā‘ to the Governor (Makam-i Vilayet) in Şan‘ā‘.
539 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:261, 271-273, 322.
540 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:261.
rebellion. To the extent that they may be considered as part of a supra-tribal state, it was because they were acting in an official capacity for the Imām under his appointed leaders, and engaging in *jihād* rather than going on an ordinary plundering expedition.

Just as the Imām extended the authority of his state by means of persuasion and voluntary alliances, so the manner in which this state operated tended to be based on collaboration between the Imām’s officials and the locally powerful tribes and notables. The 1891 rebellion was set in motion when the shaykhs of the Sharaf region in the northwest, led by their chief the Sanaydār Munaṣṣar ibn Thābit, * appealed to the Imām for aid against the Ottomans. The individual who initiated the correspondence was a locally prominent *sayyid*, Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ash-Shihārī.541

Thereupon the Imām sent them weapons and provisions, along with the *muqaddamī* Sayyid Ibrāhīm ibn Qāsim ash-Sharafī with a body of soldiers. All these persons subsequently took part in a battle on the Shāhil mountain with the Ottoman troops, in which 100 Ottoman soldiers were killed with their commander Mehmet Arif. The fighting was done by the *sayyids* of Shāhil, the local tribes of Aflāḥ, Banī Ka‘b, Banī Jill, and Nūsān, together with the “soldiers of the Imām.” After this victory, the Imām appointed Ibrāhīm ibn Qāsim over the Shāhil region.542

Within this collaborative relationship, it appears that the primary mobilizational role was played by the locally powerful shaykhs and ‘ulamā’. By “mobilizational,” I mean the collection of taxes and assembling of fighters for the rebellion. I have not found

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* At this stage in my research I am unsure what the term “Sanaydār” signifies. According to al-Jirāfī the Sanaydar was the “chief” or “great man” (*kabīr*) of the shaykhs of the Sharaf region. See al-Jirāfī, al-Muqtataf, 276.


specific references to persons acting in an official capacity for the Imām fulfilling these functions in the 1891 rebellion, as they did afterward. The list of persons arrested for sedition drawn up in 1892, however, contains the names of a number of tribal shaykhs who collected zaka for the Imām: the shaykh of the Banī Bahlūl ʿAbd ar-Rabb al-Jabrī, Qāʾid al-Ahjarī the shaykh of the Banī Ḥushaysh, and Nājī ʿAbdullah Juzaylān of a shaykhly family of Dhū Muḥammad. Locally prominent ‘ulamā’, such as Faqih Muṣliḥ al-Muhājir in the Ṣanʿā’ region, also collected taxes for the Imām.543 Similarly, the shaykhs led their own tribesmen in battle, although they usually acted under the overall command of a muqaddamī appointed by the Imām.

In our sources, the primary role of the Imām’s representatives appears as leading the local tribes in battle against the Ottomans, and sometimes proceeding against recalcitrant elements of the population in the Shāfiʿī areas. If the Imām’s state did play a role in direct mobilization of men and money in Ottoman territory, it does not seem to have been a prominent one. Here, however, we should qualify our observations in this regard. First, there was not always a clear boundary between persons who were locally influential and those who served the Imām in an official capacity. In the town of Radā‘, for example, Shaykh ‘Alī ibn Masʿūd of the local Qayfa tribe served as the muqaddamī of the Imām.544

Second, an organization which was both clandestine and relatively undifferentiated as an institutional structure would not leave the kind of paper trail which would enable us to determine its exact functions. The Zaydī chronicles tend to focus on battle narratives

543 BBA, Y.Mtv 74/99, 24 Kanun-ı Evvel 1308/5 January 1893. List (defter) of persons arrested for sedition in the 1891 rebellion and after, drawn up by the Administrative Council of Yemen, and sent to the Minister of War.

544 BBA, Y.Mtv 57/3 20 Tişrin-ı Evvel 1307/1 November 1891. Report from the Kaymakam of Radā‘ to the Governor of Yemen.
rather than the specific details of mobilization. The Ottoman documents provide some information in this regard, but it is inevitably scanty and second-hand. We cannot, then, determine exactly how the Imām’s state functioned in “Ottoman” territory during the course of the rebellion. It would certainly have been plausible for the “Imām’s soldiers” to exact contributions in the areas under their control, particularly if they were assisted by a locally powerful individual.

It may be said, however, that the Imām’s state was still in the early stages of formation as an institution organized for waging jihād. The year preceding the rebellion was occupied by secret negotiation and agreements between locally powerful individuals and the Imām, not the construction of an elaborate state apparatus to regiment and mobilize the population. The dispatch of the Imām’s representatives generally took place in immediate preparation for the fighting, during the fighting, or after the fighting had broken out. There was not time, in this context, for the Imām to establish elaborate mechanisms for mobilization.

VI. The Imām’s State and the Progress of the Fighting.

Here, another difference between modern guerrilla war and the raising of the 1891 rebellion becomes clear. For the establishment of the Imām’s tribal quasi-state to closely parallel this model, we should have to think of the Imām as carefully constructing a system of alliances, putting the representatives of his state in place, and then moving against the Ottomans in a planned campaign. In fact, a good deal of careful preparation did go into the rebellion. The manner in which the tribal alliance finally came together,
however, was highly spontaneous. It began when the Imām’s forces allied with some of the powerful shaykhs of the northwest, and won an important victory against the Ottoman forces there. With this victory, one tribe after another decided to throw in their lot with the Imām, in a kind of chain reaction, until the entire highland region was aflame with rebellion.

The alliance of 1891, then, should be understood at least partially in terms of the culture of war in the segmentary lineage system. That is, it was formed to conduct a single campaign for a military objective which seemed achievable in immediate terms, the expulsion of the Ottomans from Yemen; and it came together only when its initiators were seen to be successful. In the excitement of victory, it is doubtful that many of the participants fully understood that they had embarked on a difficult and protracted struggle, rather than the immediate coup that they probably envisioned.

The element of planning, moreover, tended to decrease from north to south. The agitation of the Imām had specifically targeted Ḥāshid and Bakīl, the tribes in the northeast and their powerful landowning shaykhs in the northwest. Prior to the rebellion, the Imām’s partisans had a considerable presence in these regions, a presence which did enable the Imām’s officials to assert some control over the initial course of events. The rebellion in the north, however, was the signal for spontaneous uprisings throughout the central plateau and the south, over which the Imām’s men had initially very little control. In this case, their main task was to take advantage of these uprisings to extend their authority, and assume command of military operations which were initially begun without them. In general, the success of the Imām’s men in imposing their authority tended to decrease toward the south and east. In the Shāfī‘ī areas particularly, they
encountered strong opposition from pro-Ottoman elements, and often became bogged down in a situation of civil war. To illustrate this process, we will now give a brief synopsis of events in the rebellion by region, as the fighting rolled south from the northwest to Lower Yemen.

The Northwest and the Ṣanʿā’ Region.

In the northwest and the Ṣanʿā’ region, where the Imām’s propaganda efforts had been initially concentrated, the course of events followed the military logic outlined below.

1. Establishment of alliances with the influential shaykhs, sayyids, or tribes in a given region.
3. Seizure of control of the rural areas; capture or expulsion of the local officials and gendarmes, and occupation of outlying military posts.
4. Cutting of roads and telegraph lines, isolating the main Ottoman garrisons.
5. Siege of the main towns and fortresses.

To define the course of events in these terms suggests a distinct military strategy, which was probably present to a degree. The Imām and his advisors were obviously aware of the importance of, say, cutting the enemy lines of communication, even if they did not use the formalized terminology of modern strategic thought. The manner in which these events unfolded, however, was partially fortuitous; the Imām had to seize opportunities as they presented themselves, and turn them to his advantage.

An analysis of the initial outbreak of the rebellion will clarify this point. The rebellion began in earnest when a formal alliance was concluded between the Imām and the tribal shaykhs of the Shāhil and Sharaf regions in the northwest, together with their tribesmen and the sayyids of the area. Qāḍī al-Iryānī indicates that the thinking of the “people” of
Shāhil in making this alliance was that “should the fires of war flare up in any one of the regions of Yemen, perhaps this would occupy [the Ottomans] and bring some of [their] wrongs and injustice to nothing.”\textsuperscript{545} Such a statement indicates a certain basic level of strategic insight. If the Ottomans were faced with even a localized rebellion, it would tie down a certain number of soldiers, and make it that much more difficult for them to maintain control elsewhere.

The Imām apparently agreed. He supplied them with weapons and provisions, and sent them a \textit{muqaddamī} with a body of “soldiers” armed with breech-loading rifles. At the end of May 1891, the Imām’s men and the local tribes fought a major battle with Colonel Mehmet Arif, commandant of the forces in Ḥajja. The Ottoman forces suffered a serious defeat. Mehmet Bey was killed with a number of his officers and men, and the remainder of the troops withdrew to Ḥajja.\textsuperscript{546} This operation, then, was planned fairly carefully, had a specific strategic purpose, and probably succeeded in part due to the fact that the Imām had taken care to supply his warriors with modern rifles.

The effect of this victory, however, was similar to that of a lighted match in a room full of gasoline vapors. The sources give the impression of a sudden outburst of enthusiasm among the tribes of Upper Yemen and the northwest for the rebellion, together with a plummeting of morale among the Ottoman forces. The defeat of the latter “caused the boldness of the bandits to grow, and their attacks hither and thither increased well beyond their customary level.”\textsuperscript{547} What we see in consequence is that certain

\textsuperscript{545} al-Iryānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 1:259.
\textsuperscript{547} \textit{Yemen Salnamesi 1314} (Ṣan‘ā’: Vilayet Matbaası, 1314/1896-1897), 326.
principles of war in the segmentary lineage system seemed to go into operation almost of themselves, leaving the Imām scrambling to catch up with events.

We have noted that that tribal armies in Yemen tended to form and dissolve rapidly in accordance with the immediate prospects for victory and defeat. The victory at Shāhil created this kind of immediate political justification to rally around the Imām. The more tribesmen flocked to the Imām’s standard, the worse the situation for the Ottomans became. The more defeats the Ottomans suffered, the more tribesmen joined the Imām’s armies. As a result of this snowballing effect, a united alliance of the Zaydī tribes emerged almost spontaneously.

The effect was felt first in the northwest. In the month of June, the Imām steadily intensified his operations in that area, while more and more people in the region joined the rebellion. On 10 July 1891, it was reported from Ṣan‘ā’ that the people of the kaza of Ḥājja, “great and small” had submitted to the Imām, and that the garrison of the town of Ḥājja itself was under siege. By the time Ottoman relief columns were sent from Ḥudayda and Ṣan‘ā’ to pacify the region in July, the region was swarming with local rebels and Ḥāshid warriors fighting for the Imām under their shaykhs.

This made it impossible for the columns even to converge in Ḥajja in accordance with the plan, much less to pacify the region. The column from Ḥudayda under Hasan Edip Paşa managed to reach Ḥajja after three weeks of intense fighting. The force from Ṣan‘ā’ under Mustafa Nafiz Bey got as far as Kawkabān and Miswār, but found its way blocked there by the enormous numbers of rebels in the region. As a result, Mustafa Nafiz Bey

548 BBA, Y.Mtv 52/14 10 July 1891 (no Rumi date given). Telegram from the Head Director of the Ṣan‘ā’ Telegraph Office (Ṣan‘a Telgraf Başmüdiriyeti) to the Minister of Telegraphs.
had to fight his way back to Ṣan‘ā’.

Meanwhile, the countryside around Ṣan‘ā’ exploded in rebellion. Hasan Edip Paşa remained for some days in Ḥajja until, recognizing the futility of the situation, he finally returned to Ḥudayda.

The successes in the northwest created a mood of excitement among the tribes in the Ṣan‘ā’ region, which the Imām moved quickly to exploit. Because of its obvious strategic importance, the Imām had directed a constant stream of letters there, and had worked to build up an extensive network of supporters in the area. The victories in the northwest had created a political situation in which these months of patient effort could finally bear fruit. While the fighting was going on in the Ḥajja region, the Imām sent Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ash-Shar‘ī to Arḥab to raise the Ṣan‘ā’ tribes in rebellion. Sayyid Aḥmad came first to Arḥab, the tribe which was the most enthusiastic about besieging Ṣan‘ā’. With the aid of the shaykh of Hamdān, he was able to get the agreement of Hamdān, Arḥab, Banī Ḥārith, ‘Iyāl Surayḥ, Banī Ḥushaysh, and others to besiege Ṣan‘ā’; and a tanṣīra was subsequently made in the name of the Imām. In his capacity as a muqaddamī, Aḥmad ash-Shar‘ī then led a force of these tribesmen against the relief column which had been sent from Ṣan‘ā’ to Ḥajja. His men pursued this column all the way to Kawkabān and Miswār, inflicting heavy losses on it, and eventually forcing it to return to the capital.

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549 Ibid.
550 BBA, Y.Mtv 74/99, 24 Kanun-ı Evvel 1308/5 January 1893. List (defter) of persons arrested for sedition in the 1891 rebellion and after, drawn up by the Administrative Council of Yemen, and sent to the Minister of War.
551 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:271-79.
Toward the end of July the Imām’s partisans in Bilād Bustān rose up in rebellion, and in the first days of August they cut the Ṣan‘ā’-Ḥudayda road and telegraph line.\(^{552}\) On 8 August they assembled and went to fight the Ottoman forces; the latter were badly defeated at a place called ‘Aṣur, and withdrew into Ṣan‘ā’. The same night, tribesmen assembled around Ṣan‘ā’ “from every side,” and took the city under siege.\(^{553}\)

What we see here, again, is a combination of planning and spontaneity, characterized by shrewd political exploitation of success to bring about more success. To build up a network of partisans in the Ṣan‘ā’ region had not, of itself been sufficient to bring the tribes into alliance with the Imām. Once victory for the Imām’s forces seemed imminent, however, the tribes around Ṣan‘ā’ were eager to join the rebellion; and the existence of a network of partisans allowed the Imām to bring them into his alliance structure with the requisite speed. As these tribes in turn began to win their own victories against the Ottomans, tribesmen from other regions began to flood into the Ṣan‘ā’ area. The army besieging Ṣan‘ā’ eventually contained many tribesmen from the far northeast, from the Bakīl tribes of Dhū Muḥammad, Dhū Ḥusayn, and others.\(^{554}\) By the time of the siege of Ṣan‘ā’, the Imām was for practical purposes leading a united alliance of the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes.

The siege of Ṣan‘ā’ sparked widespread disorders throughout the rest of the highland region; al-Wāsi‘ī says dramatically that “all Yemen rose up as one in rebellion on one

\(^{552}\) al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 273; BBA, Y.Mtv 53/67 1 Ağustos 1307/13 August 1891. Telegram from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.

\(^{553}\) al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 273-74.

\(^{554}\) al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 276.
This was not quite accurate, as we shall see. Nonetheless, the siege of Ṣan‘ā’ may be taken as the point at which the Ottomans lost control of the highlands; the primary roads were blocked, Ottoman officials driven out of the countryside, and the major cities besieged. Some of these held out, and some fell to the rebels; but all were effectively isolated in a sea of rebellion.

**The Central Plateau and Lower Yemen.**

With the siege of Ṣan‘ā’, the pace of events began to outstrip the Imām’s ability to control them. In the central plateau and Lower Yemen, the initial acts of rebellion were undertaken spontaneously by discontented local groups; the Imām’s men only arrived later to take control of the situation, and at times they encountered strong opposition from local pro-Ottoman elements. In effect, the order of events we have outlined for the north was often reversed.

In the Zaydī areas of the central plateau, home of the Madhḥij tribal confederation, there appears to have been strong opposition to Ottoman rule. The people of the Dhamār region, which partially includes the Ḥadā’ and ‘Ans tribes of Madhḥij, rose up spontaneously at about the time that Ṣan‘ā’ was taken under siege. The exact sequence of events is a little hard to determine; but at some point in early August local rebels took captive the Ottoman officials in the rural areas, and then occupied the two cities of Dhamār and Yarīm. The tanṣīra was made in Dhamār on approximately 10 August,

555 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 274.
556 Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 327; Harris, Journey, 96.
and in Yarīm on August 28. The local shaykhs then sent to the Imām asking for an ‘āmil. Apparently they feared that popular anger against the Ottomans would turn against them, and wanted to restore some order to a situation which had become socially explosive.

Elsewhere, civil conflict broke out between factions favoring the Ottomans and the Imām, respectively. This was particularly evident in the sancak of Ta‘izz, whose population was largely Shāfi‘ī. The western part of this sancak, that is Lower Yemen, was the domain of powerful regional shaykhs. These shaykhs possessed large retinues of northern (Maşrîkî) tribesmen, and were constantly at war with one another.

Unsurprisingly, then, these shaykhs also split into pro-Ottoman and pro-Imām factions on the outbreak of the rebellion.

Two shaykhs of the Ibb region-Ṣāliḥ ibn Qāsim as-Şabīrī of Makhādir, and Sa‘īd ibn Ghālib ad-Du‘ays of Ba‘dān-undertook to besiege the city of Ibb on their own initiative when they learned of the siege of Ṣan‘ā’. They were, however, opposed by another powerful local shaykh, ‘Alī ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Sa‘īd of ‘Udayn.

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557 BBA, Y.Mtv 57/3 10 Tişrin-i Evvel 1307/22 October 1891. Report from the Kaymakam of Radā’ to the Governor of Yemen.
558 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:305.
559 “Yemen Hatrati.”
560 ‘Udayn, a fertile coffee and qat-growing region located to the west of Ibb, is mentioned by Niebuhr as a powerful semi-independent shaykhdom in the eighteenth century. Under the Ottomans, the shaykhdom was assigned autonomy and privileges, serving as important supporters of the government. Less is known about Makhādir and Ba‘dān, but these were evidently regional shaykhdoms of somewhat lesser importance. Ba‘dān is described as a wheat-growing region to the east of Ibb by Messick, and the income of its shaykh was probably smaller than that of Shaykh ‘Alī. It is possible that the rebellion of the two shaykhs mentioned above was prompted in part by jealousy of Shaykh ‘Alī, who had the title of Paşa and was viewed as the major pillar of the Ottoman government in that area. See Niebuhr, Travels, 2:101-102; Brinkley Messick, The Calligraphic State (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 11; and “Yemen Hatrati.”
governor (mutasarrif) of Ta‘izz, the latter came and tried to negotiate terms for a surrender.\textsuperscript{561}

When the negotiations broke down, however, he entered the city with his followers. The shaykhs of Ba‘dān and Makhādir had been in contact with the ‘āmil of Dhamār during the negotiations, apparently asking him to send an ‘āmil for Lower Yemen; but the Imām’s ‘āmil for the Ta‘izz region only arrived after the negotiations had failed. The siege of Ibb would continue for two months, with Shaykh ʿAlī participating in the defense, until the arrival of the relief force under Feyzi Paşa.\textsuperscript{562}

Civil conflict also took place on the southeastern edge of the plateau, in the territory of the Ḥumayqān tribe. Shortly after his arrival in Lower Yemen, the ‘āmil of the Ta‘izz region, Sayyid Ḥusayn ibn Ismā‘īl ash-Shāmī, set out to besiege the city of Ta‘izz. After a battle with an Ottoman force at al-Qā‘ida, however, he turned east and proceeded instead to the lightly defended frontier post of Qaṭaba. There, the local people and their leaders “submitted willingly (\textit{adh’ana}), except for a few;” and so the Sayyid “advanced with those who had submitted against those who were rebelling.” The Sayyid’s army then fought the “rebels,” occupying the town of Qaṭaba in the process.\textsuperscript{563}

In the south and east, then, the Imām’s representatives were sometimes late in arriving, and not always fully successful in asserting control of the situation. An uprising among Ḥāshid and Bakīl, which was more or less planned, had set off a series of spontaneous rebellions throughout the highland region. This may have surprised the Imām as much as it did the Ottoman government. The complexity of these rebellions, and their merging

\textsuperscript{561} al-Irānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 1:320-322.
\textsuperscript{562} al-Irānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 1:322-323; “Yemen Hatratı.”
\textsuperscript{563} al-Irānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 1:323-324.
into previously existing social conflicts, would have constituted a powerful obstacle to the imposition of any kind of central direction.

Nonetheless, it is a tribute to al-Manṣūr’s success in organizing the counter state that he did succeed in extending it throughout most of the highland region. The sayyid-dominated state of the Imām acquired increasing strength, for a brief time successfully replacing the Ottoman government as the dominant power in the highlands. The institutional basis al-Manṣūr had established for the rebellion permitted him to assert a degree of control over a confused chain of events, however imperfect. In war, the ability to take advantage of fortuitous successes, and turn the general course of events in one’s favor, is as important as careful planning; and it does appear that the Imām and his advisors possessed this ability to a high degree.

The scale of the uprisings gave the Imām a decisive military advantage in the area where the Ottomans were weakest, that is, in manpower. A decisive advantage in manpower, together with an increasing refinement in the guerrilla tactics of the highland tribes, permitted the Imām’s partisans to narrow the gap in the battlefield capability between themselves and the Ottoman forces. This was another important ingredient in the Imām’s initial successes; and to highlight this process, we will now turn to a brief tactical study of the rebellion.

VII. Manpower and Tactics in the Rebellion.

In the previous chapter, we noted that for a variety of reasons the Ottomans had serious difficulties in supplying the scattered garrisons in Yemen. In 1889 and 1890, the
ranks of the Seventh Army had been decimated by cholera. At the outbreak of the rebellion, the Ottoman troops in Yemen were doubtless as “ill-fed,” “ill-clothed,” and “diseased,” as those which Harris saw several months later. Although precise data are lacking, it does appear that the inadequacy of men and supplies permitted the rebels to overrun the smaller military posts in the country fairly rapidly. According to al-Wāsi‘ī, “the Imām took all the fortresses (al-ma‘āqil), except for a few,” on the outbreak of the rebellion.

The picture became somewhat more complex when the rebels had to deal with larger Ottoman forces in the field, or besiege major cities. In the open field, the rebels’ overwhelming superiority in numbers often did compensate for their inferior weaponry. This was primarily because this superiority was combined with the skilled use of guerrilla methods of fighting: exploitation of the rugged terrain for cover, ambushes, surprise attacks, night fighting, and surrounding tactics. The Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribesmen had probably learned by this time what they could and could not do against a well-armed Ottoman force, and refined their tactics accordingly.

All these factors came into play in the Imām’s campaign against the relief column of Mustafa Nafiz Bey. As stated previously, Mustafa Nafiz Bey had been given orders to proceed from Ṣan‘ā’ to relieve Ḥajja, where he was to join up with Hasan Edip Paşa’s force. His force consisted of about 900 men with three artillery pieces. It set out from Ṣan‘ā’ on 22 July, and on the next day, encountered a force of the Imām’s partisans in the region west of Ṣan‘ā’. The force was commanded by Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad

564 Harris, Journey, 102.
565 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 274.
566 BBA, Y.Mtv 53/66 4 Ağustos 1307/16 August 1891. Telegram from Hasan Edip Paşa to the Minister of War.
ash-Shar‘ī, and consisted of over 8,000 men from Arḥab, Hamdān, ‘Iyāl Surayḥ, and others.  

Initially, the Ottomans had the best of it. They drove the mujāhidīn who had attacked them into the village of Dharḥāna and surrounded them there; and the fighting in Dharḥāna lasted until sundown. The men in Dharḥāna were not the whole of the Imām’s forces, however, for at sundown the mujāhidīn outside the village launched a two-pronged attack against the Ottomans. One column of the mujāhidīn advanced from the east, and the other came from the north under ash-Shar‘ī.  

The Ottomans thus found themselves caught in a crossfire from three directions, and were quite likely in danger of being surrounded by overwhelming numbers. By this time, moreover, night had fallen; and the advantage would have been with the mujāhidīn who knew the terrain better. Accordingly, the Ottomans retreated to the south of Dharḥāna, where a part of the force took refuge in a village. Some of the mujāhidīn engaged the troops in the village, while ash-Shar‘ī launched an assault to take one of the guns the Ottomans had with them. The fighting continued until midnight, and a number of the Ottomans were killed.  

The account of this battle, taken from al-Iryānī, is a little vague and leaves many unanswered questions. Nonetheless, it does indicate clearly a situation where the Imām’s partisans were able to compensate for firepower inferiority by numerical superiority and good generalship. In the battle’s initial stages, it appeared that Ottoman firepower would carry the day as it had before. The mujāhidīn who had initially engaged them were

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568 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:274-75.
569 Ibid.
forced back on the defensive, and the others apparently feared to come to their aid, at least in the daytime.

As night was falling, however, the mujāhidīn launched an attack against the Ottomans from multiple directions. The effect of this would have been disorienting and frightening in the extreme to the Ottoman soldiers, and the dispersion of the enemy forces on several fronts would have diluted the effect of their firepower. The capability of the mujāhidīn to surround the Ottomans in this fashion was, of course, a function of their greater numbers.

In consequence, Mustafa Nafiz’s men were forced to retreat and take the defensive, suffering heavy casualties in the process. While his force was able to survive and continue the march for a time, it was pursued, harrassed, and blocked at every turn by the Imām’s partisans. Finally, the relief column had to return to Ṣan‘ā’ without reaching Ḥajja, because “of the numbers of the bandits who attacked them on the road, contrary to what was expected.”

In the open field, then, the rebels could achieve a tenuous battlefield superiority over the Ottomans through the employment of guerrilla tactics and numerical superiority. In general, this allowed them to restrict the movement of the Ottoman forces and confine them to the major fortified cities. In the siege warfare which characterized the rebellion, however, the inferior firepower of the rebels continued to impose limitations. While virtually all the important highland cities were taken under siege, it appears that only a few fell into the hands of the rebels. The cities that fell included Ṣafīr, Qa‘ṭaba, Yarīm, and Dhamār (which was unwalled). The cities which were besieged but not captured

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570 BBA, Y.Mtv 53/67 1 Ağustos 1307/13 August 1891. Telegram from the Governor of Yemen to the Minister of War.
included ‘Amrān, Ṣan‘ā’, Kawkabān, Miswār, Ḥajja, and Ibb.⁵⁷¹ It does not appear that Ta‘izz was ever actually brought under siege, although the Imām’s partisans had wanted to do so.

The siege of Ṣan‘ā’ is the best documented of these episodes; and the accounts of this siege reveal the limitations which, in general, must have prevented the Imām’s partisans from taking more cities than they did. The numbers of the besieging army were estimated by al-Wāsi‘ī at 70,000 men.⁵⁷² This is probably vastly exaggerated, but the tribesmen certainly outnumbered the Ottoman garrison of about 1500 men or so. The tribesmen besieging Ṣan‘ā’, however, had no artillery. In the main, they were armed with curved daggers (janbiyya) and “old style muskets” (al-banādíq al-qadīma), whose range was only about 5-600 meters.⁵⁷³

The defenders of Ṣan‘ā’, by contrast, were heavily armed, and the city was well fortified. Ṣan‘ā’ was surrounded by a continuous wall of mud brick, with stone towers at regular intervals, in which small guns were mounted. Outside the wall the Ottomans had also built a chain of small individual towers, each furnished with an artillery piece and a dozen men armed with rifles.⁵⁷⁴

For the Imām, then, starving the defenders out was a more viable option than assault. This was done successfully in the 1904 rebellion, and because of the deficiencies in the Ottoman logistical system, the Ṣan‘ānīs suffered greatly from food shortages in the 1891 rebellion as well. In the siege, “great distress came upon the people as a result of the lack

⁵⁷¹ Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 334; “Yemen Hatrat.”
⁵⁷² al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 276.
⁵⁷³ al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 274; Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:19.
⁵⁷⁴ Harris, Journey, 300-301.
of food.” The wealthy were forced to sell their possessions to have enough to eat. The poor had to leave the city, and were attacked in consequence by tribesmen who viewed them as “those who had helped the Turks” (al-musāʿidūn liʾl-aṭrāk). The situation, however, did not become desperate enough for the defenders to capitulate before the arrival of the relief force. The Imām was probably aware that such a force would come fairly rapidly after Ṣanʿā’ was besieged, and he may have felt that he could not rely on time alone to force a surrender.

Because the besiegers had no artillery, they could not hope to breach the fortifications. Their main military option was thus to storm the wall with ladders and take the city by assault. Such a strategy was extremely risky, given the heavy armament of the Ottoman defenders, but it was attempted nonetheless. The fighting which developed during the siege of Ṣanʿā’ thus coalesced into three major elements: continual exchanges of gunfire, continual attempts by the besiegers to approach the wall, and continual sorties by the Ottoman troops to drive them back.576

Overall, the Imām’s partisans seem to have focused on maintaining a harrassing fire by day, and approaching the wall with ladders by night.577 When they did get close to the wall, however, they were usually caught in a rifle and artillery crossfire from the towers, with deadly effect.578 As a result, the mujāhidīn were never able to mount a direct assault on the fortifications of Ṣanʿā’. In defending fixed positions during the siege, the Ottoman forces had a decisive advantage.

575 al-Wāsiʿī, Tārīkh, 276-277.
577 al-Wāsiʿī, Tārīkh, 276.
578 Harris, Journey, 301-302.
In tactical terms, then, the picture for the 1891 rebellion becomes increasingly mixed. The Ottoman army would always retain a degree of firepower superiority, owing to the Zaydī tribesmen’s lack of artillery. This would often give them a decisive advantage in siege warfare, whether in the defense or attack of fortifications. In field warfare, however, the Imām’s partisans were learning to exploit their own particular advantages—mobility, numbers, knowledge of the terrain, skill in ambush and surprise—to narrow the gap between themselves and the Ottoman forces.

Within the next few years, the gap would close further as a result of the Yemenis’ acquisition of breech-loading rifles. The Ottomans could no longer take their own battlefield superiority for granted; and good generalship, knowing how to exploit one’s own strengths and the enemy’s weaknesses, would increasingly become the determinant of victory on the battlefield.

VIII. The Ottoman Reaction; Feyzi Paşa’s Campaign to Retake the Highlands.

This narrowing of the gap in military capabilities was evident also in the Ottoman “reconquest” of the highlands. On the face of it, Feyzi Paşa’s campaign was a walkover executed in good Callwellian fashion: a series of rapid and decisive blows against the Imām’s partisans, which smashed their resistance, and enabled Feyzi Paşa to achieve his objectives at a minimum cost in time and bloodshed.

Decisive generalship of this sort was indeed a major feature of the campaign, and contributed in great measure to Feyzi Paşa’s initial success. In the battles Feyzi Paşa
fought, however, victory was never inevitable. In the opening phases of the campaign he led the forces under his command into several very dangerous situations, from which he was only able to extricate them by good battlefield generalship.

The victories he won did indeed result in a general withdrawal of the Imām’s forces and a brief cessation of resistance, permitting him to retake the highland cities comparatively unopposed. The Imām’s forces, however, were not “smashed” in the manner that those of Muḥammad ibn ʿĀʾid or the Ismāʿīlī dāʿī had been. The web of partisans the Imām had established remained essentially intact; they would give way when pressed at any one point, but spring back whenever the pressure was taken off. This would become increasingly apparent in the years of guerrilla war which followed the 1891 rebellion.

Feyzi Paşা was appointed as the Commandant of Yemen (Yemen Umum Kumandani) after Hasan Edip Paşа had communicated the futility of his own position, and the military administration in Istanbul had become disgusted with his performance. The ferman of appointment was issued on 7 September 1891;579 and Feyzi Paşа, who was then commander of the Ḥijāz Military Division, set sail from Jidda and arrived in Ḥudayda on 27 September 1891.580

On his arrival he had approximately 8 battalions at his disposal, or 6,200 men; the Karaman and Antalya Regiments had been dispatched from the Mediterranean coast of Anatolia at about the time of his appointment.581 The force was armed with Martini-

579 BBA, Y.Mtv 54/10 26 Ağustos 1307/7 September 1891. Note from the Minister of War to the Yıldız Palace.
580 Yemen Salmnamesi 1314, 328.
581 BBA, Y.Mtv 54/10 26 Ağustos 1307/7 September 1891. Note from the Minister of War to the Yıldız Palace.
Henry rifles, together with at least 1 battery of 6-pound (German weight) field guns, and one battery of mountain (3-pound) guns. They may have possessed other artillery pieces as well.

The forces at Feyzi Paşa’s disposal, then, were well-armed but not particularly impressive in terms of numbers; and the strategy that Feyzi Paşa adopted tended to make them vulnerable, insofar as it required their division. Feyzi Paşa’s initial objective was to relieve Şan‘ā’ as soon as possible. After this, his forces were to retake or relieve the other major cities of the highlands, and reopen communications between them.

To do this, he would divide his forces into relatively small mobile columns. These were to move down the main routes as quickly as possible, reestablish security by planting garrisons in key areas, and break up the rebel concentrations by swift and aggressive action. Often, the columns were to converge at a stipulated location. The use of converging columns increased the mobility and geographical range of the force, while reducing the risk that the columns might find themselves isolated and outnumbered by the enemy. The emphasis was on speed and decisiveness, rather than on maintaining the security of the force. As such, it was strongly reminiscent of the “hammer blows” strategy recommended by Callwell.

In general, this strategy was successful. Feyzi Paşa set out for Şan‘ā’ on 28 September, the day after his arrival, and arrived there at the beginning of October. In the month of October, a series of rapid campaigns restored Ottoman control in the northwest, the central plateau, and Lower Yemen. ‘Amrān, Kawkabān, Miswār, and Ibb were relieved,

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582 BBA, Y.Mtv 54/11 26 Ağustos 1307/7 September 1891. Note from the Minister of War to the Yıldız Palace; BBA, Y.Mtv 54/87 18 Eylül 1307/30 September 1891. Table of supplies to be sent to the Seventh Army; Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 328.

583 Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 328, 335.
and the towns of Yarîm and Dhamâr retaken. These campaigns were usually undertaken by small columns of 400-800 men each, under several different commanders.  

Feyzi Paşa’s strategy, then, was distinctly “Callwellian” in the principles it employed. The role of battle in his campaign seemed, at first glance, to reflect the Callwellian ideal also. The decisive turning point of the campaign was a series of battles between Manâkha and Ṣan‘ā’, which the Ottomans won partially through superior firepower. Thereafter the rebels generally refused to hold fixed positions against the Ottoman columns in large numbers, choosing to retreat instead.

Actual analysis of these battles and their aftermath, however, shows that we need to qualify these observations to a certain extent. Because of the relatively small size of the force as a whole and the mobile columns, Ottoman battlefield superiority could not be taken for granted. In essence, Feyzi Paşa’s force was in the same situation as the garrisons of the Seventh Army. That is, they possessed superior firepower, but the Imâm’s partisans had command of the terrain and overwhelming numerical superiority. At the outset of these battles, in fact, the small body of troops under Feyzi Paşa’s command was in grave danger of being overwhelmed by a much larger force of the Zaydî tribesmen.

Feyzi Paşa was able to turn this situation into victory for the Ottomans through good generalship and knowledge of the conditions of battle in Yemen. By and large, in these battles the rebels employed the characteristic tactics of the highland tribes. That is, they sought to occupy strategic passages and the surrounding elevated points, taking cover in

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584 Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 334-36. The northwest region was reconquered by two mobile columns, consisting of one-and-a-half and two battalions respectively. One column marched to Kawkabân, and the other to ‘Amrân, to relieve the garrisons there. After this, they joined up in Miswâr.
the rough terrain, for the purpose of blocking the advance of the enemy force and harassing it with sniper fire. When battle was joined, the tribesmen would attempt to surround the advancing force. The men in fixed positions would maintain a steady fire, while others would launch probing attacks against the enemy flanks.

Feyzi Paşa countered these tactics by a combination of artillery barrages and aggressive small unit actions. If possible, advance bodies of troops would secure the high points along a passage before the rebels could occupy them, to provide a screen for the advance of the troops. Otherwise the rebels could be shelled out of their positions, or driven out by small unit assaults. Once this was done, the pursuit would be pressed as far as possible, and the high ground seized along the way. The emphasis in his tactical combinations was on speed, aggressiveness, and maintaining the initiative. Firepower and assault were employed to deny the rebels the advantage of the terrain, and maintain the momentum of the campaign in favor of the Ottomans.

On the march to Ṣan‘ā’, Feyzi Paşa had split his force into two columns. This was a compromise between the need for speed and the need to bring up sufficient troops to confront the rebels in force. Ṣan‘ā’ had to be relieved as soon as possible, and speed could best be achieved by a small column. This column, however would have to have reinforcements readily available, if it was not to be overwhelmed by the rebels.

Initially, Feyzi Paşa had gone with about two battalions to seize Manākha by way of the Manākha road. The remaining six battalions were to go by way of the Ṣanqūr pass,* and the two columns were to unite below Mafhaq, a fortress located a few kilometres

* This road was longer but less rugged, and therefore more suitable for a large body of troops with heavy equipment.
from Ṣan‘ā’.585 Feyzi Paşa’s column took Manākha without a struggle, and then proceeded to Mafhaq.

The larger column, however, failed to materialize in time. This was probably to be expected, given the length of the road and the greater size of the force; but as it happened, the delay put Feyzi Paşa in an exceedingly dangerous position. Mafhaq was not far from Ṣan‘ā’, where thousands of rebel tribesmen were concentrated, and these now began to drift into the surrounding area. As a result, Feyzi Paşa’s column found itself in real danger of being surrounded and cut to pieces.586

Quick and decisive action by Feyzi Paşa, however, retrieved the situation for the Ottomans. First, troops were sent to occupy the strategic points (nikat-ı lazime) surrounding the camp. Apart from denying advantageous sniping positions to the rebels, this was also “so as not to allow the bandits to perceive the meagreness of the force.”587 Presumably the troops on picket would prevent the enemy from getting close enough to carefully observe the strength of the column, although our author does not elaborate on his statement; it would also prevent the rebels from launching an attack by night. At dawn the next day, Feyzi Paşa launched a surprise attack against the rebel positions. The tribesmen were caught unawares and fled. The Ottoman forces pressed the pursuit to the environs of Sūq al-Khamīs, seizing control of the mountains which commanded the pass in that area.588

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585 Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 328-329.
586 Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 329.
587 Ibid.
588 Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 329-30.
In this case, then, Feyzi Paşa had averted disaster by a series of decisive measures, which were taken with an eye to the tactics usually employed by the highland tribes. The most important points around his camp were occupied before the rebels could get to them, thus preventing the latter from carrying out an immediate assault; and after this, Feyzi Paşa turned the tables on them by launching a surprise attack first. The initiative was thus recovered for the Ottomans, and the pursuit pressed, so that the rebels would not have a chance to regroup.

The fighting continued around Sūq al-Khamīs into the next day, when the second column under Ahmet Rüşdi Paşa arrived. The day after, the combined force marched on Ṣan‘ā’, arriving at the pass of ‘Aṣur in the evening. The pass of ‘Aṣur led directly into the plain of Ṣan‘ā’, and in consequence, the Imām’s partisans attempted a final stand here against the Ottoman forces. In this battle, Feyzi Paşa’s peculiar tactical combination of artillery, assault, and seizure of strategic terrain came into full play.

On the arrival of the force at the entrance to the pass, Feyzi Paşa saw that the peaks on the left side of the road (eğose) were occupied by the Imām’s partisans. In consequence, he sent a body of troops to occupy the mountains on the left side of the road. The night passed without significant fighting; and in the morning, it was observed that the rebels had left the mountains and taken up position in a fortified village.589

A battalion of troops was then brought up from Ṣan‘ā’ to blockade the rebels from that side; meanwhile, the rebels opened fire on the Ottomans, and reinforcements began to come up from the camps at Ḥadda and Rawḍa. In consequence, Feyzi Paşa’s soldiers occupied the mountains surrounding the village, while artillery was brought up from

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589 Yemen Sallānesi 1314, 331-332.
Ṣan‘ā’. The village was then subject to an intensive bombardment, while simultaneously the Ottomans launched counterattacks against the tribesmen coming from the direction of Ṣan‘ā’. The latter were driven off, and the village almost completely destroyed. That night the rebels abandoned the village, and the army besieging Ṣan‘ā’ melted away.⁵⁹⁰

Seemingly, then, victory had been sealed for the Ottomans. With few exceptions, Feyzi Paşa’s men were able after this to reestablish Ottoman control of the major cities, without encountering significant resistance on the battlefield. The guerrilla phase of the conflict, however, was just beginning. After the relief of Ṣan‘ā’, the “bandits...no longer dared to move about in large numbers” but “remained scattered hither and thither” (ötede beride kalmış).⁵⁹¹

With the incitement of these “bandits,” however, rebel bands soon began to appear in various fortresses throughout the country, necessitating the constant dispatch of punitive expeditions to expel them.⁵⁹² The activities of these bands, directed by the Imām, and conducted by his commanders (maqādima), would steadily increase over the next fifteen years. Guerrilla rebellion, which had been politically fragmented and sporadic, would become continuous and organized from 1891 on. It would soon become clear that Feyzi Paşa’s success had been limited and temporary, and that the Callwellian/divide and rule formula for maintaining control would no longer work.

Conclusion.

⁵⁹⁰ Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 332-333.
⁵⁹¹ Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 338.
⁵⁹² Yemen Salnamesi 1314, 335-336, 338.
The 1891 rebellion thus marked a watershed in the history of rebellion and counterinsurgency in Yemen. The Imām al-Manṣūr, by means of assiduous propaganda and building up his network of partisans, was able for the first time to extend the tribal quasi-state constructed by his predecessors into Ottoman territory. There, it would serve as an effective counter state for raising rebellion, employing the means historically used by these kinds of states to assert their authority: persuasion of the tribes by appeals to Islam and honor, use of the mediatory power of the sayyids to bring rival tribes into alliance with one another, exploitation of military victories to further expand the circle of alliances.

Through the shrewd use of these kinds of measures, the Imām was able to effect the kind of political unification which can take place in Middle Eastern segmentary lineage societies such as that of Ḥāshid and Bakīl: an alliance of all the rival tribes for the purpose of expelling a foreign invader, held together by a militant ideology of jihād, the scripturalist-Islamic authority of men from the holy lineages, and the hope of gain from joining a successful enterprise. In doing so, he successfully neutralized the Ottoman divide and rule tactics which had been effective in maintaining control in Yemen up to that point.

In consequence, the Imām was able to raise an insurrection on a scale which overwhelmed the Ottoman force stationed in Yemen. The small Ottoman garrisons, faced with armies that had a tremendous advantage in numbers and familiarity with the terrain, could no longer take their own battlefield superiority for granted. Consequently, they had to retreat into the fortified cities and wait for the arrival of the relief force.
At the same time, the Imām’s forces continued to labor under obvious military limitations. The majority of his partisans were still armed with matchlock muskets, and this made it difficult for them to capture fortified cities or to face a well-armed expeditionary force on the battlefield. Because of the high level of spontaneity with which the alliance had come together, the Imām had difficulty in controlling his men and keeping them in the field in the event of setbacks. The 1891 rebellion was, to some extent, simply a tribal uprising on a grand scale. The Imām had raised this rebellion by careful work and planning, but had difficulty in controlling the course of events once it had been set in motion.

As a result of all these factors, the 1891 rebellion was put down relatively swiftly and easily by the Ottomans. Feyzi Paşa’s relief force had sufficient size, armament, and expertise in command to regain the advantage on the battlefield for the Ottomans; and this, together with effective strategic employment of speed and surprise, allowed Feyzi Paşa to reconquer the country within a fairly short period of time. The tribes, seeing that defeat was imminent, abandoned the Imām as quickly as they had joined him.

Despite its partially ephemeral and tribal character, however, in this rebellion the foundations were laid for the long-term guerrilla war which would begin shortly thereafter. A network of committed partisans had been built up, and a counter state structure put in place which could mobilize men for war across tribal boundaries. Likewise, in the course of the fighting a kind of strategic paradigm had emerged for successful rebellion against the Ottomans, which would subsequently influence the planning for later insurrections of the same kind. Al-Manṣūr would therefore use the
lessons of this rebellion to organize the kind of long-term, state-forming, and total war which was implicit in the idea of *jihād*.

In turn, this would force the Ottomans to change their own methods of dealing with rebellion. The focus of the Ottomans shifted from maintaining control by divide and rule tactics to extending the authority of the state in a more effective manner. This would lead them to ask the same kinds of questions that counterinsurgency strategists in the twentieth century have asked; should the population be subdued by forceful military and police measures, or should their loyalty be won by reform and development? Policies with similarities to modern counterinsurgency, in both its repressive and persuasive forms, began to emerge in consequence.

The greater sophistication of both the Ottomans and the Imām resulted in a steady intensification of the war. Military operations gradually became more protracted and destructive, while greater demands were made on the population by both sides. The character of war in Yemen was thus transformed, from limited and intermittent conflict to a bitter ideological struggle waged with considerable stubbornness and ingenuity by both parties. In this regard, it had some similarities to the total guerrilla wars of the era of decolonization; and we shall take up the question of whether it was total war in this sense in the next chapte
CHAPTER 6

GUERRILLA WAR AND COUNTERINSURGENCY AS TOTAL WAR IN YEMEN.

The 1891 rebellion was a major watershed both in the development of Zaydī modes of resistance and Ottoman strategies to counter it. After the 1891 rebellion, the conflict in Yemen began increasingly to assume the characteristics associated with “modern” irregular war. First, we will show that this period witnessed a continuing refinement of the Imām’s state as an instrument for waging guerrilla war. This involved what the Zaydī chroniclers called ʾislāḥ, the ordering of the state on the principles of the Sharīʿa, and the extension of its authority among the Zaydī tribes. The refinement of the administration of the Imamate was paralleled by the adoption of modes of resistance based on the idea of jihād, employing guerrilla tactics of attrition and conducted by bands of partisans (ʿiṣābāt). We will show that the employment of the ʿiṣābāt enabled the Imamate to achieve a degree of autonomy from the tribal political system. In turn, this autonomy was a major factor in allowing the Imām to wage a jihād that was long-term and total in orientation, rather than short-term and limited. The escalation of the war in Yemen was likewise facilitated by the tribes’ acquisition of breech-loading rifles, which now began to pour into Yemen from Djibouti and elsewhere.
Sophisticated modes of rebellion such as this required the Ottomans to modernize their methods of dealing with them. Ideologically, such strategies were based on the pan-Islamic and absolutist thought of Abdülhamid’s reign. Abdülhamid was the sole legitimate caliph of the Muslims, and the general good of the Muslims required that they obey him. Al-Manṣūr’s Imamate was therefore illegitimate, and he must either submit voluntarily or be forced to do so.

In consequence, strategies with marked similarities to modern counterinsurgency emerged in this period, in both repressive and “hearts and minds” manifestations. The former was implemented by Feyzi Paşa, military governor of Yemen from 1891 to 1898. The purpose of Feyzi Paşa's policies was simply to cow the population by force. The tactics of repression and mobile war he employed were similar to the counter-guerrilla practices used in the European colonies, and these in turn were inspired by ideas of total war developed by the French and Germans in the nineteenth century.

Because Feyzi Paşa lacked the resources to crush the rebels in a truly decisive fashion, however, his policies only succeeded in angering the population; and the situation slid further and further out of the government's control. In 1898, then, Abdülhamid had Feyzi Paşa replaced by Hüseyin Hilmi, who attempted a drastic reversal of the latter's policies. Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa's policies were specifically designed to win the voluntary support of the population for the government by methods similar to those of “soft” counterinsurgency: the replacement of a military administration by a civil one, the reform of the government, and development programs designed to improve the lives of the people. Like the Imām's attempts to extend the authority of his state, these policies were referred to as ʻislah. The term in this context incorporated older Sunnī Islamic ideas
of the state as guarantor of the security and moral health of the Muslims with the progressive and reformist ideals of Abdülhamid's regime.

Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa's policies failed, however, for some of the same reasons that Feyzi Paşa’s had. Lack of money made it impossible to implement Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s ambitious programs of development and reform. Beyond this, however, Hüseyin Hilmi was thwarted by the dictatorial and manipulative elements in Hamidian absolutism, which coexisted alongside its “rational” and modernizing aspects. Specifically, Abdülhamid's general policy of encouraging rivalry between different branches of the government made it impossible for Hüseyin Hilmi to bring the Seventh Army under control and reform its behavior. Since abuses by the Seventh Army were the primary reason for instability in Yemen, the Zaydī rebellion continued unabated.

In sum, by the 1890’s war in Yemen had lost much of its archaic and intermittent character. The struggle became focused on an ideologically driven competition between the Ottomans and the Imām to extend the power of their respective states over the Zaydī population, and gain their support. Battles were fought with modern weapons according to the principles of mobile warfare, and the fighting was bitter and protracted, rather than spasmodic and limited. And as the fighting intensified toward total war, it became increasingly clear that the Ottomans were losing. This period was a long prelude to the insurrection of 1904, when a series of humiliating defeats would put to rest once and for all the Ottoman idea of destroying the Imām’s power.
I. \textit{Iṣlāḥ}.

The concept of \textit{iṣlāḥ} formed the ideological foundation for an essential process in the mobilization of the Zaydīs against the Ottomans: the development of a certain level of autonomy by the Imamate as a state from the tribal structure, so as to facilitate the cross-tribal mobilization of the Zaydīs against the Ottomans.

The Arabic root \textit{ṣ-l-ḥ}, from which the term \textit{iṣlāḥ} derives, is rich in meaning. It is associated with peace (\textit{ṣulḥ}), piety or moral soundness in the Islamic sense (\textit{ṣalāḥ}), and the capability or legitimate capacity to perform an action (\textit{ṣalāḥīyya}). The verb \textit{aṣlaha}, from which the verbal noun \textit{iṣlāḥ} is directly derived, means broadly “to make peace,” “to make sound,” and hence “to reform.” It may also mean “to pacify,” to suppress rebellion by military force.

Time and space does not permit us to give a full explication of the historical use of \textit{iṣlāḥ} in Zaydī political thought, which awaits further study. In al-Iryānī’s text, which is our main source, it is connected to the extension or strengthening of the Imām’s authority in a given region. The use of the term \textit{iṣlāḥ} for al-Manṣūr’s state-building activities appears to reflect the close connection in Zaydī thought between the authority of the Imām and the moral health (\textit{ṣalāḥ}) of the Muslim community.\textsuperscript{593} \textit{Ṣīyalāḥ} is the quality possessed by one who is \textit{ṣāliḥ}; that is, who is pious, abstemious, and self-controlled in the Islamic sense.\textsuperscript{594} Historically, Zaydī thinkers viewed it as the duty of the Muslim community to submit to the Imām so that he could lead them in the struggle to achieve

\textsuperscript{593} See, for example, the description of the Imām Qāsim ar-Rassi’s thought in Ghulays, \textit{Tajdīd}, 64-66; and the use of the terms \textit{ṣalāḥ} and \textit{ṣāliḥ} in ash-Shawkānī, \textit{Raf’}, 87, 89-91.

\textsuperscript{594} Ibid.
moral purity at the social level. The idea of ṣalāḥ is likewise related to that of the maslah—, or the “general good” of the Muslim community, which it is the Imām’s duty to look after. The Imām does these things by “enjoining the good and forbidding the evil;” that is, by ensuring the observance of the five pillars of Islam, and enforcing the Sharī‘a law. Islāḥ, therefore, is the moral ordering associated with the imposition of the authority of the Imām’s state and the Sharī‘a.

In this context, al-Manṣūr and his chief may have been influenced by Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ash-Shawkānī (although in contrast to the latter, the Imām was a strict Hādīwī). Ash-Shawkānī is considered as a forerunner or participant in the Salafiyya movement of the nineteenth century, which advocated the reform of the faith by return to the practice of the “virtuous ancestors” (as-salaf as-ṣāliḥ) of the first three centuries of Islam. Ash-Shawkanī advocated a purification of the faith from elements associated with “polytheism” (shirk), and the extension of the authority of the central government, in conjunction with efforts to enforce Islamic law and instruct the common people in the principles of Islam. These principles were substantially implemented by al-Manṣūr in his program of islāḥ.

This concept of islāḥ is reinforced by the use of its morally opposite terms in the Zaydī context, those of fitna, fasād, and ‘isyān. These words, having various

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595 See for example Ghulays, Tajdid, 81-82, 107-108, 113-114.
596 Ghulays, Tajdid, 116. See also ash-Shawkānī, Raf‘, 91 for the use of maslah in the sense of “general good.”
598 For the use of islāḥ as “enjoining the good and forbidding the evil” see ash-Shawkānī, Raf‘, 90-91.
600 ash-Shirji, ash-Shawkānī, 128-129, 179.
connotations of strife, evil, and rebellion, effectively denote the converse of ḥāth (that is, reconciliation, moral reform, and pacification). In the Zaydī thought of Yemen, they denote specifically the anarchic and immoral character of tribal life when undisciplined by the guiding hand of the Imām and the Shari‘a.601 Before the Ottoman conquest, the term ḥāth was used to describe the Imāms’ futile attempts to pacify the tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl.602

Ḥāth as undertaken by al-Manṣūr, then, included the idea of the moral disciplining of the tribes by imposing on them the authority of the Imām and the Shari‘a. Al-Manṣūr’s Imamate, however, was still strongly constrained by the characteristic limitations of the tribal quasi-state. Therefore, ḥāth as moral disciplining was usually preceded by ḥāth as “reconciliation” of tribal factions in conflict, a key role of the sayyids in a tribal society such as that of Ḥāshid and Bakīl. Reconciliation also had a specifically Qu’ranic justification, that of the requirement to make peace (aṣlaḥa) between quarreling parties among the Muslims by just judgment.603 The mediatory role of the Imām’s sayyid officials gave an opening for the Imām’s state to expand its authority and implement ḥāth in the legal sense.

In the Hijrī year 1317 (1899-1900), for example, the Imām sent the sayyid Muḥammad ibn al-Hādī to “make peace [in] the country of Khawlān ash-Shām” (ḥāth Khawlān ash-Shām). This meant specifically to reconcile the feuding Khalīf and Jawharī sections of that tribe, which Muḥammad ibn al-Hādī did by making a judgment in accordance with

601 For the Zaydī Islamic conception of tribal culture see Dresch, Tribes, 185 ff., 218-224-225. According to al-Irānī, al-iḥṣād “a making perverted or corrupt, a sowing of sedition,” “continues to flourish abundantly in the minds of Ḥāshid and Bakīl, leaving them only on very rare occasions.” See al-Irānī, Sīrāt, 2:26.
602 See for example al-Haymī, ar-Rawd, 27.
the laws of the \textit{Sharī’a}. After this, “the commandments of God were made effective in those regions, and whoever raised his head to commit evil (\textit{fasād}) was suppressed.”\textsuperscript{604}

In this passage, then, \textit{iṣlāḥ} as the reconciliation of warring parties led to the imposition of the authority of the Imām’s state, such that those who commit “evil” (i.e., rebellion) may be “suppressed” (\textit{inqama’a}); and that the legal code of the Imām’s state, the \textit{Sharī’a}, is therefore enforced in the region (rather than tribal customary law). The point is made more explicit in passages dealing with the extension of the Imām’s authority in the northwest.

The year 1899 witnessed a major expansion of the Imām’s authority in that region, after the tribes there had been impressed with the defeats inflicted by the Imām on a major expeditionary force sent against him by the Ottomans. Not everyone accepted the Imām’s authority voluntarily, however, and among the recalcitrant was Shaykh Muḥammad al-Hindī of the Ḥajūr region. The Imām therefore proposed to the elders (‘\textit{uqqāl}’\textsuperscript{*}) of the Ḥajūr region that they “reconcile al-Hindī [to accepting the authority of the Imām’s government]” (\textit{iṣlāḥ al-Hindī}), and “put them under obligation to wage the \textit{jihād} against him if he refused gifts.”\textsuperscript{605}

Here again, we see the subtle transition of \textit{iṣlāḥ} from negotiation for the purpose of reconciliation to the forceful assertion of the authority of the Imām’s state. Al-Hindī

\textsuperscript{604} al-Iryānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 2:141-142.

\textsuperscript{*} The social role of the \textit{‘\textit{uqqāl}} (sing. \textit{‘\textit{āqīl}}), a term which I have translated here as “elders,” is in need of further study. In al-Iryānī’s work, they appear as mediators between local villagers or tribesmen and the state, whether that of the Imām or the Ottomans.

\textsuperscript{605} al-Iryānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 2:132. The \textit{‘\textit{uqqāl}} were evidently furnished with these “gifts,” which were always offered to powerful shaykhs as material inducements to join one faction or another in a conflict. Al-Hindī’s refusal to accept them would have meant refusal to submit to the Imām’s authority, which in turn would justify suppressing his rebellion by force.
refused to come to terms; and as a result, the Imam sent a band of partisans (ʿiṣāba) against him, burning his territories and garrisoning its fortresses after al-Hindī had fled.606

Likewise, the īslāḥ of al-Hindī in this context is clearly connected to the imposition of Islamic law in his territories. Muḥammad al-Hindī is described literally as one of the “pillars of idolatry” (arkān at-ṭāghūt). “Idolatry,” or ṭāghūt, in the context of Zaydī-Islamic thought in Yemen, means tribal or local custom as opposed to Sharīʿa law.607 Al-Hindī was said to have allowed women to leave their husbands without the formal divorce procedure.608 Other blameworthy customs of the Ḥajūr region included the permitting interest, and allowing women to go about unveiled and mix socially with men. When the Imam had established full control of the Ḥajūr area, he forbade these customs.609

What we see in the process of īslāḥ, then, is the employment by the Imam and the sayyīds of their mediatory function in the tribal system to build up the authority of their state on a supra-tribal basis, and thereby gradually gain a degree of autonomy for it. Īslāḥ was a spiritual conception of the process by which the Imam’s state made its own legal and moral values paramount over those of tribalism. To organize the diverse Zaydī tribes under a larger state authority required the Imam to overcome the particularism of individual tribal interests and local custom; and the idea of īslāḥ, with its focus on settling the selfish quarrels of the tribes and imposing the uniform legal code of the

606 Ibid.
607 Dresch, Tribes, 184.
608 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:129.
609 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:150.
Sharī’a, gave the Imām the ideological means to do so. How, then, did the Imām’s state increase its autonomy from the tribal system in practice?

II. The ‘Iṣāḥāt.

A key institution in the development of the Imamate as an autonomous state were the “bands” (iṣābāt) of partisans, which became prominent after 1891. The ‘iṣābāt were salaried bodies of tribesmen, recruited by al-Manṣūr specifically for the purpose of waging jihād against the Ottomans under the name of “soldiers of the Imām.” The ‘iṣābāt could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered a standing army. The recruitment for the iṣābāt, however, involved a separation (albeit partial) of the tribal warriors from their tribes, and an incorporation into the state apparatus of the Imām. The manner of recruitment of the iṣābāt frequently involved a specific agreement between a given tribe and the Imām for the former to supply him with a certain number of warriors, who could then be used wherever and however he saw fit.

After an agreement was negotiated between the Dhū Ghaylān tribe and the Imām for the former to wage the jihād, for example, the Imām required them to supply an ‘iṣāba of four hundred men to fight the jihād “wherever it might be [waged].” Subsequently, this ‘iṣāba was used to suppress Muḥammad al-Hindi. That is, they were employed outside the territory of their tribe as an instrument to enforce the authority of the Imām’s state, and for purposes which had nothing to do with their particular tribal interests. Not

610 BBA, Y.Mtv 99/37 21 Haziran 1310/3 July 1894. Telegram from the Commandant of Yemen to the Minister of War.
611 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:131-132.
all the ḯāt, moreover, were tribally homogeneous; one ḯāta consisted of men from Nihm, Arḥāb, and Khawlān.612

The structure of command in the ḯāt also tended partially to separate the men from the tribal system. The commanders of the ḯāt were called muqaddamī (pl. maqādimā). Usually, they were prominent persons from within the sayyid elite. The sons of the former Imām Muḥsin ash-Shihārī, for example, served as maqādimā for the Imām,613 as did the sayyid ‘Alī Ṣalāḥ.614 An ḯāta recruited from the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes might also be placed under a powerful shaykh in the territories under Ottoman control, if that shaykh was a tried partisan of the Imām. An ḯāta of Arḥāb fighters, for example, was put under the command of Shaykh ‘Alī Miqdād of Anis in the central plateau.615

In the context of the separation of the tribesmen from their own territory, then, the ordinary structure of military leadership in the tribe was disrupted or replaced. The chief men in command were not the tribal shaykhs, although such men might act as subordinate commanders.616 Rather, they were persons directly chosen by the Imām for their sayyid descent, loyalty, or outstanding service.

The dependence of the ḯāt warriors on the authorities of the Imām’s state, rather than their tribes, was accentuated by the system by which they were maintained. The ḯāt received their maintenance directly from the Imām, as a monthly salary of six

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612 BBA, Y.Mtv 99/37, 13 Haziran 1310/25 June 1894. Telegram from the Commandant of Yemen to the Minister of War.
613 BBA, Y.Mtv 146/77, 19 Eylül 1312/1 October 1896. Note from the Minister of War to the Palace.
614 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:298.
615 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:174.
616 Ibid.
riyāls. Three were paid directly from the public treasury of the Muslims, the bayt al-māl, and three taken from the zakāt tax, which they collected on his behalf.617

The isābāt thus helped to strengthen the second “pillar” of the Imām’s autonomous state, the public treasury of the Muslims. The Imām had abundant revenues from the canonical taxes of Islamic law,618 the plunder taken by the isābāt, and the lands specifically attached to the public treasury.619 These were placed in storehouses of grain and money (buyūt al-amwāl) in the protected market towns (hijrāt) of his territory.620

Apparently as a result of the Imām’s careful management, these storehouses had a constant surplus, which the Imām used to fund the ‘isābāt and provide aid to the tribes for the jihād.621 The ‘isābāt and the bayt al-māl thus acted as mutually reinforcing institutions which, by virtue of al-Manṣūr’s tireless administrative work, gradually lifted his state above the vagaries of the tribal system of mobilization.

III. The Ḳāt and the Zaydīs’ Mobilization for War.

In the 1891 rebellion, the mobilization of men and money for the jihād had largely been undertaken by persons influential at the local level, powerful tribal shaykhs or sayyids acting on behalf of the Imām; and for practical purposes, this system continued in the 1890’s. The isābāt, however, assumed an increasing role alongside these local

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617 BBA, Y.Mtv 99/37, 13 Haziran 1310/25 June 1894. Telegram from the Commandant of Yemen to the Minister of War.
618 al-Irānī, Sīrat, (Ṣāliḥīyya’s introduction), 1:86-93.
620 al-Irānī, Sīrat, (Ṣāliḥīyya’s introduction), 1:96.
621 al-Irānī, Sīrat, 2:54, 57.
potentates in the key areas of mobilization: extending the authority of the Imām’s state, disseminating propaganda on his behalf, collecting taxes, and arousing the people to rebellion.

The initial steps in extending the authority of the Imām’s state were no different than they had been in 1891. There was first an exchange of correspondence or envoys between the Imām and the tribes of a given region. Thus in the Hijrī year 1317 (1899-1900), the Banī Jumā’a section of the Khawlān tribe sent a delegation to the Imām “requesting a governor (‘āmil) to uphold the Sharī’a and collect the [taxes] obligatory [in Islamic law]” (al-wājibāt). If there was mutual agreement in this regard, the Imām would receive written undertakings (‘uhūd) from the tribe in question, presumably to the effect that they would obey his orders. The tribe would then give hostages as assurance of their good conduct, and the Imām’s officials would arrive in the region. The Imām was still to a considerable extent reliant on the goodwill of the tribes, and he might be reluctant to send his officials unless he received the hostages first.

As we have noted in the section on iṣlāḥ, however, the insertion of the Imām’s officials or soldiers into a given region gave him a wedge with which to expand his authority. This was particularly true in the northwest and the central plateau, where the Imām and the Ottomans vied bitterly for authority. This was where the ‘ishābāt began to play an increasing role as the Imamate’s instrument of direct coercion.

Here, the Imām would send his iṣābāt and maqādim in direct support of the shaykhs or tribes who were his allies, who would then compel the recalcitrant to submit to the

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622 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:161.
624 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:161.
authority of the Imām. In connection with his victories over the Ottomans in 1899, the Imām was invited by the ‘uqqāl of the Sharaf region in the northwest to send his officials there. In the process, the people in the neighboring region of Ḥajūr also submitted to the Imām. Here, however, the local shaykhs repeatedly rebelled against the Imām’s governors; and the Imām’s muqaddamī suppressed these rebellions ruthlessly, by means of both the ‘iṣābāt and the neighboring tribes allied with the Imām.625

The process of extending the Imām’s authority in this fashion was closely tied to that of mobilizing the population for the jihād against the Ottomans. As noted, the iṣābāt would often perform these duties in the company of a local shaykh. Inevitably, however, this entailed the assumption by the iṣābāt of an increasingly direct role in obtaining taxes and volunteers for the war.

The iṣābāt would be dispatched into the territory under Ottoman control, accompanied by scholar-propagandists for the Imām (sing. faqīh or mujtahid). The iṣābāt would circulate through the villages, collecting the zakāt for the Imām, while the scholar-propagandists accompanying them would urge the people to take part in the jihād.626 Thus on 17 July 1895, the Commandant of Yemen informed the Minister of War that a muqaddamī sent by the Imām had come to the territory of Khawlān for the purpose of spreading sedition there; and the rebels had spread out for the purpose of collecting the zakāt.627

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625 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:132, 149.
626 BBA, Y.Mtv 182/39 6 Ağustos 1314/18 August 1898. Report (tahrirat) from the Commandant of Yemen to the Minister of War.
627 BBA, Y.Mtv 124/92 5 Temmuz 1311/17 July 1895. Telegram from the Commandant of Yemen to the Minister of War.
The rebels could employ coercion against the local people as well as persuasion. Abdullah Paşa, Feyzi Paşa’s successor as the Commandant of Yemen, noted in a report to the Minister of War that the rebels threatened those who refused to pay their expenses (iaşe ve infak) with the plunder of their property and the destruction of their villages. Thus, the villagers were forced to pay whether they wished to or not, and sometimes to join the işabat in armed rebellion.628

The purpose of the işabat was in large part to recruit men directly in this manner, to join them in their operations against the Ottoman army; and their numbers were expected to swell as they moved about the countryside. On 1 November 1896, the Minister of War informed the sultan that two maqādima had come with 200 bandits into Ottoman territory, where they were increasing their numbers and summoning the tribes of Khawlān and Arḥab to rebellion.629

In sum, the işabat played an essential role in establishing the authority of the Imām’s state in Ottoman territory, thus giving him greater overall control over the war effort. The Imām’s increasing control over mobilization for the war thus had both tangible and intangible elements. Tangibly, the işabat partially assumed the mobilizational functions which had been largely controlled by the local elites in 1891; that is, the collection of zakāt, engagement in propaganda activities among the villagers, and the recruitment of men for war. This shift was very subtle, and should not be overstated. The işabat were able to move about as freely as they did because of the network of partisans al-Manṣūr had established in 1891.

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628 BBA, Y.Mtv 182/39 6 Ağustos 1314/18 August 1898. Report (tahrirat) from the Commandant of Yemen to the Minister of War.
629 BBA, Y.Mtv 147/77 19 Eylül 1312/1 October 1896. Note from the Minister of War to the Palace.
Nonetheless, by cooperating with the Imām’s troops and permitting them to collect taxes and recruits directly, the shaykhā were acceding to a subtle shift in authority, away from themselves and toward the central figure of the Imām. This process would ultimately result in an intangible increase in the mobilizational capability of the Imām. That is, it appears that the persistent efforts of the ‘īṣābāt to involve the local population in the jihād eventually helped to create a symbiotic cooperation between the two groups.

The experience of fighting for the Imām under the direction of the ‘īṣābāt, and making monetary sacrifices for the war effort, may have caused the Zaydīs in at least some areas to identify more strongly with the Imām’s cause; this seems to have increased their obedience to the ‘īṣābāt, and their skill in cooperating with them. The clearest case of this was in the Anis region, where the people had a long-standing loyalty to the Imām, from which they would not be swayed even by “continued suffering and the destruction of lives and property.” Thus, the peasants of many locales in Anis tended to join the ‘īṣābāt in rebellion when they arrived in the area. When an ‘īṣāba of 70-80 men came to the nahiyah of Jabal Shirq in Anis, “the local people united with the ‘men of banditry’” (erbab-i šekavet). The effectiveness of guerrilla war in Anis was founded on the close cooperation of the ‘īṣābāt, the local people, and the shaykh ‘Alī Miqdād.

The system of mobilization we have described was continuous and long-term, and it served as the foundation for a military strategy which was likewise long-term in its orientation. As such, this strategy marked a distinctive break with the patterns of war which had prevailed up to the 1890’s. Sāliḥīyya, in fact, describes the strategy and tactics of al-Manṣūr’s forces as typical of “wars of liberation,” with guerrilla attacks, bombings,

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630 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:181.
631 Y.Mtv 166/119 23 Ağustos 1313/4 September 1897. Note from the Minister of War to the Palace.
and occasional assassinations of “collaborators.” We do not go so far as to use the term “war of liberation,” a nationalist term which undergirds Sāliḥīyya’s nationalist thesis, which is not an appropriate category of analysis for the Zaydī rebellions.

Nonetheless, we do wish to amplify his point in certain regards. The strategy developed by al-Manṣūr was closer in many respects to twentieth century guerrilla war than to the patterns of war and rebellion which had prevailed in Yemen until the 1890’s. In the 1890’s al-Manṣūr developed a system of guerrilla war by attrition, which aimed to wear down the forces of the Ottoman state. The characteristic guerrilla tactics of the highland tribes, historically employed in short-term wars pursued for limited aims, were subsumed into this new mode of war and transformed by it. To employ the term “total war” for this strategy may be something of an anachronism. Nonetheless it must be noted that it was much closer in aims and conception to “total war,” than to the limited and “heroic” war of earlier decades; and as such, it represented a virtual revolution in the patterns of war in Yemen.

IV. Jihād.

The ideological foundation for this type of war was that of jihād. Jihād was the military counterpart of the state-building project of iṣlāḥ: the ideological means by which the tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl could rise above the particularistic goals of tribal

632 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, (Ṣāliḥīyya’s introduction), 1:102-111.
633 Ṣāliḥīyya has commented on the attritional character of this war; “the forces of the Imām relied in their wars on all the familiar methods of wars of liberation, inasmuch as these were to make the enemy forces engage in continual movement, knowing neither ease nor rest...” See al-Iryānī, Sīrat, (Ṣāliḥīyya’s introduction), 1:102.
warfare to resist the Ottoman invader in a united and determined fashion. We have pointed out in Chapter Four that the rhetoric of *jihād* emphasized such virtues as perseverance, struggle, and sacrifice for the larger good. Therefore, it was well-suited to the waging of a long-term war of attrition.

Here, we will show how such rhetoric was specifically opposed to tribal military custom, and assimilated to the long-term guerrilla war against the Ottomans. Al-Iryānī’s work places a great deal of stress on “pure intention” (*niyya* *khāliṣa*) in the aim (*marām*) of the *jihād*.⁶³⁴ A contributing factor in the abortive character of the 1898 uprising was this absence of pure intention on the part of the tribesmen, who were interested mainly in plunder.⁶³⁵ Elsewhere, he speaks disapprovingly of the practice of “boasting” (*yatabajjahūna*) after a victory given by God as one of the “shameful customs” (‘ādāt *al-*mustaqbaḥa) of the Arabs.⁶³⁶ In other words, the philosophy of *jihād* is incompatible with the self-aggrandizing element in the tribal culture of honor.

Right intent, in the context of the *jihād*, meant a willingness to sacrifice self and to material pleasures in the service of God. In al-Iryānī, the rhetoric of sacrifice is particularly prominent in his description of the guerrilla war in Anis. In one of his letters, the Imām refers to his partisan ‘Alī Miqdād as “he who sacrifices his person and his possessions to uphold Islam” (*al-mujarrid nafsahu wa nafsahu li-nuṣrat al-Islām*).

Sacrifice of this kind was, in Anis, extended from the individual to the social level. We have noted above that al-Iryānī speaks approvingly of the willingness of the population to endure the loss of life and the destruction of property for the Imām. The same point is

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made in a letter to ‘Alî Miqdâd from one of his relatives and the shaykhs in command of an ‘îsâba from the Imâm, urging him to resume the jihâd after he had given it up. “We will not leave off the ‘striving’ (as-sa’y) to please God even if that leads to the destruction of life, property, and sons.”

These ideas of sacrifice and struggle to achieve a larger moral goal are what made war of a more total kind possible in Yemen. Such a war was waged specifically as a guerrilla struggle, and the rhetoric of jihâd came to incorporate this aspect as well. In reference to the struggle in Anis, al-Iryānī employs the formulaic phrase al-jihâd wa mudâyaqaat a’dâ’ Allah fi’l-aghwâr wa’l-anjâd, “the jihâd and the besetting of the enemies of God in the valleys and on the heights.”

The Arabic term mudâyaqa is associated with ideas of harassing, troubling, surrounding, and “making strait.” It was an apt description of the kind of war which was now waged by the ‘îsâbât against the Ottoman government.

V. The Military Methods of the ‘Isâbât.

The ‘îsâbât employed classic guerrilla modes of warfare on their forays into Ottoman territory, making surprise attacks on Ottoman outposts, capturing their weapons and supplies, and disappearing when a larger Ottoman force appeared on the scene. The effect was to wear the Ottoman troops down in numbers, morale, and resources. ‘Alî Miqdâd of Anis was particularly skilled in this type of warfare. “He had with him a band

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638 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:174. The same phrase is used in a slightly different form to describe the guerrilla war in the northwest, “and they beset the foreigners, the enemies of God, in the valleys and on the heights.” See al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:57.
of men who were famous for their valor and fearlessness, and he . . . continually raided the government centers in all the makhālif* of Anis . . . The government would prepare a large force against him, having received the news that he was spending the night in Banī Qushaȳb, and morning would scarcely have come when the news would arrive that he had raided them in Ḍawrān...this went on for many years, and the government and the country were greatly tired out.*639

This mobile strategy of attrition required significant changes in the traditional tactics of the Zaydī highland tribes. We have noted that historically the highlanders, to defend tribal territory, would take up position in inaccessible passes or fortresses. This was a form of stationary defense, adopted when confronted by an enemy who was superior in numbers.640 Intertribal war in Yemen could be accompanied by a show of resistance, with subsequent bargaining,641 or the party on the defensive could simply wait in their strongholds until the invader withdrew. It was tactics of this kind which had led to the downfall of the Yemeni resistance in 1871-72.

The ‘iṣāḥāt, however, were able to incorporate this system of fortress warfare into their own methods of mobile and attritional warfare. These methods were described in detail in a memorial from the Commandant of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War in August 1898. According to Abdullah Paṣa, whenever the government received a report that the rebel bands were in a given region, troops would be dispatched there to punish them and restore public security. Thereupon the rebels would take refuge in a

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* A mikhāf (pl. makhālif) is a pre-Ottoman term for an administrative district in Yemen.
639 al-Wāṣīʿī, Tārikh, 280.
640 Esat Cabir ibn Osman, “Yemen,” 142.
641 Ahmet Ziya, “Çografya.”
fortified village, and the Ottoman troops would surround the village and bombard it with artillery. Perhaps because they were usually insufficient in number and feared open battle with the ‘‘iṣābāt, they would always leave an escape route open.

The bombardment would usually do much more damage to the village than the rebels themselves, who would eventually make their escape by night. Thereupon they would occupy another fortified village, and the process would be repeated. “In this manner the bandits tire out the imperial troops...for no good purpose; and apart from this they cause the destruction of many towns and villages, with some destroyed by themselves, and others by the Ottoman troops.”

The territorially based, stationary, and defensive system of fortress warfare in highland Yemen was thus replaced by a system of fortress war which was actually offensive and mobile. The ‘iṣābāt were not tied to the areas in which they were fighting at any given time. The activity of the bands was particularly intense in Anis and al-Ḥayma, but they also conducted operations in Ḥajja, Khawlān, al-Ḥadā’, and Jabal Rayma.

In occupying fortresses they were not seeking to defend territorial boundaries or induce the Ottomans to bargain. Rather, they were attempting to draw the Ottoman troops into pursuit and combat. This was not necessarily to obtain a clear battlefield

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642 BBA, Y.Mtv 182/39 6 Ağustos 1314/18 August 1898. Memorial (tahrirât) from Abdullah Paşa to the Minister of War.

643 BBA, Y.Mtv 86/21 16 Tişrin-i Evvel 1309/28 October 1893. Telegram from the Commandant of Yemen to the Minister of War; Y.Mtv 124/92 5 Temmuz 1311/17 July 1895. Telegram from the Commandant of Yemen to the Minister of War; Y.Mtv 99/37 4 Muharrem 1312/8 July 1894. Note from the Minister of War to the Yıldız Palace; Y.Mtv 173/105 17 Şubat 1313/1 March 1898, note from the Minister of War to the Palace.
victory, but to steadily drain them of men, supplies, and morale in a series of inconclusive campaigns.

In warfare in the field, the rebels often employed classic guerrilla tactics based on harassment, ambush, and withdrawal. Such tactics essentially reflected the strategy of mobile attrition we have outlined. That is, their greatest success was in wearing down the Ottoman expeditionary forces through repeated attack and withdrawal, rather than inflicting decisive defeat. Such tactics appear to have been characteristic of the early years of ‘iṣābāt war in particular, when their weaponry may have been inferior, and guerrilla resistance was in the early stages of organization. Under these circumstances, it was vital for the ‘iṣābāt fighters to know when to attack and when to get away, avoiding lengthy pitched battles which would result in certain defeat.644

This would change, however, as rifles flooded into Yemen during the decade of the 1890’s. The tribes of Yemen acquired their rifles through the arms trade which mushroomed in the European Red Sea colonies in the 1890’s.645 The center of this trade was the French port of Djibouti, where private traders congregated to sell arms to the emperor of Ethiopia and other local buyers. This trade quickly spread across the Red Sea into Yemen. The coastal tribes of Yemen became involved, ferrying cargoes of rifles to Yemen in their dhows. The Banī Marwān and Zarānīq tribes of the Tihāma in particular played a major role in this trade, acting as the middlemen who sold the rifles to the tribes in the interior.646 Arms were also sold in the free port of Aden, and the sultan of Lahj

644 For a description of a battle of this type see al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 1:460 ff.
645 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:148.
646 Ibid.
was rumored to be involved in this trade.\textsuperscript{647} As a result, by the turn of the century virtually all the tribes of Yemen were armed with breech-loading rifles.\textsuperscript{648} The French Gras rifle and the Remington rifle, were particularly common among the tribesmen.\textsuperscript{649} These weapons had, in fact, a longer range than the Martini-Henry rifle with which the Ottoman troops were armed, putting the latter in an increasingly dangerous position.\textsuperscript{650}

The evidence suggests that the possession of rifles emboldened the rebels to stand their ground more often in the face of the Ottoman troops, taking advantage of their skill in occupying difficult terrain to engage them in lengthy positional battles. These battles could last a day or more, with extended exchanges of rifle fire. In the late spring of 1897, for example, ‘Alī Miqdād and his forces occupied 24 fortified villages in the Jabal Shirq region of Anis. Here, he confronted an Ottoman force of three-and-a-half battalions, with one 8 and one 9 cm. cannon.

The subsequent battles lasted for days on end. On Sunday, the 22nd of May, two villages were seized in the opening battle of this campaign. After this, the Ottoman force advanced against the pass (‘aqaba) occupied by the rebels, where the latter “opened fire on them from the precipices and numerous strong points they had occupied at the head of the pass.” The Ottomans returned fire, and the resulting battle lasted for ten hours before

\textsuperscript{647} al-Iryānī, \textit{Ṣīrat}, (Ṣālihiyya’s introduction), 1:102.

\textsuperscript{648} “Yemen Hatrati.”

\textsuperscript{649} Atif Paşa, \textit{Yemen}, 2:149; BBA, Y.Mtv 204/44 23 Haziran 1316/6 July 1900. Report (\textit{layiha}) from the General Staff Colonel Hüseyin Remzi Bey to the Palace.

\textsuperscript{650} BBA, Y.Mtv 204/44 23 Haziran 1316/6 July 1900. Report (\textit{layiha}) from the General Staff Colonel Hüseyin Remzi Bey to the Palace.
the pass was finally taken. After the capture of the pass, four more of the villages were taken in a series of battles lasting for three days—the first, second, and third of June.⁶⁵¹

Here, then, the Ottomans encountered fairly stubborn resistance by the mujāhidīn; it took them four days to drive the rebels out of five positions, almost a single day of fighting per position.

It appears that possession of rifles enabled the ‘iṣābāt to combine bouts of stubborn resistance with their characteristic mobile withdrawals, in such a way as to cause the maximum harrassment and exhaustion of the Ottoman troops. Extended fighting of the type we have described would drain the Ottoman troops physically and morally, as much as a fruitless pursuit of an evanescent enemy. Nothing permanent would be gained from these battles, either in terms of securing territory or destroying the rebels. The ‘iṣābāt would simply reappear in another place and force the Ottoman troops to repeat the process.

In the 1890’s, then, the situation in Yemen was increasingly dangerous for the Ottomans. Al-Manṣūr had reconstructed the Imamate as a viable tribal quasi-state and turned it into a formidable machine for waging guerrilla war. Rebellion in Yemen was no longer short-term, spontaneous, and fragmented by tribe and region; it was now directed by the Imām as a long-term war, aimed at the destruction of Ottoman authority.

This in turn required the Ottomans to make fundamental changes in their own strategies of dealing with rebellion. It became clear that the manipulation of intertribal rivalries and the dispatch of intermittent punitive expeditions would no longer work. What emerged instead in the 1890’s were methods of dealing with rebellion which were

⁶⁵¹ BBA, Y.Mtv 163/72 1 Haziran 1313/13 June 1897. Memorial from Feyzi Paşa to the Minister of War.
increasingly modern in character. These strategies employed the pan-Islamic and absolutist ideologies of Abdülhamid’s regime to justify uncompromising war against the Imām, using the modern technologies of power available to Abdülhamid’s state: ruthless counter-guerrilla strategies, police repression, and the extension of the control of bureaucratic institutions over the population.

VI. Pan-Islamism, Repression, and Total War.

The initial reaction of the Ottoman government was violent repression, carried out by the governor Ahmet Feyzi Paşa. In analyzing the dynamics of this repression, we will first discuss how Abülhamid used pan-Islamist thought to serve the ends of what we have described as “split-up modernization.” In the introduction, we discussed the peculiarly brittle character of ideology in autocratic states engaged in this type of modernization. To strengthen the state, the autocrat has to modernize its institutions; yet the educated governing and professional classes he must create to do so are those who will ultimately challenge the legitimacy of his rule.

To ward off these challenges, modernizing autocrats have historically contrived ideologies of rule in which the prerogatives of absolutism and divine right coexist with some of the mass-mobilizing elements of modern nationalism. The autocrat may adopt a quasi-messianic role, in which his traditional role as absolute ruler endowed with the divine mandate and educated modernizer may complement each other. It is he who has been chosen to lead the masses under his rule on the path toward civilization and national
unity, so that they may take their rightful place among the great nations of the world. To accomplish his mission, his subjects owe him unquestioning obedience.

Such ideas implicitly justify the ruler’s use of his expanded military and police capability to crush dissent, both within the newly educated classes created by his regime and the “traditional” groups hurt by his policies of monolithic centralization. Within this process, a loosening of customary restraints on the ruler’s exercise of force may take place. Aware of the insecurity of his position, the ruler increasingly resorts to violence to bolster his position. This, of course, results in the further erosion of his legitimacy, and further resort to violence. In places such as Iran, Ethiopia, and the Ottoman Empire, such rulers created a “tradition” of bureaucratized violence which was carried very much further by those who eventually overthrew them.

Here, we intend to show how Abdülhamid’s pan-Islamism played this role in Yemen, serving to justify the suppression of the traditionally dominant groups of Zaydī society who had been hurt by his centralizing policies. First, we will briefly recapitulate the main tenets of this philosophy. Abdülhamid sought to outflank the appeal of ethnic nationalism (kavmiyet) by attempting to “modernize” Islamic identity and give it some of the mass mobilizing appeal of modern nationalism. In this he was inspired by the pan-Islamic ideas developed by the Young Ottomans, who in turn were influenced by Pan-


653 Ervand Abrahamian’s Tortured Confessions, for example, documents the steady increase in the violence and sophistication of the Iranian prison and torture system from the time of Reza Shah to the Islamic Republic.

654 Karpat, Politicization, 321 ff.
Germanism and the threat posed by Pan-Slavism.  Cemil Aydın has shown that Pan-Islamism was in part a reaction by elements of the Ottoman intelligentsia to the racist-imperialist nationalism of the late nineteenth century.  Similarly, Kemal Karpat links the definitive emergence of Pan-Islamism as a state ideology to the discrediting of Tanzimat liberalism by the military defeats of 1877-1878.  Under Abdülhamid, the religious identity of Islam became the religio-national one of Islamiyet, stressing communal unity and loyalty to the state, and aimed at mobilizing the Muslim community to defend itself against the predatory nations of Europe.  The Sunnī Muslim duty (farz) of obedience (itaat) to legitimate authority thus became that of unquestioned loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate and the person of Abdülhamid.  Such loyalty was referred to as “love” (mahabbet), and tied to a personality cult of Abdülhamid.

These increasing demands on Muslims’ loyalty, however, were not paralleled by an opening up of the political system.  All groups, with the possible exception of the Albanians, were increasingly repressed and held at arms’ length.  The dictatorial and proto-nationalist violence inherent in Abdülhamid’s concept of Islamiyet likewise was not consistent with the moral underpinnings of Sunnī political philosophy, even in its qualified support of absolutism.  As a result, its actual role came to be that of legitimating the violence of the autocrat's policies for the ruling elite, which was charged with suppressing the rising opposition to the state on his behalf.  Nowhere was this more

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659 Mehmet Emin Paşa, “Yemen Kitası,” 7 (my pagination).
apparent than among the Zaydīs, where the Ottoman caliphate had little basis of legitimacy to begin with.

This becomes evident in a document of Feyzi Paşa’s regime which contains the main justifications for the Ottomans’ war against the Imām, a letter to al-Manṣūr written by the Ottoman envoy Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī ar-Rifā‘ī al-Hamāwī. First, the letter is a summons to the Imām to submit, rather than an attempt to negotiate with him. Sayyid Muḥammad first takes issue with al-Manṣūr’s Imamate, which constituted an implicit challenge to Abdülhamid’s claim to the leadership of the Muslim community. The descendants of the Prophet no longer have a legitimate claim on the leadership of the Muslim community, because it was not ordained in “the will of God” (al-qadar) that the caliphate should remain with them.660 The lawful Caliphate has instead been transferred to the Ottoman line.

Sayyid Muḥammad now goes on to enjoin obedience to the sultan in language reflecting the traditional Sunnī political philosophy of submission to authority. Abdülhamid II is “the guardian of the lands of the Muslims and the keeper of the ḥarām, the house of God . . . He fills his Council with the ‘ulāma’, who carry out the decrees of the Creator, and applies himself with diligence to the duties (farā‘id) of religion and the customs (sunan) [of the Prophet].”661 The sultan thus fulfills the essential requirements of legitimacy in the Sunnī political tradition, public maintenance of major Islamic ritual practices and moral principles,662 together with the actual power to protect the Muslim community. Therefore, “obedience to [the sultan] is a duty of religion (mafrūda) and

660 al-Washalī, Dhayl, 43.
661 Ibid.
662 Lewis, Language, 99.
service to him is lawful (mashrū’a).” Conversely, “to rise up against him is dissent [from the consensus of the community] and aggression” (al-khurūj alayhi baghy wa ‘udwān).663

Several points are worthy of note here. First, there is an explicit recognition of the ideological character of the war in this letter, conceived within the traditional Sunnī legal language of political authority. The war is described as a conflict between two claimants to the leadership of the Muslim community. The Imām is described as being guilty of baghy, which in Islamic legal language means rebellion against the rightful Imām with a religious or political basis.664

Second, it is clear from the language of the letter that there cannot be a power-sharing compromise between the rival claimants. The letter has the character of a call to the bughāt, the rebels, to submit. Historically, such a call to submit was a legal requirement in Sunni Islam, before the state could proceed against rebels with military force.665 The rationale for obedience to the caliph given here, however, is defined in terms which derive partially from nineteenth century nationalism; that is, unity of purpose between the state and the “nation” is necessary to survive the murderous nationalist competition of the time. The times require the Imām “to desist from such action” because the imperialist powers of Europe are constantly watching to exploit sedition within the Empire for their own ends. As a result, “the hearts of the unbelievers have been gratified” by the Imām’s sedition.

The necessities imposed by the Hobbesian character of the Muslims’ struggle for survival therefore ultimately override the limitations which adherence to Islamic law

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663 al-Washalī, Dhayl, 43.
665 Khadduri, War, 77-79; Lewis, Language, 81-82.
would impose. The Sunnī jurists of the Middle Ages such as al-Mawardī and others only permit limited war against those who commit baghy, refusal on religious or political grounds to accept the lawfully constituted authority of the Imām. They are not to be killed if taken captive, and their property should not to be destroyed. Wars of extermination are reserved for those who committed fasād, “evildoing,” or shaqāwa, “banditry,” conceived as purely criminal disturbances of the peace.

In this letter, however, we see a marked departure from these specifically legal limits. Sayyid Muḥammad goes on to advise the Imām that his baghy “has necessarily caused the wrath of the sultan against you . . . and he has taken an oath . . . that if you do not keep within your proper bounds (lam taqif ‘inda ḥaddika) that he will kill you and those who follow you with the sword of your forefather [Muḥammad], because you have undertaken an affair which will destroy the pillars of religion, and excited the action of the people of wickedness (fasād).”

Therefore, despite the fact that the Imām is specifically accused only of baghy in the first half of the letter, he is to be kept within bounds by the punishment for fasād. Tactfully, the letter does not accuse the Imām himself of fasād or shaqāwa. Since the Imām’s baghy opens the way for those who commit fasād, however, the sultan is justified in taking strong measures to stop him.

What we see in this letter, then, is manipulation of the legal ideas historically associated with the Sunnī Ottoman state to serve the proto-nationalist philosophy of pan-

666 Khadduri, War, 77-79; Lewis, Language, 81-82.
667 Lewis, Language, 81.
668 al-Washali, Dhayl, 44.
Islam, in such a manner as to justify unrestrained violence in quashing the Zaydī rebellion. Such legal restraints on the ruler as existed in the historic Sunnī philosophy of government have been eroded for “reason of state,” although such reason is still defined in Islamic terms.

The reduction of the moral argument of pan-Islamism to the simple sanction of force is made explicit in the final lines of Sayyid Muḥammad’s letter. “Upon my life, the Arabs have not the might to make war on the Sublime State under any circumstances, but have dug for themselves the pits of punishment and destruction; for the soldiers of the government have descended on Yemen in numbers like the sands. May the Arabs fear God . . . and may they be led toward obedience to God and his Prophet through their obedience to our Lord, the Commander of the Faithful.”

This passage seems to finally lock the government into the policy of violence which the moral rhetoric of the letter has been gradually constructing. Up to this point, the conflict has been between the sultan and the Imām as one who commits baghy, together with the “people of wickedness” who support him. Now the conflict is between the “Sublime State” and the “Arabs,” a term which certainly means the Zaydī tribal population, and could be expanded further. A rhetoric of government omnipotence almost literally threatens the “Arabs” with extermination unless they submit, in accordance with their Muslim duties as defined by the state.

In short, the moral fortress constructed for the state by Sayyid Muḥammad in this letter is complete, and the guns are trained on the unfortunate “Arabs” of Yemen. The power and absolute moral superiority of Abdūlhamid’s regime render compromise with

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669 al-Washalī, Dhayl, 45.
the Imām unnecessary; and Abdülhamid’s duty as the protector of Islam requires him to make war on the Imām until he submits or is completely destroyed. Pan-Islamism, like the nationalisms which it partially sought to imitate, thus became an ideology of total war. In turn, the resulting policies of violent repression were increasingly implemented by military officers who had been formally exposed to European doctrines of total war.

VII. Doctrines of Total War in the Nineteenth Century.

By the time Feyzi Paşa was made military governor of Yemen, the Ottoman officer corps had been exposed to European military ideas for some time. Two German thinkers who were seminal in the formation of the concept of “total war,” Helmuth von Moltke and Colmar von der Goltz, had played key roles in the organization of the Ottoman army;670 and by the end of the nineteenth century, their works were readily available in the library of the Military Academy.671 What, then, were the key ideas of total war which were formulated in the nineteenth century, and is it possible to detect their influence in Feyzi Paşa's policies?

The roots of twentieth century total war lie in the Napoleonic wars, and the subsequent interpretations of the Napoleonic experience by nineteenth century military thinkers. The key figures in this regard were Henri de Jomini, Carl von Clausewitz, Helmuth von Moltke, and Colmar von der Goltz. The doctrines of war developed by these men were fairly simple. Clausewitz developed the idea of war as the theoretically unlimited


application of force in a titanic struggle of wills, whose logical purpose was the complete subjugation of the enemy.672 Von der Goltz tied this idea to the concept of all-consuming nationalist struggle. War, he said, was “a bloody conflict between nations, in which each side strives for the complete overthrow, or, if possible, the annihilation of the opponent.”673 The means to do this was to destroy the enemy’s military capability and will to resist by a devastating defeat of his main forces in battle.674

The destruction of the enemy was to be achieved by a bold strategy based on the rapid and simultaneous movement of several forces at once to the battlefield.675 Tactically, the enemy was to be defeated by numerically superior forces attacking from several directions at once, with aggressive tactics employing a combination of concentrated firepower and bold assault.676

While this military doctrine was developed mainly in the context of the conventional battlefields of Europe, a system of counter-guerrilla war based loosely on these same principles was emerging in the colonies at the same time. A key figure in the development of this type of war was Thomas-Robert Bugeaud in Algeria, who suppressed the rebellion of ‘Abd al-Qādir.677 Such strategies focused on the use of mobile columns to hunt down the guerrillas, coupled with all-out war against the

674 von der Goltz, Conduct, 19-21.
675 Jomini, War, 63.
population who supported them. This involved the systematic destruction of crops, villages, and herds, and often enough, large-scale massacres of the population itself. The militarist nationalism of the European states led them to wage total war in the colonies long before the classic total wars of the twentieth century.

VIII. Total War and Feyzi Paşa.

It is clear that these ideas had considerable influence on Ottoman policy in Yemen, directly or indirectly. By the 1890’s, German reforms in the Ottoman army had produced a professional corps of staff officers familiar with German military thinking. These men were attached to the various army corps throughout the empire, including the Seventh Army in Yemen.

Feyzi Paşa would probably have had some knowledge of Napoleonic strategy and contemporary counter-guerrilla techniques, although it is uncertain whether he was directly familiar with German war doctrine. Obviously, however, he would have been familiar with Abdülhamid’s pan-Islamist philosophy; and pan-Islamism was based on the same Hobbesian view of international relations which influenced German military thinkers of this period. The doctrine of total war had penetrated the political system in which Feyzi Paşa operated, whether he himself had an articulate conception of this doctrine or not.

679 Griffiths, “Reorganization,” 100-101, 139-140.
680 Feyzi Paşa had graduated from the Military Academy under Abdülaziz, before the establishment of close relations between the German and Ottoman armies.
Then there was his own personality, which by the account of his contemporaries was irascible, authoritarian, and cynically corrupt; and his position at the head of a modern army gave him the capability to indulge his aggressive tendencies on a massive scale. Finally, there was Feyzi Paşa’s brutal and racist contempt for Arabs. We have no direct statements of Feyzi Paşa on this subject. Feyzi Paşa’s mentor Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, however, had virtually said in so many words that the only argument the “Bedouins” understood was that of force, and we get the overwhelming impression from Feyzi Paşa’s actions that he had taken this idea to heart.

Feyzi Paşa therefore set out to eradicate the insurgency in Yemen by main force, relying on police and counter-guerrilla techniques similar to those employed by the Europeans in this period. War in Yemen therefore began to lose its archaic character as a negotiation by intermittent violence of the boundary between state and tribal power. Instead, it became closer to Clausewitz’ “ideal” war, that is, an uncompromising contest of wills focused on the absolute subjugation of the enemy.

We may describe Feyzi Paşa’s policy as one of “punitive repression,” as opposed to the softer methods of “hearts and minds” counterinsurgency. As developed by a series of colonial military strategists from Bugeaud to Trinquier, “punitive repression” is based on three major principles. First, insurgency is viewed primarily as a military problem, and therefore priority is given to dealing with its military aspects. Second, the use of harsh measures such as the destruction of villages, crops, and livestock is approved as a means

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of cowing the population into submission. Third, the organizational network of the insurgency is crushed by means of forceful police measures. These may include mass arrests, the creation of an extensive intelligence network, and interrogation with torture.

The guerrilla organization must also be crushed militarily. The government should extend its authority into the “base area” of the guerrillas, the remote region from which they organize their operations. This involves covering the area with a network of roads and military posts, if necessary, and sending out mobile columns to hunt down the guerrilla bands.

A government which employs this kind of strategy must have the military power and the resources to bring continuous force to bear in all sectors of a restive society for an extended period of time. This requires a massive investment in manpower, intelligence, and infrastructure. In this context, the appalling dynamics of racism and repression may ultimately result in the destruction of the social base of the guerrillas through deportation or genocide. The French suppression of ‘Abd al-Qādir was essentially based on these kinds of measures, as was the crushing of the Sanūsiyya insurgency in Libya by the Italian fascist government.

It has often happened, however, that policies of a punitive and repressive character have been undertaken by governments without the military or financial resources to sustain them. Where these are lacking, repressive policies can result in the rapid rise of

armed opposition which quickly outstrips the ability of the state to suppress. In this case, the state often cannot stabilize the situation even temporarily. The fiercer the repression, the fiercer the resistance, so that the state sinks ever deeper into a morass of violence which threatens its very existence.

This was what happened in Yemen during Feyzi Paşa’s tenure as governor. Viewing the situation in Yemen primarily as a military problem, he devoted the bulk of the administration’s limited resources toward strengthening the position of the Seventh Army vis-à-vis the rebels. His major objective was to prevent the rebel bands from gaining a permanent foothold in Ottoman territory. To do this, he implemented a strategy based on both static defense and active engagement.

The construction of new fortifications was the key aspect of static defense. These fortifications had two purposes: to reduce the vulnerability of the Ottoman lines of communication in the event of rebellion, and to provide a network of military posts which the rebel bands would find difficult to slip through. The Ottoman garrisons in the highlands were dependent on the continuous flow of supplies from the port of Ḥudayda to Ṣan‘ā’, and Feyzi Paşa realized that keeping this route open was the key to maintaining control in Yemen.

As a result, walled military posts (karakolhane) were constructed on the Ṣan‘ā’-Ḥudayda road throughout Feyzi Paşa’s tenure as governor. Likewise, Feyzi Paşa ordered the construction of a ring of fortresses on the mountains surrounding Ṣan‘ā’, where the besieging tribesmen had taken up their positions in the previous rebellion.

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687 al-Washali, Dhayl, 41. The chronicler mistakenly attributes this program of fortification to Feyzi’s immediate predecessor Hasan Edip Paşa.
In this manner, Feyzi Paşa sought to ensure that the Ottoman forces would enjoy an improved defensive position in the event of another uprising. The construction of fortifications, however, was not confined to the major lines of communication. Feyzi Paşa also greatly increased the number of military posts throughout the whole region under Ottoman control “to prevent the bandits from spreading into the interior of the country.” The posts were thus to serve as a means of observing and checking the movements of the Imâm's 'işābāt.

This, then, was the static defense aspect of Feyzi's policy. Active engagement involved the employment of mobile columns which were to engage the 'işābāt in battle. In the summer of 1894, for example, the Imâm sent an 'iṣāba of 300 men to enter Ottoman territory from the region of al-Ḥadā’ to the east. As a result of timely instructions to the Commandant of Dhamār, however, troop units were dispatched to al-Ḥadā’; and fearing attack by these units, the rebels withdrew into the desert to the east.

This strategy of posts and mobile columns, however, was implemented only in Ottoman territory; and the military thinkers who developed this strategy stress that operations ultimately should be extended to the guerrillas’ base area for a decisive victory to be achieved. The Ottomans never had the resources to do this. Upper Yemen, which effectively constituted the base area of the Imâm, remained outside the control of the government. In consequence, the initiative remained with the Imâm, and the policy of

689 BBA, Y.Mtv 182/39 6 Ağustos 1314/18 August 1898. Memorial (tahrirat) from Abdullah Paşa to the Minister of War.
690 BBA, Y.A. Res. 71/48 16 Haziran 1310/28 June 1894. Minutes (mazbata) of the Administrative Council of the province of Yemen, sent to the Council of Ministers (Meclis-i Vükela).
691 See Trinquier, Warfare, 81-86.
suppressing the revolt militarily could never be carried to its logical conclusion. At the strategic level, operations against the ‘išābāt in the south could only constitute a defensive holding action, as long as the army could not strike decisively at the Imām’s capability to organize the bands in the first place.

Similar points could be made with regard to the question of the Ottomans’ use of repressive violence in Yemen. It is very difficult for a government that relies on main force to suppress insurgency to succeed without massive police control and the destruction of the social base of the guerrillas. Force applied as intermittent brutality rather than sustained pressure will tend simply to drive the population into the arms of the guerrillas. Apart from the basic immorality and short-sightedness of any repressive policy, this was the main problem with Feyzi Paşa’s strategy.

The military operations were conducted with little regard for the well-being of the civilian population. Often, the peasants were punished harshly for real or assumed collaboration with the enemy. When the ‘išābāt occupied a fortified village and gave battle, the Ottoman units typically sought to drive them out with massive artillery fire. This, of course, had disastrous consequences for the property of the inhabitants. If the ‘išābāt left before the arrival of the Ottoman troops, the latter would burn the village. Such measures resulted in substantial disruption of Zaydī rural society without its outright destruction. The Ottomans made themselves unpopular and supplied the guerrillas with willing collaborators at the same time.

The Imām’s guerrillas, moreover, were usually recruited from the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes outside Ottoman control; and these tribes remained largely untouched. Destroying 692 BBA, Y.Mtv 182/39 6 Ağustos 1314/18 August 1898. Memorial (tahrirat) from Abdullah Paşa to the Minister of War.
the social base of the guerrillas in this context would have entailed the extension of
Ottoman control to Upper Yemen, and deportation or internment of the tribes there. This
was not done, although such a measure was proposed by an Ottoman officer in 1900.⁶⁹³

These, then, were the military measures which Feyzi Paşa put into effect to contain the
rebellion. In political terms, Feyzi Paşa implemented repressive policies in keeping with
Abdülhamid’s policies of dictatorial centralization and promotion of the Ottoman
caliphate. As stated, the existence of the Imamate constituted an implicit challenge to
Abdülhamid’s claim to the caliphate. No compromise, therefore, was possible; the
Imām’s political influence was to be eradicated from Ottoman territory in Yemen. Feyzi
Paşa thus began a program of mass arrests designed to wipe out the Imām’s network of
political supporters. Anyone suspected of collaboration with the Imām was imprisoned,
whether the evidence warranted it or not.

This program was begun toward the end of 1892, shortly after Feyzi Paşa returned
from an expedition to Upper Yemen. At this time, Abdülhamid issued an order to the
effect that the names of the Zaydī military chieftains (reisler) and religious propagandists
(müctehidler) should be supplied to the central government, with a view to their exile
from Yemen. Upon this, Feyzi Paşa undertook to arrest a number of shaykhs, sayyids,
and qāḍīs on the suspicion that they had links with the Imām.⁶⁹⁴ This action inaugurated a
period of severe repression which lasted until his departure from office in 1898.

For these years, al-Wāsi‘ī complains that the people of Ṣan‘ā’ were “greatly
oppressed” (fī ẓulm shadīd) by the government's brutal and indiscriminate police

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⁶⁹³ Y.Mtv 204/44 23 Haziran 1316/6 July 1900. Report (layiha) from the General Staff Colonel Hüseyin Remzi Bey to the Palace.
⁶⁹⁴ al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 155-56.
measures. The colonel of the gendarmerie regiment in Yemen, Mirzah Bey, was particularly notorious in this regard; and in one year “no day passed without [Mirzah] beating and imprisoning a number of people.”

As with the military operations in the countryside, such policies involved the employment of indiscriminate violence without the reserves of force necessary to suppress the inevitable reaction. In response to Feyzi Paşa’s oppression, elements of the population began to carry out acts of “terror” in Ṣanʿā’ and other towns, blowing up government buildings and occasionally killing soldiers. The government responded by imprisoning everyone in the neighborhoods where the explosions took place, which served only to alienate the population further.

Since the Ottoman administration did not have a large police force to maintain control of the capital, soldiers who were urgently needed for military operations had to be kept in garrison there. In 1898, Feyzi Paşa reported that he could only send a limited number of troops from Ṣanʿā’ to deal with the rebellion in the countryside because the “people [of the city]...would rise up” if the garrison there was weakened.

This was the situation in the capital. In the countryside, it was worse. In July 1894, the mutasarrif of Ḥudayda reported to the Grand Vizier that the shaykhs and people of Yemen were going over to the Imām “in droves” (fevc fevc) on account of the tyranny of

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695 al-Wāṣiṭī, Tārīkh, 158.
696 al-Wāṣiṭī, Tārīkh, 159; BBA, Y.Mtv 99/37 4 Muharrem 1312/8 July 1894. Note from the Minister of War to the Yıldız Palace.
697 BBA, Y.Mtv 178/72 25 Mayis 1314/6 June 1898. Telegram from Feyzi Paşa to the Minister of War.
the governor of Yemen. Guerrilla war intensified in the region south of Ṣan‘ā’, and uprisings broke out in the west and northwest as well.

Feyzi Paşa thus succeeded in driving the Zaydī population into the arms of the rebels without doing much injury to the organization of the latter, or extending the control of the government in an effective manner. In consequence, the military situation became more and more difficult for the government to control.

The problem was exacerbated by the poverty and corruption of Feyzi Paşa’s administration, together with the poor communications of Yemen. Soldiers were regularly defrauded of their pay and rations by higher officers. Walter Harris, who travelled to Yemen shortly after its reconquest by Feyzi Paşa, noted the contrast between the living conditions of the high officials and the troops in his description of the sights of Ṣan‘ā’. “Again it is some ill-fed, ill-clothed Turkish soldier, . . . with his face unshaven and sunk with illness; and as one is still watching him, there rattles past a shabby victoria, in which is seated some fat Pasha or Bey . . . and one knows that as often as not, his clothes, his carriage, and his horse are bought with the money that ought to feed the soldiers, for but a small proportion of the pay of the troops ever reaches them.” No doubt Harris had some of the tendency to exaggerate the abuses of Turkish rule common among British writers of the time, a tendency which served to justify their own self-satisfied nationalism and imperial ambitions. Harris’ comments in this regard were not particularly hysterical by the standards of the time, however, and his observations are broadly borne out by both Yemeni and Ottoman authors.

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698 BBA, Y.Mtv 99/37 4 Muharrem 1312/8 July 1894. Note from the Minister of War to the Grand Vizier.
Even had the command of the Seventh Army been honest, however, the poor communications of Yemen rendered the distribution of supplies among its garrisons of Yemen problematic. We have noted in Chapter Three that before the 1891 rebellion the Ottomans had been entirely dependent on caravan transport to supply their troops, owing to the absence of railroads or roads suitable for wheeled traffic; and this did not change during Feyzi Paşa’s tenure as governor. Apart from the slowness and vulnerability of caravan transport, it was always difficult to find enough animals to carry the soldiers’ provisions. This was especially true in times of drought, when transport animals died from lack of fodder; and as it turned out, there was a prolonged period of drought in Yemen from about 1893 to 1898. Shortly after taking office, Feyzi Paşa’s successor wrote that so many animals had died during the drought that the transport of supplies from Ḥudayda was impossible. The provisions sent from Istanbul were piling up in Ḥudayda and would eventually rot, while the troops in Ṣan‘ā’ were going hungry.⁷⁰⁰

It proved impossible under these circumstances to keep the Ottoman soldiers alive among the abundant and vicious microbes of Yemen, much less healthy. The death rate from illness was very high among the Ottoman troops. Cholera plagues periodically decimated the ranks of the soldiers. In the Hijrī year 1310 (1892-1893), there was a major cholera epidemic in Yemen, so that “many [of the Ottoman troops] died, until only a few were left.”⁷⁰¹ One Ottoman officer estimated that by the end of Feyzi Paşa’s tenure as

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⁷⁰⁰ BBA, Y.Mtv 180/35 9 Temmuz 1314/21 July 1898. Telegram from the Commandant of the Seventh Army (Abdullah Paşa) to the Minister of War.

⁷⁰¹ al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 155.
governor, the strength of the army in Yemen had dwindled to about 8,000 men as a result of cholera.702

The year of the first cholera epidemic was also the year in which Feyzi Paşa put the more repressive aspects of his program into effect. The Paşa was thus enforcing increasingly violent policies with what was, in all likelihood, a steadily decreasing number of troops. As the Ottoman soldiers were being decimated by cholera, the numbers of the ‘iṣābahāt were increasing as a result of drought.703 Raiding in the south was a traditional means of survival for the northern tribesmen when they could not cultivate their fields, and the Imām had enough reserves in grain and cash to pay them to do it. When we consider that deep-rooted insurgencies in the twentieth century have taken hundreds of thousands of troops to suppress,704 the impossibility of maintaining control of Yemen with the troops available to the Seventh Army becomes clear.

The steadily rising tide of unrest culminated in a major uprising of Ḥāshid and Bakīl in 1898.705 The rising was poorly planned and implemented, and thus the rebellion was suppressed relatively easily by Feyzi Paşa’s successor. Nonetheless, it demonstrated decisively what had been growing increasingly clear in the past several years, that Feyzi Paşa’s policies had made the country ungovernable.

In consequence, Feyzi Paşa was deposed; and his successor, Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa, had radically different ideas on how to control the country. There was no change in the stated

702 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:172.
703 Reports from the authorities in Yemen indicate that drought facilitated the recruitment of volunteers for the ‘iṣābahāt. See BBA, Y.Mtv 99/37 13 Haziran 1310/25 June 1894. Telegram from Feyzi Paşa to the Minister of War.
704 The Algerian insurrection took about 400,000 troops to suppress. See O’Ballance, Insurrection, 215.
705 BBA, Y.Mtv 178/72 25 Mayıs 1314/6 June 1898. Telegram from Feyzi Paşa to the Minister of War.
war aims of the administration; the goal was still to make the Imām and the Zaydī tribes submit themselves completely to the Ottoman government. The fundamental idea of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa, however, was that military operations could be combined with reforms in such a manner that the Zaydīs would give their voluntary support to the government; the same premise, in other words, on which modern “soft” counterinsurgency is based. Thus, Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa implemented the second phase of the modernization of Ottoman counter-guerrilla techniques in Yemen, in which the conflict was conceived as a battle to win the “hearts and minds” of the population.

IX. The Policies of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa.

As in the soft counterinsurgency of the modern era, the policies of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa were based on the twin components of persuasion and coercion. On the one hand, Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa sought to win the support of the population by programs of government reform combined with social and economic development. On the other, these programs were to be accompanied by military operations to extend the control of the central government further into the countryside.

Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s policies were described as islahat, or “reforms;” and he was accompanied by a Reform Commission (Heyet-i Islahiye), with which he worked closely in devising policy. Here, we will show how the ideas associated with islah in late Ottoman times were used to construct and legitimate a comprehensive program designed to permanently crush the Imām’s rebellion. Again, we will make use of the concept of
“split-up modernization” to analyze both the ideas and the practical dynamics of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s policies.

Earlier in this chapter we discussed some of the connotations of the terms Ḱلال and Ḵṣ�� in Zaydī political thought and practice. Such ideas were also an integral part of Sunnī political thought; inevitably, however, they had a somewhat more authoritarian cast. Ḳṣ라 in Ottoman times came to be associated with the power of the ruler, and his capacity to suppress the evildoers who threatened the integrity of the community.706 The various good things associated with ḳṣرا-right belief, obedience to the Şeriat, peace, and prosperity-could only be assured by a strong sultan and state.

In the Tanzimat period of the nineteenth century, Ḳṣrah came to have the meaning of “reform” in the secular and modern sense. The Ḳṣrah were the programs undertaken by the Tanzimat bureaucrats to remake Ottoman society in what they saw as the rational and ordered image of Europe: the creation of a modern legal code,707 the establishment of the infrastructure of a modern economy such as railroads and banks, and the centralization of political power in the state apparatus.708 What Carter Findley describes as the effort to organize the bureaucracy on rational-legal principles could also be subsumed under the rubric of Ḳṣrah. This included increasing specialization of function within the bureaucracy, and the recruitment of officials on the basis of professional education rather than household connections (intisap). Such measures were intended in part to do away

707 Mardin, Genesis, 183-184.
708 See, for example, the text of the Ḳṣrah Fermanı in Dуществ (Der Saadet: Matbaa-ὶ Amire, 1289), 1:8. See also Davison, Reform, 52 ff., 136 ff., 234 ff.
with the corruption and personal tyranny which the old patronage networks had fostered.\textsuperscript{709}

Now, under Abdülhamid, the secular concept of \textit{islahat} in the \textit{Tanzimat} was tied once again to Islamic and absolutist concepts. Modernizing reform was conceived as a function of the sultan’s justice and might, aimed at securing the general welfare of the Muslim community.\textsuperscript{710} Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s policies in Yemen, then, can best be understood as a state-building project founded on this “split-up” conception of \textit{islah}. To modernize and reform the administration was conceived as an extension of Abdülhamid’s autocratic power. The general benefit of the Muslims was to be secured by imposing the sultan’s own vision of progress and communal unity, rooted both in traditional conceptions of the \textit{ümmer} and European nationalist ideas.

The traditional and pan-Islamic foundations of Hüseyin Hilmi’s program of \textit{islah} may be seen in a letter from the Zaydī `ālim Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Kibṣī urging al-Manṣūr to submit to the caliph. The purpose is the same as the letter of Sayyid Muḥammad ar-Rifā’ī in Feyzi Paşa’s time, to get the Imām to submit. The language, however, reflects the softer side of Abdülhamid’s pan-Islamic policies. First, we see an initial appeal to the concept of \textit{maṣlaḥa}, although the term itself is not used. The new governor, says al-Kibṣī, wants to prevent bloodshed among the Muslims and therefore “cleaves to all those who . . . care for the common benefit (\textit{al-manfa’a al-‘umūmiyya}) of Islam.”\textsuperscript{711}

\textsuperscript{709} Findley, \textit{Reform}, 42-43, 120 ff.

\textsuperscript{710} For a statement of the philosophy behind this idea see Mahmut Nedim Paşa, \textit{Ayine ve Hasb-ı Hal} (Istanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1327), 61. This work was addressed to Abdülaziz, but reflected the ideas which underlay Abdülhamid’s regime.

\textsuperscript{711} al-Iryānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 2:33.
The “common benefit” is again defined in pan-Islamic terms. The new governor is concerned about “unity among [the peoples of Islam]” (al-ittihād baynahā) which requires their submission to the sultan-caliph. Al-Manṣūr is thus urged to desist from seeking the Imamate and “enter under the sheltering authority of . . . the sultan of Islam and the Muslims, whose utmost aim is in the guarding of the pale of Islam.” The “common benefit” of Islam is thus defined as the political unity of the Muslims in submission to the caliph.

Submission to the caliph is here tied explicitly to the concept of ḣalāḥ, that which, in this context, will secure the internal peace of the Muslim community. Al-Manṣūr is urged that he is under obligation to the Muslim community, to see to “that which will make their affairs sound,” (yuṣliḥu umūrahum) and “ward off tumult and tribulation among them” (yadfa’u fitnatahum wa mihanahum). Following a line of argument which in practice derives from Sunnī thought, the responsibility for fitna is thereby placed entirely on al-Manṣūr’s shoulders, as one who disobeys the injunction to submit to the lawful Imām.

What this passage does, then, is link the modernizing program of Ḥulah in Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s regime to older Islamic concepts of the term. The verb yuṣliḥu, from which the Arabic noun ḣalāḥ derives, is linked specifically in this passage to the “common benefit” (al-manfa’a al-ʿumūmiyya) of Islam, which is essentially synonymous with the term maṣlaḥa. To engage in ḣalāḥ for the larger maṣlaḥa means that social peace should be secured by the submission of dissenters to the lawful caliph, a “traditional” Sunnī idea given a pan-Islamic ring by its association with the “unity” (ittiḥād) of the Muslims.

712 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:34.
713 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:34-35.
The specific manner in which traditional concepts associated with *islah* were modernized by Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa becomes clear in the minutes sent by his Reform Commission to the Grand Vizier on 7 March 1898. Here, language derived from older concepts of *islah* is used to denote something like the counterinsurgency policies of the present day.

First, there is the idea of consultation with representatives of the local population to determine the specific problems faced by the people. The document states that the Reform Commission has undertaken this kind of consultation with the religious scholars (*ülema*), “descendants of the Prophet,” (*eşraf*) and “notable men of the country” (*mütehayyizan-t memleket*).714

In consequence of this consultation, it has emerged that the grievances of the people center around abuses of the tax system; that is, the extortion of illegal taxes by corrupt officials and the powerful regional or tribal shaykhs who serve as the government’s proxies. These men are defined in traditional Islamic terms as “tyrants” (*zaleme*). Therefore, the document proposes a sweeping reform of the tax system. All illegal taxes are to be eliminated, corrupt officials dismissed and prosecuted, and the powerful shaykhs removed as intermediaries between the villagers and the government. The purpose of this policy is defined specifically as gaining the loyalty of the population for the government. The term employed here is *isticlab-i kulub*, “drawing the hearts [of the tribesmen to the government].”

Within this context, the members of the commission also recommended measures designed to reform the bureaucracy and increase its professionalism. In order to ensure

714 BBA, Y.Mtv 187/69 23 Şubat 1314/7 March 1898. Minutes (*mazbata*) of the Reform Commission, sent to the Grand Vizier.
the appointment of “capable” (muktedir) officials, salaries in the bureaucracy should be increased. Likewise, additional officials should be appointed, especially to the judicial bureaucracy, so that “all may obtain their rightful share in the exalted justice [of the sultan]” (madelet-i seniye).715

Here, we see that historic Sunnī-Ottoman concepts of ʻislah have been tied to the modernizing and rationalizing project of Abdülhamid’s regime. The idea of ʻislah as the elimination of corruption and the appointment of capable officials was not new, and can be found in the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Katip Çelebi.716 In this document, however, corrupt officials are to be prosecuted in accordance with the law, rather than being summarily executed to display the fearsome wrath and justice of the sultan.

The disciplining of the zaleme, or tyrannical officials, is also not a new idea. The shaykhly zaleme are to be removed not only for moral reasons, but because their presence prevents the implementation of a centralized and legally rigorous system of tax collection. Similarly, for the people “to obtain a share in the exalted justice” of the sultan does not indicate the direct bestowal of an act of justice on an individual by a beneficent monarch. It means, rather, to ensure that the courts have enough well-trained and capable personnel to function effectively. Justice is conceived as the proper functioning of an institution.

To ensure the complete tranquility (asayiş) of the country, and to implement the “fundamental reforms” (Islah-ı esasiye) in the desired fashion, vigorous military measures against the tribes are necessary. Şa’da and the Imām’s capital at Qaflat al-‘Idhar should be occupied, and the major tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl should be “chastised

715 BBA, Y.Mtv 187/69 23 Șubat 1314/7 March 1898. Minutes (mazbata) of the Reform Commission, sent to the Grand Vizier.

and pacified” (i.e., brought under the control of the central government). The various empty ports of the Tihâma should be occupied, and its rebel tribes brought to heel by a “display of military force” (*satvet-i askeriye iraesi*).717

Reform of the state apparatus is thus to be combined with forceful military measures, in the manner of modern counterinsurgency. Likewise, the “punishment” (*tedib*) of the tribes no longer indicates periodic punitive expeditions, carried out in order to indicate the boundaries of obedience to them within a practical situation of tribal autonomy. Rather, it is preparatory to their *ıslah* or “pacification;” that is, the full imposition of bureaucratic state control in tribal territory.

Finally, the document advocated extensive programs of social and economic development. The authors advocated the building of a railroad, which, apart from its importance in transporting military supplies, would “result in an increase in wealth (*terakki-i servet*) from trade and agriculture, and be a cause of the prosperity (*umran*) of the country;” they also recommended the improvement of the existing roads. In addition, they called for the construction of primary schools (*mekatib-i ruşdiye*) and the opening of two industrial schools (*sanayi mektebi*) in Şan‘ā’ and Ḥudayda, respectively.718

In this document, then, the historic use of *ıslah* as the suppression of “evildoers” in conjunction with the moral reform of state and society has been remolded to conform to the modernizing aspects of Abdülhamid’s regime. Designed to deal with the serious and ongoing insurgency in Yemen, what has emerged is a program with marked similarities to modern counterinsurgency. How did this program work out in practice?

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717 BBA, Y.Mtv 187/69 23 Şubat 1314/7 March 1898. Minutes (*mazbata*) of the Reform Commission, sent to the Grand Vizier.

718 BBA, Y.Mtv 187/69  23 Şubat 1314/7 March 1898. Minutes (*mazbata*) of the Reform Commission, sent to the Grand Vizier.
X. The Implementation of the Reform Commission’s Program.

In discussing the manner in which these policies were implemented, we will focus on three major themes: centralization and rationalization, the reform of the behavior of government personnel, and programs of social and economic development.

In regard to the policy of bureaucratic rationalization, the most noteworthy innovation of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s regime was the separation of the military power from the civil. The office of governor of Yemen was separated from the position of Commandant of the Seventh Army, to which Abdullah Paşa was appointed. Abdullah Paşa was also appointed as the head of a “Military Pacification Division” (Firka-i Islahiye), the military parallel of the civilian Heyet-i Islahiye which accompanied Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa.

This separation of powers represented an extension to Yemen of the continuing rationalization of the Ottoman state; that is, the division of the branches of government by specialized function in tandem with the overall expansion of the state apparatus. It was an initial step toward modernizing the provincial administration, in preparation for imposing greater central control. Likewise, it represented a partial civilianization of the administration of a disturbed region, undertaken for the same reason that modern counterinsurgency theorists recommend civilian control: the recognition that policies based on military force alone have failed.

Now, ʻislah was conceived as a joint task by the military and civil branches of government, with each fulfilling its particular function in that task. The “Military Pacification Division” and the Seventh Army were to undertake ʻislahat-ı askeriye, the
initial military operations necessary to subdue the autonomous tribes. The *islahat-i askeriye* were to be followed by *islahat-i mülkiye*, the organization of a civil administration in the areas conquered in this fashion.  

We have seen that, with regard to military pacification, the Reform Commission had set itself ambitious goals: the conquest of Upper Yemen, and the subjugation of the refractory tribal confederations of Ḥāshid and Bakīl. The main purpose of these operations was delicately stated as the “removal of the presence” (*izale-i vücud*) of the Imām.  

In his description of the major expedition to the northwest, al-Manṣūr’s chronicler al-Iryānī defines these war aims more explicitly as the “complete defeat” (*nikāya*), and “capture” (*akhdh*) of the Imām, motivated by the desire to impose the central control of the government (*talab an-nizām*). In practice, then, the operations were defined as total war. They were aimed at the complete political destruction of the regime’s enemies, the sweeping aside of the social barriers to bureaucratic control, and the transformation of tribal life to conform to the aims of the centralized state.

A number of these operations were in fact carried out, although they fell far short of achieving their ambitious goals. The most important was that undertaken by the Military Pacification Division under the command of Abdullah Paşa to the Imām’s capital at Qaflat al-‘Idhar. This expedition involved about 9,000 troops and took approximately seven months, lasting from November 1898 to May 1899. (Aimed specifically at the

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719 For the use of this terminology see BBA, Y.Mtv 187/69 23 Şubat 1314/7 March 1898. Minutes (*mazbata*) of the Reform Commission, sent to the Grand Vizier.

720 BBA, Y.Mtv 186/11 6 Kanun-ı Sani 1314/18 January 1899. Minutes of a Military Commission, sent to the Minister of War.


defeat and capture of the Imām, this operation was a complete failure). Likewise, an expedition was sent to the northern Tihāma to discipline the Banī Marwān tribes and establish a government presence in the port of Mīdī.\(^{723}\) Operations were also undertaken to expel the Dhū Ghaylān tribesmen from Lower Yemen.\(^ {724}\)

As noted, the organization of a civil administration (\(\textit{islahat-i mūlkiye}\) or \(\textit{teşkilat}\)) was supposed to be carried out in conjunction with these military operations. Various efforts were in fact made to rationalize and centralize the provincial administration at the local level throughout Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s tenure as governor. Sometimes this was done in connection with military pacification, and sometimes independently. Broadly speaking, these “civil reforms” had three major elements: the disarmament of the tribes, the removal of the powerful shaykhs as intermediaries between the government and the population, and the installation of a body of civil officials to see to the collection of taxes and other administrative tasks.

The disarmament of the tribes, described by al-Iryānī as being a major aim of the Qaflat al-‘Idhar expedition of 1898,\(^ {725}\) was never undertaken in anything like a systematic fashion. Attempts to assert greater central control over the process of tax collection were more serious. Under Hüseyin Hilmi, at least some of the shaykhs were removed from their positions. Taxes were apportioned village by village; and headmen (\(\textit{'uqqāl}\)) were appointed in each village to collect the taxes and turn them over to the government. Al-Iryānī noted, however, that the government simply kept the extra money that the shaykhs

\(^{723}\) BBA, Y.Mtv 197/2 28 Tişrin-i Evvel 1315/9 November 1899. Memorial (\(\textit{tahrirat}\)) from the Commodore of the Red Sea to the Minister of the Navy.

\(^{724}\) al-Iryānī, \(\textit{Sīrat}\), 2:126.

\(^{725}\) al-Iryānī, \(\textit{Sīrat}\), 2:106.
had previously collected for itself. 

Islah as centralizion and rationalization took precedence over islah as moral reform in the service of justice.

The grand project of the “civil reforms” that is, the organization of a civil administration in areas where there had been none before, was carried out only to a limited extent. The overall failure of “military pacification” prevented a great deal from being done in this regard, and I have only found one reference to the organization of a civil administration in a “pacified” area. After the expedition to the port of Mīdī, the area was organized as a nahiye and a “director” (nahiye müdürü) appointed to administer it, along with gendarmes and customs officials (rüsumat ve zabita memurları).

The program of centralization embodied in “military pacification” and “civil reform” thus had only limited success. The attempt to eliminate corrupt officials from the bureaucracy was implemented on a larger scale, at least in the civil bureaucracy. The most notorious officials of Feyzi Paşa’s regime were dismissed, and bribery was strictly punished. One disgruntled official who had been dismissed from his post as a result of these reforms even attempted to assassinate Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa as a result. Within this context, Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa implemented one measure which is interesting as a foreshadowing of the idea of cultural sensitivity. In response to a previous complaint by the Imām that the Ottoman officials wore the dress of “Christians,” Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa made his officials put on robes, and discard the Ottoman fez for the turban.

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726 al-Irānī, Sīrat, 2:125.
727 BBA, Y.Mtv 197/2 28 Tişrin-i Evvel 1315/9 November 1899. Memorial (tahrirat) from the Commodore of the Red Sea to the Minister of the Navy.
728 al-Ŷāsi’i, Tārīkh, 291-292.
The attempt to reform the culture and behavior of civil officialdom in Yemen was thus fairly thorough. The administration’s plans for social and economic development were less successful. The Reform Commission, as we have seen, had set itself ambitious goals: a railroad was to be constructed, the existing roads improved, and schools built which were to teach the Yemenis both practical economic skills and loyalty to the state.\textsuperscript{730} There were also plans to aid the peasants by the loan of seed grain from the government.\textsuperscript{731}

It appears, however, that only the educational program was implemented with any degree of thoroughness. Yemeni chroniclers record that Hüseyin Hilmi Paşâ did, in fact, establish a Bureau of Education (\textit{idārat al-ma‘ārif}, Ott. \textit{Idare-i Maarif}) along with a number of primary schools, a teachers’ school (\textit{dār al-mu'allimīn}) and an industrial school. The governor “compelled” (\textit{ajbara}) the people to enroll their sons in these schools.\textsuperscript{732}

The schools were designed not merely to win the Yemenis’ gratitude, but to indoctrinate them directly with loyalty to the state. The curriculum thus retained the historical Sunnī emphasis on instruction in right belief and obedience to the ruler. Right belief in this context, however, was transmuted into the proto-nationalist identity of pan-Islamism. Instruction in obedience to the ruler likewise became a demand for an intense loyalty (\textit{mahabbet}) to the caliphate and Sultan Abdülhamid.

Although at this stage in our research we do not have documents directly dealing with the curriculum of the schools in Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s time, Mehmet Emin Paşa’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{730} BBA, Y. Mtv 187/69 23 Şubat 1314/7 March 1898. Minutes (\textit{mazbata}) of the Reform Commission, sent to the Grand Vizier.
\textsuperscript{731} al-Irānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 2:29.
\end{footnotesize}
memorial of the 1880’s proposes a curriculum with most of these elements. According to Mehmet Emin Paşa, the primary schools to be established in Yemen should teach that obedience to (itaat) and love for (mahabbet) the Ottoman caliphate was a duty of each individual Muslim (farz-ı ayn). The youth were also to be subjected to intense propaganda concerning the praiseworthy qualities of Abdülhamid, and the blessings associated with sacrificial loyalty (fedakarlık) to the caliphate.733

In addition to mystical loyalty to the state as represented in the caliphate of Abdülhamid, the schools were to teach a fierce love of the Muslim “homeland” and a willingness to defend it from the enemies that beset it. The youths were to be informed of the threat posed by foreign governments, the enemies of faith (din) and homeland (vatan). They were literally to be taught hatred (nefret) of these governments, so that they would not be seduced by their intrigues.734

Reading these lines, it is clear that we have gone beyond the old paternal concepts of Islamic rule into the realm of violent nineteenth century nationalism. Although identity is based on religion rather than race or blood, there is the same stress on unity, loyalty, and heroic self-sacrifice for the state. This is conceived as a means of ensuring the survival of the community in a brutally hostile international environment. And again, while this is a prescription for the curriculum of the schools in Yemen that pre-dates Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s time, there is no reason to believe that these recommendations did not reflect what was actually later taught. Al-Iryānī noted sourly that the purpose of Hüseyin Hilmi

733 Mehmet Emin Paşa, “Yemen,” 6-8 (my pagination).
734 Ibid.
Paşa’s new schools was to corrupt (ifsād) the youth so that they would “grow up adoring the state” (yashībbū ‘alā maḥabbat ad-dawla).\footnote{al-Irānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 2:125.} In short, we see that Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s programs employed historic Islamic political language to push for a modernizing project of state-building reform: enforcing strict professional standards in the bureaucracy, bringing tax collection under closer governmental supervision, and asserting the right of the central government to a monopoly of force. Expanding the control of the bureaucratic state in this manner was in turn linked to the effort to impose Islamiyet on the Yemeni population; that is, a “proto-national” concept of Islam stressing loyalty to the state and willingness to defend the community against other predatory nations. Such loyalty was to be taught in the schools, and reinforced by the government’s manifest attempts to improve the welfare of the population.

This program was implemented specifically as a means to deal with a major guerrilla rebellion, in an attempt to persuade the population to support the government rather than the guerrillas. As such, it could not fail to have similarities to modern counterinsurgency of the “soft” variety; for this kind of counterinsurgency is simply state-building in a context where opposition to the state is particularly well organized and violent.

“Soft” counterinsurgency is also a form of total war, as much as repressive counterinsurgency. The policies of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa and the Reform Commission, at least as they were planned, did have this character. That is, they were conceived as an attempt to bring all the resources of the state to bear to deprive the Imām’s partisans of popular support and crush them militarily. The relationship between the Ottoman...
administration in Yemen and Yemeni society would be transformed, and the latter made over in the Ottomans’ image.

What was actually achieved in this context, however, fell far short of what was planned; and judged according to its larger goals, Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s program of reform was essentially a failure. The Imâm was not defeated, the Zaydî population was not persuaded to support the Ottomans, and the authority of the central government was only minimally expanded. How and why did the policies of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa fail?

**XI. The Failure of Reform in Yemen.**

Here, we will analyze both the immediate and structural causes for failure. The immediate causes can best be understood in the light of observations on counterinsurgency by modern military strategists. To analyze the structural causes of failure, we will make use of Findley’s discussion of the inherent contradictions in Abdülhamid’s regime. The modernizing character of Abdülhamid’s policies, in which Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s policies were evidently rooted, coexisted with arbitrary and discretionai elements aimed at maintaining Abdülhamid’s absolutist rule. In Yemen as elsewhere, the latter often thwarted the implementation of the former.

The immediate causes for failure may be listed as follows: failure to establish full civilian control of the military, failure to coordinate the actions of the civil and military branches of the administration, and failure to reform the culture and behavior of the Seventh Army.
Blaufarb and Tanham stress the importance of the assertion of full civilian control over the military. In this context, the various government agencies assigned to deal with the insurgency must be brought under a single authority, with a clear chain of command and a rational division of functions. There must be “unified management” of the counterinsurgency program. We have noted that the separation of the military and the civil powers in Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s administration marked a step toward the civilianization of the provincial government. Since the chain of command was ambiguous in this regard, however, there was perpetual conflict between the civil and military branches of the administration.

In al-Wāsi‘ī’s words, Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa “ordered the affairs of the province in a manner that the military refused [to carry out]” (ta’bāhu al-‘askariyya). The commander of the Seventh Army Abdullah Paşa sought to block the efforts of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa and the Reform Commission at every turn. Disagreement over policy soon assumed the dimensions of a personality conflict, for which much of the blame appears to lie on Abdullah Paşa’s side. Arabic and Ottoman sources agree that he was arrogant, intransigent, and corrupt; and Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa found him so difficult to deal with that eventually he resigned.

In this context, failure to establish full control by the governor’s administration over the Seventh Army meant that the latter remained untouched by the reforming zeal of Hüseyin Hilmi and his officials. A basic principle of modern counterinsurgency, as we have seen, is that reform begins with the army. Continuing corruption and indiscipline

impair the fighting efficiency of the army and alienate the population. This makes it impossible for the army to reestablish basic security in the countryside, without which programs of civil reform and development cannot be carried out.\footnote{Blaufarb and Tanham, \textit{Who}, 19-22.}

This was the practical situation of the Seventh Army under Abdullah Paşa. The major expedition to the northwest that we have described previously did not even begin to achieve the ambitious goals for which it had been organized. It had, however, resulted in the reestablishment of a government presence in the Shāhil region of the northwest, with the submission of a number of the shaykhs and common people of the area.\footnote{al-Iryānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 2:57.} Whatever was accomplished for the government in this regard, however, was undone by the ill-considered actions of Abdullah Paşa. According to one officer who served in the northwest with Abdullah Paşa, the latter behaved with a pompous arrogance (\textit{azamet}) toward the shaykhs who came to submit. He kept several officers from Feyzi Paşa’s regime who had distinguished themselves for “evil character” (\textit{su-\textasciitilde{}ahlak}), “bribery” (\textit{irti\textasciitilde{}a}), and “tyrannical actions” (\textit{mezalim}), promoting them to high positions.\footnote{BBA, Y.Mtv 192/160 23 Temmuz 1315/4 August 1899. Report (\textit{layiha}) from the (former) Commandant of the 28th Brigade to the Palace.}

The policies pursued by the Seventh Army in the Shāhil region, once the authority of the government was reestablished there, seemed to aim at terrifying the population into submission rather than gaining their support. Heads were taken by the Ottoman soldiers, extortionate taxes collected by violence, and houses and mosques destroyed.\footnote{Ibid.; al-Iryānī, \textit{Sīrat}, 2:56-57.}

The practical continuation of the abuses of Feyzi Paşa’s regime resulted in a resurgence of rebellion in the northwest. The tribes of the Shāhil and Sharaf regions
reestablished contact with the Imām, and the jiḥād was resumed.\textsuperscript{743} The northwest became less secure than ever, and in places such as the Ḥajūr region, the soldiers were unable to leave their fortifications except in large numbers.\textsuperscript{744}

Failure to reform the Seventh Army thus seriously hindered the implementation Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s policies. This was particularly true in the unsettled area of the northwest, where measures to win the confidence of the population were most essential. The ultimate consequence was that Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s policies had no practical effect as a measure to reduce unrest.

Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s inability to bring the Seventh Army under his full control and reform it, then, seriously hindered the implementation of his policies. We should temper these observations, however, by noting that the Reform Commission’s schemes of pacification were unrealistic on the scale they were envisioned. A major source of conflict between the Reform Commission and Abdullah Paşa, in fact, was the former’s constant demand for soldiers to seize control of the outlying regions of Yemen, which Abdullah Paşa usually rebuffed. There were barely enough soldiers to pacify the interior of the province, he said, let alone seize its barren frontier areas.\textsuperscript{745}

Here Abdullah Paşa, for all his sins, had a core of military realism which the civilian administrators of the Reform Commission obviously lacked. As he pointed out in a telegram to the Minister of War, how would it be possible to send expeditions to these remote areas when there were no transport animals to carry the provisions and artillery?

\textsuperscript{743} al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:57-58.
\textsuperscript{744} BBA, Y.Mtv 192/160 23 Temmuz 1315/4 August 1899. Report (layiḥa) from the (former) Commandant of the 28th Brigade to the Palace.
\textsuperscript{745} BBA, Y.Mtv 186/54 23 Kanun-ı Evvel 1314/4 January 1899. Telegram from the Field Marshall (Müşir) of the Seventh Army to the Minister of War.
How could the government finance the long and expensive line of communications which would have to be maintained in order to keep control of these regions? The Seventh Army continued to face the same logistical and financial deficiencies which had hampered its operations in the past; and even if its leadership had been upright and efficient, it is doubtful that it could have carried out pacification on the scale envisioned by the members of the Reform Commission.

The continuing poverty of the administration likewise imposed severe limitations on the programs for social and economic development. The projected railroad was never built, and there is not much evidence to suggest that major improvements were made to existing roads. The scheme to lend grain to the peasants, greeted enthusiastically by the inhabitants of the central plateau, apparently never got off the ground either. According to al-Iryānī, grain was only lent to some of the people in the outlying areas (ahwāz) of Ṣanʿā’.

The attempt to centralize the system of taxation was at least partially reversed, and some of the shaykhs returned to their former positions as tax collectors. We have noted that Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa did succeed in building a number of schools, and appears to have won some popular gratitude as a result. According to al-Wāsiʿī, the Paşa “compelled the people to be taught (taʾlīm), and eventually, the people praised the effect of that.”749 Most of the people of enrolled their children in these schools were residents

746 Ibid.
747 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:29.
748 al-Iryānī, Sīrat, 2:125.
749 al-Wāsiʿī, Tārīkh, 291.
of Ṣanʿā’, however, where the schools seem to have been concentrated. Thus, they had little effect on the people in the countryside where the guerrilla war was raging.

The overall impression one gets is that Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s benevolent reforms had little if any effect on those at whom they were ultimately targeted; that is, the disaffected Zaydīs of the northwest and the central plateau. In Ṣanʿā’, where his measures had the most effect, Hüseyin Hilmi was well liked by the population. The provincial administration did not, however, have the financial resources to bring “progress” and “civilization” to the impoverished tribesmen of the countryside. It appears that in this regard hopes were raised and then bitterly dashed, both with the administration’s failure to fulfill its promises and the continuance of the previous regime’s abuses. The frustration of these expectations no doubt played a role in the resurgence of unrest during Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s time as governor, after a short period of relative calm; and the situation steadily worsened after his departure.

The immediate causes of the failure of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s policies, then, lay in the continuing poverty of the provincial administration, and the failure to assert control over the military branch of government. The underlying structural causes of this failure lay in the inconsistent nature of Abdülhamid’s system of government. Conflict between the military and civil branches of government was not unique to Yemen. It was a feature of the Ottoman administration as a whole, in both the capital and the provinces; and the roots of such conflict lay in the peculiar logic of Hamidian absolutism.

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750 al-Irhānī, Sīrat, 2:64.
751 al-Irhānī, Sīrat, 2:165; al-Wāsīʾī, 292.
752 See for example Tahsin Paşa, Abdülhamid, 120-121.
Historically, Persian and Ottoman political thinkers viewed it as necessary that the servants of the state be kept in subjection to the sultan, for only thus could their inherent tendency to oppress the people be restrained.\textsuperscript{753} Shortly before Abdülhamid came to the throne, the traditional theory was restated by Abdülaziz’ Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim in his \textit{Ayine ve Hasb-i Hal}. The thesis of this work was that the bureaucrats of the \textit{Tanzimat} had achieved an unwarranted independence (\textit{istiklal}), and were using it to ruin the state and oppress the population. Only the sultan should have \textit{istiklal}, or full power and freedom of action. The Ottoman state could only achieve its former glory by means of a strong sultan who could keep the bureaucrats in their place.\textsuperscript{754} This is what Abdülhamid sought to do, because he had seen first hand the threat that a powerful ministerial class could pose to his throne.

The practices explicitly sanctioned to maintain this sultanic absolutism were amoral in conception (and often, grossly immoral in execution). The sultan was permitted to use all manner of force, craft, and deceit to maintain the subservience of his officials. Mutual spying and bitter interpersonal rivalries were to be positively encouraged, and the officials kept in constant fear of punishment.\textsuperscript{755} Ostensibly, this was done to ensure that officials would remain zealous in service to the state and act with justice toward the subjects. From the standpoint of power politics, the rationale for these practices was to prevent the officials from combining against the sultan and threatening his power.

Abdülhamid’s primary concern was to preserve the arbitrary and discretionai authority which Ottoman tradition accorded him, and he exploited these kinds of


\textsuperscript{754} Mahmud Nedim Paşa, \textit{Ayine}, 8-10.

\textsuperscript{755} Mahmud Nedim Paşa, \textit{Ayine}, 40; \textit{Hürz ül-Mülük} in Akgündüz, \textit{Kanunnamele}, 8:41.
measures to the full. The sultan therefore created a parallel government of spies was created to watch the officially constituted one, tolerated corruption as a means of gaining the loyalty of his ministers, and practically encouraged discord among the high officials of his government.\textsuperscript{756} Such measures persistently undermined his parallel efforts to make the government function as a “rational-legal” efficiently and professionally. The implementation of any project in this system was thwarted by constant discord among the persons and agencies concerned. Evidently, this is what happened to Hüseyin Hilmi’s program of reform in Yemen.

Within this context, it should also be noted that the absolutism has historically drawn strength from the image of the wise and just sultan contrasted with his corrupt or vicious officials. This was the case even in Yemen. In one of the Imām’s letters to the Ottoman government, the blame for the troubles of Yemen is placed on the immoral and tyrannical “officials” (ma’mūrin) of the sultan’s government, rather than the sultan himself. Abdülhamid is referred to in respectful terms as “the most Majestic Sultan, through whom God establishes the faith . . . and who uproots the fornicators and transgressors.”\textsuperscript{757}

In other words, the wicked officials serve as a useful foil for the sultan. They can be used to implement unpopular policies without affecting his personal legitimacy too much, and cast aside as a display of his justice and mercy if they go too far. Officials who become too popular as a result of zeal or competence, by contrast, may directly threaten the monarch’s power. This is particularly true of modernizing absolutisms, where the forces questioning the system of monarchy might rally around officials who seem to

\textsuperscript{756} Findley, \textit{Reform}, 227 ff. See also Tahsin Paşa, \textit{Abülhamid}, 98, for the conflict between the Grand Vizier Sait Paşa and the Minister of War Rıza Paşa.

\textsuperscript{757} al-Washalî, \textit{Dhayl}, 46.
represent modernity and progress. This, as we have seen, had happened just prior to Abdüllhamid’s accession, with Midhat Paşa and the deposition of Abdülaziz. Therefore, corruption was practically encouraged in modernizing absolutist states such as those of Abdüllhamid or Emperor Haile Selassie.\textsuperscript{758} Too great a reforming zeal, by contrast, might be “rewarded” with demotion or dismissal.\textsuperscript{759}

This seems to be the reason why individuals such as Feyzi Paşa or Abdullah Paşa were allowed to dominate policy in Yemen, while genuinely reformist governors encountered obstacles from within the Ottoman establishment. Corrupt or vicious governors might lose Yemen for the Empire; nonetheless, such a loss was repairable, albeit at the cost of much money and many innocent lives. A governor who was too successful in pacifying Yemen, however, might achieve a degree of support within the military and civil establishments at the sultan’s expense. He might even serve as a rallying point for opposition as Midhat Paşa had done, costing the sultan his throne, and perhaps even his life.

Abdüllhamid therefore seems to have preferred mediocre officials to superior ones, for the former were more likely to remain dependent and obedient. The sultan was genuinely concerned about the future of the Ottoman state and the Muslims. Yet in the last analysis, he seems to have been psychologically incapable of distinguishing his own desire for personal power from the larger good of the Ottoman state, and sacrificing the former in the service of the latter.

\textsuperscript{758} Findley, Reform, 238; Kapuściński, Emperor, 47, 99.
\textsuperscript{759} See Keddie, Roots, 160-164; Kapuściński, Emperor, 31-34.
Conclusion.

In this chapter, we have analyzed the conflict in Yemen as a gradual escalation toward total war. Our focus has been on the adaptation of the methods of armed conflict to ideological goals which tended to be uncompromising in character. On both sides, war was ostensibly waged as efforts to reshape society in accordance with a moral vision putatively derived from the principles of Islam.

For the Zaydīs, this was accomplished by an ideological focus on the Islamic principles of *jihād* and *iṣlāḥ*; the effort to expel the foreign invaders and reform Zaydī society itself by replacing tribal custom with Islamic law. Such concepts emphasized perseverance and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of larger moral and spiritual goals. As such, they provided an effective ideological basis on which to organize a long-term guerrilla war, which the tribal military culture of honor did not.

On the Ottoman side, the war was increasingly justified by reference to pan-Islamic and absolutist principles. The sultan had the right to reshape Ottoman Muslim society in accordance with the principles of *Islamiyet*, a vision of Islamic society influenced by European nationalism. *Islamiyet* emphasized communal unity and loyalty to the state as a means of defending the Muslim community against the aggressive imperial powers. Those who refused to go along with *Islamiyet* were branded as traitors subject to violent suppression by the sultan. Pan-Islamism and absolutism was therefore interpreted by Abdülhamid as a license to wage total war on those of his subjects who did not share his vision.
The increasing focus on all-encompassing ideological goals resulted in major changes on the organization of war on both sides. The Imamate remained a tribal quasi-state in structure and operation, an uneasy compact between the tribes and the religious classes. The Imām’s development of the ‘iṣābāt, however, enabled his state to achieve a limited autonomy from the tribal system. Militarily, they waged the kind of long-term guerrilla war of attrition against the Ottomans which could not be organized through the tribal system of mobilization per se.

On the Ottoman side, the archaic reliance on punitive expeditions was replaced by a grueling system of mobile war designed to hunt down and destroy the Imām’s partisans. When it became clear that purely military methods did not work, the Ottomans adopted a program whose rationale and techniques were basically similar to those of modern counterinsurgency: an attempt to employ all the resources of the state to persuade the population to support the government, and crush the rebels militarily at the same time.

Both sides conceived the war as an existential struggle. The Imām’s partisans wished to expel the Ottomans from Yemen, while the latter aimed at destroying the Imām completely as a political force. The conflict in Yemen thus steadily escalated in intensity during this period. It gradually became clear that the balance was tilting toward the Zaydīs in this struggle. The Zaydī leadership seemed to display greater focus and zeal than the Ottomans. Meanwhile, Ottoman efforts were persistently hampered by the inconsistencies inherent in Abdülhamid’s methods of rule, which created attitudes of frustration and cynicism among Ottoman officials.

The consequences of all this would become clear in the rebellion of 1904. This rebellion marked the crescendo of the tide of violence which had been steadily rising in
Yemen since 1890, and it had many of the dramatic characteristics of total war in the conventional sense: the mobilization of men and matériels on an enormous scale, prolonged battles involving massive exchanges of firepower, strategies designed to wear down the enemy through the depletion of his resources. The Ottomans would be badly humiliated in this war, and the idea that the Imamate could be crushed as a political entity would be permanently discredited.
CHAPTER 7

THE 1904 REBELLION

In the last chapter, we discussed al-Manṣūr’s reconstruction of the Imamate as a supra-tribal state, and his development of a strategy of long-term guerrilla war to undermine Ottoman authority. In this chapter, we will analyze the rebellion raised by his son Yahyā on his accession in 1904. This rebellion was the essential outgrowth of al-Manṣūr’s policies; and as a result, it was far more militarily sophisticated and costly to the Ottomans than the 1891 rebellion had been.

The 1904 rebellion was distinguished by the following elements: mobilization of the tribes through the ‘īsābāt; the existence of a planned strategy of revolt; the achievement of battlefield superiority over the Ottomans; and the possession by the Imām’s armies of food stores where the Ottoman garrisons had none, made possible by al-Manṣūr’s assiduous stockpiling of grain and money in his treasury. Imām Yahyā thus achieved a decisive superiority over the Ottomans in terms of control of the Zaydī population, and on the strategic, tactical, and logistical fronts. This enabled him to accomplish what al-Manṣūr had never been able to do, the expulsion of the Ottoman garrisons from the Zaydī highlands.

Given the resources at the Ottomans’ disposal, this expulsion could only be temporary; and the Ottomans would eventually restore the status quo through the dispatch of an
expeditionary force. The campaign to suppress the rebellion, however, differed
dramatically from that of 1891. The Imām’s partisans were far better armed and more
experienced than in 1891, and would resist much more stubbornly. Consequently, the
Ottomans had to resort to a strategy which had some of the characteristics of a war of attrition; masses of men, stores, and artillery were brought up to bludgeon their way through the Imām’s positions. They could no longer rely on quick victories through lightning attacks and the easy display of superior firepower.

The 1904 insurrection, in short, signaled the final transformation of the character of rebellion in Yemen. The Imām demonstrated that he was able to effect a mobilization of the Zaydi population to fight an extended war of attrition against the Ottomans, transcending the spasmodic and fragmented tribal upheavals of the past. The 1891 rebellion took one year to raise and lasted several months before the Ottomans finally suppressed it; the 1904 rebellion took several months to raise and lasted for over a year. The cost of maintaining control of Yemen under these circumstances thus became prohibitive for the Ottomans, who were beset by increasingly serious external and internal threats elsewhere; and in consequence, they would begin to seriously reconsider their fundamental policy toward the Imamate.

II. The Accession of Imām Yaḥyā.

Al-Manṣūr died on 3 June 1904 at Qaflat al-‘Idhar, where he had moved the capital from Ṣa‘da, and his son Yaḥyā made his da‘wa the next day. The accounts surrounding his da‘wa stress its conformity with the central ideas of Ḥādāwī Zaydism, minimizing its hereditary character and the influence of his father’s partisans. Here again, the idea of jiḥād played a central role. Zaydi historians writing in Yaḥyā’s reign emphasize that his accession was legitimated by the consensus (ijmā‘) of the main Zaydī ‘ulamā’, from the
Ṣanʿā’, Ṣa‘da, Ḧūth, and Dhamār regions; and this consensus was based on the Imām’s personal qualities, his “courage,” (ash-shajā’ā), “exalted zeal” (‘ulūw al-himma), and his “noble character (karam al-akhlāq). These were the qualities which, in the Imamate tradition of Ḥādawī Zaydism, would ensure that the Imām was personally suited to lead the Muslim community in the jihād; and once elected, the Imām Yaḥyā was required to seal the legitimacy of his election by doing so.

In the letter announcing his accession (manshūr ad-daw’a), the Imām wrote, “We enjoin on you, o believers...that which God has decreed: to hear and obey...to follow the path of the [Muslim] community, to put forth every effort, to hasten to the jihād, and to cleanse God’s earth from those who desire wickedness on the earth; for if you do not do this, there will be strife and wickedness on the earth.” According to Tevfik Bey, the governor of Yemen at the time, “the consideration of those persons who are elected as “bandit chieftain” (reis-i şekavet), in undertaking those acts of banditry which they give the name of ‘holy war’ immediately following their election, is based on the goal of achieving recognition among the Zaydis in general, and strengthening their authority.”


761 We can see this idea in Imām Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Murtada’s (d. 1437) ‘Uyūn al-azhār fi fiqh al-a’imma al-āthār, the primary legal text of Ḥādawī Zaydism. The prospective Imām must be courageous (miqdām), possessed of sound judgement (akthar ra’ihi al-īṣāba) and leadership ability (mudabbir); he must also be a mujtahid, someone able to derive legal rulings from the Sharī’a through the reasoning process of ijtiḥād. The rest of the section discusses the Imām’s rights and duties, and the bulk of this material is devoted to the duty of jihād. The implication is that the personal qualities of the Imām are those which will enable him to wage the jihād successfully. The Imām must have sufficient force of character to lead the Muslim community in war and endure the hardships that war entails; and he must also have the knowledge and moral authority to direct this war toward the aims of Islam, and ensure that it is waged in a disciplined fashion. See Imām Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Murtada, ‘Uyūn al-azhār fi fiqh al-a’imma al-āthār, ed. Shaykh Şādiq Mūsā (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1975), 519 ff.

The Imám Yahyá’s position was not as strong as his father’s, he says, and that is why he undertook the *jihād*.\(^{763}\)

It would soon become apparent that Imám Yahyá was eminently qualified to lead the *jihād*, whatever the role of heredity and political influence in his accession. The legacy of his father, however, would help Imám Yahyá in undertaking the *jihād* as it had helped his election. Al-Manşūr had bequeathed to him the institution of the ‘*iṣābāt*, and it was to the ‘*iṣābāt* that he initially turn in raising the insurrection.

**II. The ‘*Iṣābāt* and the Instigation of the Rebellion.**

In the last chapter, we noted that in al-Manşūr’s time the ‘*iṣābāt* emerged as the cornerstone of the Imám’s tribal quasi-state, and the essential agents of supra-tribal mobilization for war. Often recruited on a cross-tribal basis, commanded by *sayyids*, and campaigning on the Imám’s behalf outside their own tribal territory, they had become increasingly effective in extending the Imamate’s authority. An ‘*iṣāba* would arrive in a given region and summon the people to rebellion; and when they had expanded their numbers by the addition of local sympathizers, they would undertake operations against the Ottoman troops. We also asserted that this process tended to accustom the Zaydís to cooperation with the Imám’s men. This tended to foster a unity of purpose and action between the ‘*iṣābāt* and the population, allowing them to transcend the particular interests of tribe and region in order to achieve the larger Islamic goals of the Imamate.

\(^{763}\) Mehmet Tevfik Bey, *Haturalar*, 1:353.
Now, the Imām Yaḥyā fomented the 1905 insurrection by undertaking this process on a grand scale. It was his success in doing so which marked, in some ways, the final success in the reconstruction of the Imamate as a supra-tribal state. The 1904 rebellion showed that the Imamate had achieved sufficient legitimacy and coercive power to unite the Zaydīs as a population against the Ottoman state, regardless of tribal affiliation, and to do so with considerable efficiency. The tribesmen were mobilized much more rapidly than they had been in 1891, and kept in the field much longer. The ideal of jihād, emphasizing stubborn perseverance in the face of hardship, became a reality for much of the Zaydī population as well as the ‘īṣābāt.

Our sources describe the following scenario in the opening stages of the rebellion: a military assembly of the northern tribes around Qafla, agreement on a coordinated plan of action, recruitment of ‘īṣābāt from the assembled tribesmen, and then dispatch to their place of assignment. According to al-Wāṣi‘ī, after the ‘ulamā’ had acknowledged Yaḥyā as Imām, “he assembled the tribes from the entire country, and they agreed to obey him...and...to besiege the cities in which there were Turks.”764 The existence of a prior agreement of this kind implies some level of planning, although we cannot be sure exactly what it consisted of.

The observations of Tevfik Bey, the Ottoman governor of the time, tend to support this. In the first days of October he informed the Interior Minister that that a major concentration of troops was taking place around Qafla.765 About a week later Tevfik Bey received news that the Imām was collecting taxes and sending notices (evrak) urging the people not to pay taxes to the government. The Imām himself had come to the south,

764 al-Wāṣi‘ī, Tārīkh, 299.
765 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hāvaralar, 1:284-85.
while “the evildoers who have been assembled would set out for the regions of Ḥajja, Ḥajūr, Kawkabān, Ḥarāz, Ṣanʿā’, and perhaps even Taʿizz.”

When the first wave of “evildoers” was actually dispatched, they did not go precisely to all these locations; again, in the words of Tevfik Bey “it was understood that one section (kism) of the bandits had gone to Ḥajja, and one to the Ibb region; likewise, a number had set out from the presence of the Imām (Imam nezdi) in order to come to the environs of Ṣanʿā’ or Anis.” The impression given is one of a coordinated operation based on defined geographical objectives.

That the troops assembled and sent were ‘iṣābāt is likewise indicated by Tevfik Bey. In a telegram to the Grand Vizier dated 9 October 1904, he noted that the troops assembling in Qafla numbered about 1500, and would ultimately spread out to the mülhakat (that is, the outlying regions of the sancak of Ṣanʿā’). There, they would “disrupt security” (asayişi ihlal), raiding the individual kazas. This, of course, was the modus operandi of the ‘iṣābāt.

The Imām would employ these ‘iṣābāt in their characteristic function, that is, raising the local population in rebellion and spearheading military operations against the Ottomans; and the subsequent rapid deterioration of the security situation in late October and November was essentially due to this kind of activity. By the second half of November, rebel forces were attacking caravans and military posts along the major

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766 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hatrialar, 1:285.
767 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hatrialar, 1:285-86.
768 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hatrialar, 1:284.
769 In recounting the early phases of the rebellion Mehmet Tevfik Bey made the following observations concerning the ‘iṣābāt: “The bandits whom the Imām had assembled up to that time, [giving them] a salary of fifty kurus, were approximately 4,000 [in number]; but the main problem was that wherever they went, they increased their forces by the people’s joining them.”
routes-Ṣanʿā’-Ḥudayda, Ṣanʿā’-Taʿizz, and Ḥajja-Ḥudayda. In a telegram to the palace dated 29 November 1904, Tevfik Bey noted that “the bandit gangs (eskiya çeteleri) whom the Imām has assembled and sent are increasing, as the local people join them wherever they . . . go.”

He adds “It was known by experience that the people would be prepared [to do this];” in consequence, he had requested the dispatch of reinforcements one month earlier, before the situation had gotten entirely out of hand. Such statements suggest that the relatively swift mobilization of the population was in large part due to the cooperative relationship that the `iṣābāt had established with them in previous years.

What is evident also in this regard is the degree to which al-Manṣūr’s years of patient effort had made cross-tribal cooperation possible. As we have seen, the Ottoman sources often make a distinction between the “bandit gangs” (eskiya çeteleri) and the “people” (ahali). What this seems to indicate was that the former were recruited from the northern tribes outside the control of the Ottoman government (idare haricinde), while the latter meant in part the Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribes within Ottoman territory.

The first iṣāba sent out by the Imām was a force of 1500 men recruited from the northern tribes of Arḥab, Dhū Muḥammad, and Dhū Ḥusayn, who were sent to fight the Ottomans in the Ḥarāz region. When forces of similar size came to besiege Ṣanʿā’, their sayyid commanders were said to have taken under control (itaate alarak) the tribes in the

770 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Ḥaturalar, 1:290.

771 In response to a question from the Interior Ministry concerning the extent to which support for the `iṣābāt was voluntary, Tevfik Bey stated that over half the people of the sancak of Ṣanʿā’ had joined the “bandits” sent by the Imām. Even if some of them had been pressured into joining the rebellion, their initial reluctance had been mainly due to self-interested motives, such as fear of the government, or fear that the Imām would hurt their private interests. They still nourished a sectarian attachment to the Imām in their hearts. See Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Ḥaturalar, 1:352.
immediate neighborhood of Ṣanʿā’, specifically the Banī Maṭar, Hamdān, and Banī al-Ḥārith. The southern tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl were therefore willing to submit, at some level, to men from the northern tribes as long as the latter were acting in their capacity as soldiers of the Imām.

This had happened before, in 1891; but what is significant in this regard is the relatively greater ease with which this was accomplished. The comparatively rapid mobilization of 1904 forms a striking contrast with the situation in 1891. Al-Manṣūr made his daʿwa in July of 1890; and it took almost a year to build up a network of tribal alliances before fighting began in earnest in the early summer of 1891. Even then, the tribes of the Ṣanʿā’ region only gave their unqualified support after al-Manṣūr’s forces had achieved major successes in the Ḥajja region.

By contrast, the period between Imām Yaḥyā’s daʿwa and the outbreak of serious fighting was six months, and military operations were begun simultaneously in several key regions of the province at once. In short, the ʿiṣābāt permitted Imām Yaḥyā to raise rebellion much faster than his father, and to exert a higher degree of control over the process.

III. The Strategy of the Imām.

The Imām and his advisors retained this higher degree of control throughout the 1904 rebellion as a whole, enabling them to direct events according to a more closely defined

772 BBA, Y.Mtv 269/9 26 Tişrin-i Sani 1320/9 December 1904. Telegram from General Staff Lieutenant-Colonel Ibrahim, Colonel Hacı Sait, Major-General Yusuf, and the Kaymakam of Ḥarā’im (error for Ḥarāz?) Hüseyin to the Minister of War.

773 See Chapter 5, 279 ff.
strategy than in 1891. For the northwest and the Şan‘ā’ region, our sources strongly suggest that such a defined strategy did exist, formulated partially in view of the events of 1891. The objective in this strategy appears to have been to isolate the garrisons in the highlands and starve them into surrender; and in broad terms, it was to be implemented in the following phases:

1. Arrival of the ‘ișābāt in a given region and mobilization of the local tribes.
2. The cutting of the major roads and telegraph lines, with a massive concentration of the rebels along the roads to ensure the complete blocking of all traffic.
3. Siege and capture of the major cities.

These elements were present, at some level, in all the Imām’s military operations in the highlands; and with regard to the siege of Şan‘ā’, they did take place in the consecutive fashion described. The rebels did not immediately march on the city in a sudden burst of enthusiasm. They began on the roads leading into the city and fought their way in, ensuring that communications were completely blocked and all the outlying military posts captured. Ottoman observers at the time likened the process to a noose being tightened around the city.

In keeping with this strategy, the month of November was taken up with attacks on the roads, slowing down caravan traffic and finally blocking it completely. When the first ‘ișābāt had been dispatched in October, one had come to the kaza of Ḥajja, where they cut the Ḥajja-Ḥudayda road.774 Between 13 and 17 November the Ḥudayda-Şan‘ā’ and Şan‘ā’-Ta‘izz roads were cut, as were the Şan‘ā’-Ma‘ākha and Şan‘ā’-Ma‘bar telegraph

The remainder of the month was taken up by the concentration of rebels along these roads, together with continuous clashes between these rebels and the armed supply caravans of the Ottomans. Finally, on 1 December 1904 the Ṣan‘ā’-Manākha road was completely blocked; communication with Ta‘izz was likewise entirely cut off at the same time or shortly thereafter. The supply caravans, which up to that point had been able to fight their way to Ṣan‘ā’, could no longer get through.

Now that Ṣan‘ā’s chief supply route had been taken by the Imām’s partisans, the actual siege of the city could begin in earnest. In the first several days of December, the rebel forces entered Bilād Bustān near the western gate of the city and Rawḍa to the east; likewise, they cut the Ṣan‘ā’-Kawkabān road, so that “the capital of the province was completely enclosed within a great ring” (büyük bir daire içinde mahsur kaldı). At the same time they began to besiege and capture the military posts around the city and on the Ṣan‘ā’-Manākha road; as these posts fell one by one, Tevfik Bey noted that “this showed that the ‘iron ring’ of the siege surrounding Ṣan‘ā’ was gradually narrowing” (San‘a’yi ihata eden muhasara çemberi gittikçe daraldıgını göstermekte idi).

The laying of siege to Ṣan‘ā’, in other words, suggests a calculated and deliberate process, whose ultimate aim was its slow strangulation by cutting it off from all outside sources of supply. There was a clear consecutive pattern in the rebel operations in this regard in November-December 1904. First, caravan traffic to the city was blocked from all directions. Second, after this was decisively accomplished, the rebels took up their lines.775

775 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hâtralar, 1:288.
777 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hâtralar, 1:291.
778 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hâtralar, 1:295.
positions around the city. Third, they consolidated their grip on Ṣan‘ā’s communications by capturing the military posts in the environs of the city, and on the Ṣan‘ā’–Ḥudayda road.

To compare this process to what took place in 1891 is again to get a sense of deliberate planning, as opposed to ad hoc improvisation, carried on the waves of enthusiasm generated by military success. At that time, the rebels’ operations spread in a half-planned, half-spontaneous fashion from Ḥajja to the Ṣan‘ā’ region, the result of tribal mobilizations which were propelled forward by military successes in the field. The catalyst for the 1891 rebellion was a major victory won by the Imām’s forces over the Ottomans at Shāhil at the end of May. This boosted the morale of the Zaydī malcontents and put them on the alert for rebellion, aided no doubt by the assiduous propaganda of al-Manṣūr’s partisans. While the fighting was going on in Ḥajja, al-Manṣūr sent his muqaddamī Ἀḥmad ibn Muḥammad ash-Shar‘ī to the Ṣan‘ā’ region to get the tribes of that area to besiege Ṣan‘ā’; this apparently was in June or July of 1891. On the strength of the Imām’s successes, a number of the tribes agreed.

The course of events, then, indicates that the level of strategic planning at the outset of the rebellion was much higher in 1904 than in 1891, and that the Imām and his advisors exerted relatively greater control over the process. Greater military sophistication was likewise evident in the conduct of operations in the siege itself. In 1891, the specific aim of the Imām’s armies was to take Ṣan‘ā’ by assault; “the intention of the tribesmen was to plunder the weak and the poor, and they shouted this out around Ṣan‘ā’.”

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779 al-Iryānī, 1:271.
780 al-Wāsī’ī, Tārīkh, 276.
Consequently they frequently attempted to approach the wall, with disastrous results as they came under fire from the Ottoman artillery.\textsuperscript{781}

While assaults of this type did take place in the 1904 rebellion, the chief military operations recorded were sorties by the Ottoman troops against rebel positions, in which they were often unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{782} In this siege, then, the rebels did not show quite the same tendency to waste their manpower in reckless assaults on Ṣan‘ā’. Rather, they would allow the Ottoman troops to exhaust themselves in futile assaults against the “ring of steel” they had thrown around the city; this again implies a deliberate strategy of starvation through isolation.

In contrast to 1891, moreover, the rebels seem to have enjoyed a clear superiority in the battles. While the Ottomans enjoyed some successes in their sorties in the former rebellion, they seem to have had relatively fewer in the 1904 rebellion. Their failures were due in large part the rebels’ acquisition of rifles which were better than those of the Ottomans; and in consequence, the Seventh Army would lose the only battlefield advantage it enjoyed in an insurrection, that of superior firepower.

\textbf{IV. Small Arms and the Rebellion.}

After 1891, the soldiers in Yemen had been armed with the British Martini-Henry rifle, and it appears that this was still the weapon in use on the outbreak of the rebellion. Ottoman observers at the time noted that the rifles of the soldiers in Yemen were old;

\textsuperscript{781} Harris, \textit{Journey}, 301-302.

their ammunition was also old, and often would not go off in consequence.783 The Martini-Henry was a single-shot rifle firing a black powder cartridge, whose heyday had been in the 1870’s and 1880’s. By 1900, however, the major European armies—including the Ottoman forces in Europe—were armed with various brands of the magazine rifle. These, in the main, used smokeless powder cartridges. They had bolt-action magazines holding several rounds, enabling them to fire several times in quick succession. Their range, up to 2,000 meters, was considerably longer than that of the Martini-Henry rifle as well.784

Now, there is some evidence to suggest that magazine rifles may have been present in sufficient quantity in Yemen to alarm the Ottomans. Ottoman contemporaries noted that at the outbreak of the rebellion the rebels’ weapons were superior to those of the Ottomans, with a longer range.785 In a telegram to the Minister of the Interior after the fall of Ṣanʿā’, the governor of Yemen stated that virtually all of the Yemeni tribes were armed with weapons of the “new system” (yeni sistem), as opposed to those of the “old make” (kar-ı kadim).786 This may simply indicate the breech-loading rifle as opposed to the matchlock musket. The chief brands of rifle mentioned in our sources are the Martini-Henry and Gras,787 a single shot rifle of French make. A colonel of the Ottoman General Staff stated in 1900 that the followers of the Imām were armed with the

783 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hıtralar, 1:281; Memduh, Yemen İslahat ve Bazı MüTalat (Istanbul: n.p., 1325), 17.
784 Ian Hogg and John Weeks, Military Small Arms of the Twentieth Century (Northfield, Ill.: Digest Books, Inc., 1973), 3.01-3.02.
785 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hıtralar, 1:281; Memduh, Yemen, 17.
786 Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hıtralar, 1:353.
787 BBA, Y.Mtv 269/67, 2 Kanun-ı Evvel 1320/15 December 1904. Telegram from the Regimental Adjutant (Alay Emini), in the name of the Commandant of the Hudayda division, to the Minister of War.
Remington rifle “which in terms of its ballistic qualities is equal and perhaps superior to our Martini-Henry.”\textsuperscript{788} In other words, the supposed firepower superiority of the Zaydīs may have come in part from single shot rifles perceived to be superior to the Martini-Henry, at least the worn-out ones the Ottoman soldiers in Yemen had.

Sinan Kuneralp, however, states that a number of the tribesmen besieging Ṣanʿā’ in 1905 were armed with the magazine rifle.\textsuperscript{789} There was no standardization of equipment in the Imām’s armies; weapons for the tribes in Yemen were provided in the main by the private arms traders of Djibouti and Aden, who probably had a variety of older and newer models. In consequence, the rebels apparently were armed with a mix of single shot and magazine rifles.

Despite the heterogeneity of the tribesmen’s weapons, at the outset of the rebellion their perceived superiority in armament greatly worried the Ottomans. In 1891 the rebels had the advantages of numerical superiority, better mobility, and control of the terrain; to this was now added a degree of superiority in small arms, an area where the Ottomans had previously enjoyed the ascendancy. In consequence, the rebels were able to achieve a degree of battlefield superiority over the Ottomans for a time; and this, as we shall see, would be disastrous for the Seventh Army.

\section*{V. The Tactics of the Imām’s Forces.}

\textsuperscript{788} BBA, Y.Mtv 204/44 23 Haziran 1316/6 July 1900. Report (layiha) from the General Staff Colonel Hüseyin Remzi Bey to the Palace.

\textsuperscript{789} Sinan Kuneralp, “Military Operations in the 1904-1905 Uprising in the Yemen,” \textit{Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations Annual} 2 (1987): 64. Kuneralp states that in the siege of Ṣanʿā’, the rebels were armed with Gras and magazine rifles, whose ammunition was smuggled in from Aden. The article is not footnoted, unfortunately. Mr. Kuneralp told me in 1999, however, that it was based on the dispatches of the Austrian military attaché in Istanbul.
The effective implementation of the strategy of “starvation through isolation” was, in fact, dependent on battlefield superiority. Communications would have to be blocked for a sufficient length of time for supplies to run out for the Ottomans, and this would mean fighting off any relief forces the Ottomans might send. It was the rebels’ inability to do this which prevented the capitulation of Ṣan‘ā’ in 1891; Feyzi’s relief force arrived before the situation for the Ṣan‘ā’ garrison became truly desperate, and the rebels were unable to stop it. In the 1904 rebellion, better arms and increased tactical sophistication would enable them to thwart every attempt to relieve Ṣan‘ā’ until the summer of 1905.

In analyzing the tactics employed by the Imām’s partisans, the influence of the ‘iṣābāt is evident. We have seen that, as the ‘iṣābāt had acquired rifles in the 1890’s, they had grown more stubborn in resistance, engaging in extended firefights with the Ottoman units. In 1905, this happened on a larger scale. At times, the rebels would stand their ground and engage in virtual battles of attrition with the Ottoman forces, with the latter often getting the worst of it.

If the situation warranted it, the rebels could also use a difficult stretch of terrain as a theater of mobile war rather than a tract of ground to be defended. As we have seen, mobile tactics of harrassment, ambush, and withdrawal had been an important feature of ‘iṣābāt warfare in the preceding thirteen years, employed particularly against Ottoman columns on the march. In 1905, the rebels fought a major battle of this type against the first sizeable relief force sent to Ṣan‘ā’, resulting in a disastrous defeat for the Ottoman troops.
In this rebellion, then, the rebels would employ the characteristic tactics of the 'iṣābāt on a grand scale. That is, they would combine mobile assault-and-withdrawal tactics with hard fought defensive battles, in such a way as to cause the maximum exhaustion and demoralization of the Ottoman troops. In these battles the rebels likewise distinguished themselves by their high level of discipline and ability to direct the course of the fighting toward the overall strategic goals of the campaign. In tactics as in strategy, then, the rebellion in 1905 showed the influence of the transformation of war which had taken place under al-Manṣūr.

VI. Stationary Defense and the Battle for Rawḍa.

Important battles of attrition took place in the first five months of the rebellion, before the major relief forces were sent. At this time, small Ottoman forces repeatedly tried to break through the Ṣan‘ā’-Manākha road and the siege cordon surrounding Ṣan‘ā’, in order to get supplies to the city and the military posts along the road. As a rule they failed; and when they succeeded, they often found themselves pinned down at their destination and unable to return.

Stationary battles made sense in this case, because the rebels at this point possessed all the main advantages we have enumerated: superior firepower, control of the terrain, and superior numbers, with the last being particularly important in battles of attrition. At the outbreak of the rebellion the combined garrisons of Ṣan‘ā’ and Manākha numbered about
3,200 men, over two-thirds of which were in Ṣan‘ā’.

While troops could be brought up to Manākha from the coast, the Ṣan‘ā’ garrison would become increasingly difficult to reinforce as communications were cut off.

By contrast, the rebel numbers were constantly increasing. In mid-December 1904 it was estimated that 12,000 rebels held the Ṣan‘ā’-Manākha road, while Sinan Kuneralp gives a figure of 30,000 for the rebel forces besieging Ṣan‘ā’.

The latter figure may be too high; but the likelihood is that the rebels enjoyed at least a two to one superiority to the Ottomans.

In this context it made sense to allow smaller Ottoman forces to dash themselves to pieces on their positions, losing men who could not be easily replaced. This was the pattern of fighting around Ṣan‘ā’, where the rebels had heavily entrenched themselves in the fortifications around the city. In February 1905, for example, elements of the Ottoman garrison became bogged down in an extended battle to expel the rebels from Rawḍa, one of their principal headquarters.

The battle of Rawḍa followed the arrival of a relief force of about 3,000 men from Manākha and the Ḥijāz at the end of January, who brought a few days’ worth of provisions for the beleaguered Ṣan‘ā’ garrison. It was evident that the force would have to be used to obtain supplies in some manner. Several options existed for doing this, but finally it was decided to launch an attack on Rawḍa, a town about eight or ten miles from Ṣan‘ā’.

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790 Atuf Paşa, Yemen, 2:230; BBA, Y.Mtv 269/57, 3 Kanun-ı Evvel 1320/16 December 1904. Telegram from the mutasarrıf of Ḥudayda to the Palace.

791 Kuneralp, “Operations,” 64; BBA, Y.Mtv 269/67, 3 Kanun-ı Evvel 1320/16 December 1904. Telegram from the Regimental Adjutant (Alay Emini), in the name of the Commandant of the Ḥudayda Division, to the Minister of War.
Ṣan‘ā’. Rawḍa was an important center for the rebels, and it was rumored that a quantity of provisions was stored there.\textsuperscript{792}

The houses in Rawḍa, however, were built on the usual pattern of houses in Yemen; that is, they were towers about three or four stories high, with loopholes for guns. The rebels had taken up position in these houses and barricaded the doors. Apart from this, they had occupied a number of the towers between Ṣan‘ā’ and Rawḍa.\textsuperscript{793}

In consequence, the Ottoman forces would first have to spend three days fighting their way through the houses and towers located on the way to the town. Precise details of these battle are lacking, but the reasons for the slowness of the Ottoman advance seem fairly evident. G. Wyman Bury, writing in 1913, describes the terrain between Ṣan‘ā’ and Rawḍa as follows: “Beyond the wall, outside Bab al-Roumi, stretch green streaks of tamarisk and and garden ground, that merge into an open plain, trending northward between two wide-set rows of low hills. Along this plain, in echelon, are set occasional tall, round towers of old sun-baked brick...Beyond these towers a long, low spur of limestone juts out from the eastern hills; past it the plain reopens toward Roda.”\textsuperscript{794}

It is apparent that there would have been little cover for a force marching out of Ṣan‘ā’, and the Ottoman troops would have been exposed to heavy bursts of rifle fire from the rebel fortifications as they made their way to Rawḍa across the open plain. The force would have had to stop, silence the gunmen inside a tower by shell or rifle fire, and then proceed a short distance to repeat the process again. While such fortifications could be destroyed by artillery, this would take time, and might have been particularly difficult if

\textsuperscript{792} Atif Paşa, \textit{Yemen}, 2:238.
\textsuperscript{794} Bury, \textit{Arabia}, 76-77.
rifle fire was coming against the force from several directions at once. The likelihood is that fire was coming from several different directions at once, for the rebels enjoyed complete command of the terrain, and were far superior in number to the Ottoman troops.

Once at Rawḍa, the Ottomans spent twenty days attempting to dislodge the rebels from the fortified buildings there. They were unable to do this even though a special gun on a sliding sledge (kızakli top) was brought up from the Şan‘ā’ citadel to batter down the houses. The Ottoman troops suffered numerous casualties, and finally had to return to Şan‘ā’ in defeat. 795

Again, we do not have exact details of this battle. Based on the patterns of warfare which had developed in the previous decade, however, we can assume that the fighting for Rawḍa would have involved an intense duel of rifle and artillery fire, with the rebels enjoying the protection and superior fields of fire provided by the fortified houses of the town. In other battles of this type the Ottomans usually had some advantage in firepower as a result of their artillery, but this would have been nullified to some extent by the rebels’ possession of better rifles. It seems evident, likewise, that Rawḍa was too large to be easily destroyed by one or two pieces of artillery, no matter how powerful.

From our sources, then, it appears that the battle was decided by the rebels’ ability to direct a heavy volume of fire from protected and elevated positions against troops who were relatively more exposed, weaker in numbers, and unable to return fire at the same level. This was not, however, a battle where the Ottomans suffered a dramatic defeat. As a battle lasting twenty days, it was evidently a battle of attrition. Victory would go to the side which could most effectively drain the enemy of men, supplies, and morale in

795 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 238-39; Mehmet Tevfik Bey, Hıtaralar, 314.
extended fighting, and superior resources were consequently a key to victory. The Ottoman garrison in Ṣanʿāʾ did not possess these resources; and, probably realizing that they were losing more men than they could afford, the Ottoman commanders called off the operation.

Around Ṣanʿāʾ, then, rebel tactics were based in large part on the following pattern: heavy and extensive entrenchment in fortifications and strategic terrain by overwhelming numbers, coupled with judicious employment of their firepower. By means of such tactics they were able to prevent the garrison from breaking through the siege cordon; as yet, however, they had inflicted no catastrophic defeats on the Ottomans. This would change, however, when the first major expeditionary force was mobilized to go to the relief of Ṣanʿāʾ in the winter of 1905.

VII. Mobile Tactics and the Rout of Rıza Paşa’s Expeditionary Force.

From the battle of Rawḍa it is evident that the rebels could use their rifles effectively in stationary and defensive warfare; the rout of Rıza Paşa’s expeditionary force showed how far the rifle had transformed the characteristic mobile tactics of the ‘işābāt. Rıza Paşa’s troops were defeated through the rebels’ exploitation of the difficult terrain on the Ṣanʿāʾ-Manākha road as a theater of surprise and ambush, with periodic and sudden volleys of rifle fire against the Ottoman troops. Tactics based on harrassment rather than confrontation were required in this case, because Rıza Paşa’s force was large and well-armed enough to confront the rebels on relatively equal terms on the battlefield.
Rıza Paşa had arrived in Yemen in the middle of January, overseeing the gradual assembly of the relief force in Ḥudayda until the end of February. The total force to be mobilized consisted of five brigades, that is, 32 battalions or 25,600 men, furnished with a number of Mantelli field guns and mountain guns. The majority of the troops were from the Fifth Army in Syria; the remainder were from the Third and Fourth Armies, in Rumelia and Eastern Anatolia respectively.796

Because the Ṣan‘ā’ garrison was on the verge of starvation, however, Rıza Paşa had then hurried into the interior before the entire force had been made ready. The troops he took with him, however, were still comparatively impressive in terms of numbers and firepower. They consisted of 10 battalions totalling about 7-8,000 soldiers, and about 6-700 Ismā‘īlī auxiliaries from Ḥarāz and the Yām tribe of Najran.797

The Ottoman soldiers were armed with Mauser magazine rifles, and their artillery consisted of two Mantelli field guns and twelve mountain guns. A large baggage train was attached to the force, consisting of 200 camels, 200 mules, 200 oxen, and 2,000 untrained conscripts who were to carry flour.798 The size of this train was necessitated by the need to resupply the garrison of Ṣan‘ā’.

In terms of numbers and firepower, then, the force seemed to be a match for the Imām’s partisans. Rıza Paşa’s force, however, had a number of serious internal weaknesses, which were carefully enumerated by Ottoman contemporaries analyzing the reasons for its defeat. First, the soldiers were not properly trained in the use of their rifles. The soldiers of the Fifth Army had been armed with Martini-Henry rifles, and those of

796 Ahmed İzzet Paşa, Feryadım (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1992), 1:27.
797 İzzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1:30.
798 Ibid.
the Third Army with small caliber Mausers. At Ḥudayda, they had been given large
caliber Mauser rifles and then hurried on into the interior, without being properly shown
how to use them.\(^{799}\) This seriously compromised any advantage in firepower they had, as
the Yemeni rebels had considerable expertise in the use of their own rifles.

The men were not in good condition. They had marched over deserts and mountains
in the winter to reach their ports of embarkation, made a difficult sea journey in badly
overcrowded steamships, and then proceeded to the interior of Yemen without being
given adequate rest and food.\(^{800}\) Finally, the Syrian soldiers would show themselves to
be unreliable in fighting against fellow Arabs, as would the Yām auxiliaries when it
became clear that the Ottoman force was in serious difficulties. There seems to have
been little group cohesion in this heterogeneous force, and thus it would not act as a unit
in battle.

The force set out from Manākha on March 10. The order of march had been drawn up
by Rıza Paşa’s Chief of Staff, İzzet Paşa, and was based on the necessity of protecting
the column’s flanks from ambush when marching through the difficult terrain of Yemen.
The column was divided into vanguard, main force, and rearguard, with the baggage train
placed between the main force and the rearguard.

\(^{799}\) İzzet Paşa, *Feryadım*, 1:27. The small caliber Mauser, using a smokeless powder cartridge, was actually
a more advanced weapon than the large caliber Mauser, which fired a black powder cartridge. The variety
of small (7.65 mm) caliber Mauser used in the Ottoman Empire had a 5-round magazine and a muzzle
velocity of 625 meters per second; the large (9.5 mm) had an 8-round magazine, but a muzzle velocity of
535 meters per second. In 1887 the Ottoman government had ordered a large quantity of the latter, but
quickly switched to the small caliber pattern for its forces in Europe. Consequently, it had a large stock of
large caliber Mausers in storage; see Hogg and Weeks, *Arms*, 3.28-3.29. It appears that these large caliber
Mausers in storage were given to the soldiers of the Fourth Army in Rıza Paşa’s force, in preference to
their usual small caliber Mausers. Despite the seriousness of the rebellions in Yemen, the troops
dispatched there were consistently armed with outdated weapons.

While the column was on the march, small units were to be constantly detached from the vanguard and sent to occupy points on either side of the road, where the rebels might set ambushes. The units would remain at these points until the entire column had passed, when they would join the rearguard. During rest periods the excess troops in the rearguard would join the main force, and the deficit of troops in the vanguard would be made good. “In this manner our column would be marching constantly within a security cordon (emniyet kordonu).”

From Manākha to Mafhaq the march passed uneventfully. The problems began once the force began to wind its way up the chain of wādīs, fortified villages, and narrow passes from Mafhaq to Ṣan‘ā’. According to İzzet Paşa, the chief reason for the subsequent disaster was that his order of march was not adhered to. As a result of the uneventful march from Manākha to Mafhaq, some commanders became overconfident and allowed the organization of the column to deteriorate. The all-important security pickets were not posted; the three main bodies of the force lost contact with one another; and at one point, the majority of the soldiers became mixed up with the supply train. Seeing this, the Imām’s partisans took the opportunity to conduct a skillful running battle of ambushes and surprise attacks from the mountains flanking the road.

Exposed portions of the column were treated to repeated and well-aimed showers of rifle fire, to which they responded ineffectively. Hurrying to the scene of the first skirmish, İzzet Paşa found the rebels “firing in a well-ordered fashion” from a hill to the south of the road which the vanguard had neglected to occupy. As for the soldiers, they

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801 İzzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1:29.
802 İzzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1:30.
803 İzzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1:30-33.
had crouched down behind rocks and “were spraying gunfire in all directions with their eyes closed” (gözleri kapalı dört cihet e ateş püsküruyordu). The language used by İzzet Paşa implies battlefield discipline and experience on the part of the rebels, qualities which the soldiers in the expeditionary force evidently lacked.

Harrassment of this type was continuous and intense, and virtually impossible for the column to counter in its disordered condition. At times the rebels appeared in several different places to fire on the column, retreated when artillery or an assault force was brought up against them, and then reappeared elsewhere. The soldiers in consequence became increasingly panicked and demoralized. The cordon units abandoned their positions, and the Syrian troops in particular began to desert en masse to the rebels.

The fear created by continuous exposure to the rebel fire thus ate into the Ottoman column like acid, destroying whatever organization it had retained. The possession of rifles made the rebels’ tactics of mobile ambush far deadlier than they had been in the earlier years of war in Yemen, when an Ottoman column in difficulties could sometimes extricate itself by a single well-aimed volley of fire. The effect was compounded by the poor discipline of the Ottoman troops, and their inexperience in using the large caliber Mauser. The consummate skill of the rebels with their own weapons, coupled with an appropriate predatory sense of the enemy’s weakness, made Rıza Paşa’s soldiers easy victims for them.

The master stroke of the rebels came just before the column entered the plain around Şan‘ā’. The column was facing a long skirmishing line on the Yāzil ridge to the front, while other rebel forces were firing from several positions on the Ottoman flanks. As it

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happened, however, when the Ismāʿīlī auxiliaries advanced to the village of Yāzil they found it empty; there appeared to be a gap in the rebel skirmishing line. Consequently the column began to advance through this gap, to the south of the village of Yāzil. As the vanguard was passing, however, Rıza Paşa caught up with İzzet Paşa at the head of the main column and informed him that the baggage train had been captured by the rebels on the Yāzil ridge; the battalion detailed to protect it had fled without resisting.805

The evidence in this case suggests that the rebels had deliberately sprung a trap on the column. The rebels did not try to block the advance of the column or launch an encircling attack to cut it to pieces, something which might have been feasible given the fearful and agitated state of the soldiers. Rather, it is possible that the gap was left open deliberately, with the flanking attacks serving to funnel the column through, as it were, until the rebels could launch an assault on the main prize: the baggage train. Capture of the baggage train would, of course, defeat the entire purpose of the relief column, which was to resupply Şan‘ā‘. In this case, then, the tactics of the rebels were closely tailored to the strategic aims of the campaign as a whole, another indication of their increasing military sophistication.

The major objective of the Imām’s campaign, that of starving the Şan‘ā‘ garrison into surrender, was thus made feasible in part by the battlefield superiority the rebels had achieved over the Ottomans. The Ottoman forces seeking to resupply Şan‘ā‘ were blocked, pinned down at their destination, or virtually destroyed as fighting units. As the siege was prolonged in this fashion Şan‘ā‘’s scanty stores of food dwindled to nothing, and the garrison was forced to capitulate.

805 İzzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1:35-36.
The battlefield superiority of the rebels, however, was simply one component in the success of this strategy. The other was the Imām’s possession of material resources which were vastly superior to those of the Seventh Army, the grain and money left to him by al-Manṣūr. He could support his warriors during the months of fighting, while the Seventh Army could not. The Imām had thus achieved logistical as well as tactical and strategic superiority over the Seventh Army; and this would enable him to gain the victory (at least temporarily) in his prolonged war of attrition against the Ottoman forces.

VIII. The Imām’s Treasury and Victory through Starvation.

We have noted that al-Manṣūr had worked assiduously to increase the revenues of the Bayt al-Māl, and in consequence his son had inherited extensive stores of grain and money on his accession. These stores were particularly crucial for the Imām, because as it happened 1904 and 1905 were years of severe famine, with mass starvation in the countryside. In the midst of this, the stores left by al-Manṣūr enabled Imām Yahyā to maintain his partisans continuously in the field for the entire year of the rebellion.

Al-Wāsiʿī noted that during the rebellion vast numbers of people died of starvation in the villages. If shiploads of grain had not come from Ethiopia and the Sudan “the people would have been destroyed all at once, and not a remnant would have been left, except for he who was a soldier (jund) for the Imām.”806 In February 1905, the governor of

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806 al-Wāsiʿī, 300.
Yemen learned that the rebels in the Kawkabān region had enough grain and money to last a year.\textsuperscript{807}

By contrast, the Ottomans were woefully unprepared. On his arrival in Şan‘ā’, Tevfik Bey was met by a delegation from the Commandant of the Seventh Army Abdüllah Paşa, who informed him that unless something was done immediately the soldiers would go hungry the following day.\textsuperscript{808} The Seventh Army’s Bureau of Supplies may have been negligent, corrupt, greatly pressed to keep up with current expenses, or a combination of all three. “No importance was given to the storage of even several days’ provisions for the troops; instead, the grain which was received was accounted for salaries, and...used up in other ways.”\textsuperscript{809} Drought and unrest in the countryside made it increasingly difficult to obtain supplies locally through taxation, and difficult to find animals to transport the food brought by sea from elsewhere.

The drought, and the differential between his own supplies and those of the Ottomans, probably determined the main outlines of the Imām’s strategy. Thanks to the drought, he had virtually unlimited men at his disposal;\textsuperscript{810} thanks to al-Manṣūr, he had the material resources to support them. The Seventh Army, as always, was desperately short of both both. In this situation, a strategy of attrition through starvation was eminently feasible for the Imām.

The strategy was highly successful. Şan‘ā’ was besieged from 2nd December 1904 to the the middle of April in 1905; and because of the lack of food, both the Ottomans and

\textsuperscript{807} Mehmet Tevfik Bey, \textit{Hatıralar}, 1:303.
\textsuperscript{808} Mehmet Tevfik Bey, \textit{Hatıralar}, 1:280-81.
\textsuperscript{809} Mehmet Tevfik Bey, \textit{Hatıralar}, 1:304.
\textsuperscript{810} In times of drought the tribesmen were wont to take service with the Imām, as they could not support themselves by sowing their fields.
the local inhabitants suffered great hardships. The bread ration of the troops of Şan‘ā’
was progressively reduced to one-third and one-fourth. When the bread was gone, they
ate camels and horses; and when that was gone, dogs and cats.\footnote{Mehmet Tevfik Bey, *Haturalar*, 1:301, 306, 322.} As the stores in Şan‘ā’
ran out, the garrison turned to corrupt individuals in the Imām’s army to meet their needs.
The governor Tevfik Bey was at one point subsisting off a large bag of walnuts obtained
in this fashion. Years later, he told his grandson that in the worst days of the siege he had
begun to watch the frogs in a nearby pond intently, thinking that they might be his last
food.\footnote{Mehmet Tevfik Bey, *Haturalar*, 1:306; al-Wāsi‘ī, 300.}

For the citizens of Şan‘ā’, the situation was worse. Soldiers and police broke into
private houses and confiscated whatever food was there.\footnote{al-Wāsi‘ī, 300.} People sold their possessions
to buy food, and many families died. Aubrey Herbert, visiting Şan‘ā’ after Ottoman
control had been restored in 1905, describes conditions in the Jewish quarter as follows:
“many of the men were still skin and bone, and the crowd of dark faces with cavernous
cheeks, half-hidden by twisted, black elf-locks that hung on either side, begging eyes and
clutching hands, were [sic] horrible.”\footnote{Aubrey Herbert, *Ben Kendim* 2nd ed., edited Desmond McCarthy (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Ltd., 1925), 68.}

It does not appear that the condition of the outlying towns and military posts was any
better. The soldiers in the outposts on the Şan‘ā’-Manākha road would slaughter their
last animals for food, and then flee or surrender to the rebels.\footnote{Mehmet Tevfik Bey, *Haturalar*, 1:300-301, 306.} In early February, the
Kaymakam of Kawkabān communicated to Tevfik Bey that he had only a seventeen days’ supply of water for the troops stationed there.\textsuperscript{816}

As a result of the lack of food, the garrison towns in the highlands collapsed like a house of cards. “The storehouses [belonging to the Imām] were numerous and the grain therein abundant, and by means of that the Imām took over the [government] centers of Yemen, winning the victory over the Turks” (fakānat buyūt al-amwāl wa’l-ḥubūb bihā kathīra, wa bi-dhalika istalama al-Imām marākiz al-Yaman wa intaṣara ‘alā al-atrāk).\textsuperscript{817} Ṣanʿā’ capitulated in mid-April, after the arrival of Rīza Paşa’s force had made the situation there impossible. ‘Amrān, Dhamār, Yarīm, Ḥajja, Kawkabān, and Miswār likewise fell. On 17th May 1905, Tevfik Bey reported to the Minister of the Interior that every kaza of the sancak of Ṣanʿā’ had fallen, with the exception of some places in Ḥarāz.\textsuperscript{818}

In short, the Imām’s forces had won a complete victory over the Ottomans in the Zaydī regions of Yemen; and this victory was the result of years of preparation and determined struggle by al-Manṣūr. Al-Manṣūr had steadily built up the authority of his tribal quasi-state and turned it into an instrument for waging a prolonged guerrilla war against the Ottomans. This in turn enabled his son Yaḥyā to fight the campaigns of 1904 and 1905 as a systematic campaign of attrition. This capacity to wage a this kind of campaign on a massive scale was not something the Ottomans had ever had to deal with before in Yemen; and to restore the status quo, they would have to resort to a strategy of attrition themselves.

\textsuperscript{816} Mehmet Tevfik Bey, \textit{Hatıralar}, 1:310.

\textsuperscript{817} al-Wāsi’ī, 300-301.

\textsuperscript{818} Mehmet Tevfik Bey, \textit{Hatıralar}, 1:351-52.
IX. Feyzi Paşa’s Second Reconquest of the Highlands.

In siege war and battles in the field, a campaign of attrition may be defined as a contest of resources. Each side hurls massive quantities of men and firepower at the other, in the hope of overwhelming or exhausting its adversary; the side which wins is the one that possesses sufficient resources to hold out the longest. We cannot, of course, describe the reconquest of the highlands in 1905 as a campaign of attrition in the sense used for the campaigns of World War I. The rebels still could not meet a really large and well-armed Ottoman expeditionary force on equal terms, and they were accustomed to tactics of harassment, defense, and withdrawal. As compared to a conventional campaign in Europe, the reconquest of the highlands was relatively swift and easy.

When we discuss Feyzi Paşa’s campaign as a campaign of attrition, however, we are speaking in relative terms; that is, it had certain characteristics of attritional warfare which made it markedly different from the expeditions of 1872 and 1891. In 1891, the emphasis was on swift marches by small mobile columns, which could break up poorly armed concentrations of rebels with relative ease owing to their superior firepower; it was a strategy of “lightning blows” aimed at the swift relief of the besieged cities of Yemen. 819

In 1905, Feyzi Paşa had to deal with a rebel army which had actually captured the major cities, was often strongly entrenched in fortified positions, and possessed considerable quantities of artillery that they had captured from the Ottomans. Therefore,

819 See Chapter 5, 292 ff.
in 1905 the emphasis was on a “juggernaut” strategy in which the Ottoman forces would bludgeon the rebel forces into submission in a slow, step-by-step campaign.

The force at Feyzi Paşa’s disposal was over four times as large as the expeditionary force of 1891, and possessed considerably greater firepower. In 1891, the Şan‘ā’ relief force numbered approximately 6-7,000 men, who were armed with single shot Martini-Henry rifles. In 1905 Feyzi Paşa had about 48 battalions under his command—that is, almost 40,000 men—together with 20,000 new conscripts to reconstitute the battalions of the Seventh Army. The soldiers were armed with Mauser rifles, which seem to have been of the large caliber variety. The force also possessed a considerable number of field and mountain guns.

As in 1891, considerable use was made of converging columns to restore local security. In that year, however, these columns had often consisted of only 400-800 men, that is, one or two battalions at the battalion strength of the time. In the 1904 rebellion, many columns consisted of five battalions or more. When Feyzi Paşa’s forces advanced against the rebels in the Manākha region, they did so in two columns of of five and six battalions each; and when Feyzi Paşa set out to restore Ottoman control in the northwest, he did so with a force of eight battalions.

The length of the campaign to restore Ottoman control had increased in similar proportion. In 1891, it took Feyzi Paşa approximately one month to restore Ottoman

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820 See Chapter 5, 293-294.
822 Al-Washali states that the Mausers of Feyzi Paşa’s expeditionary force could fire ten rounds at a time. This is more consistent with the capacity (8 rounds) of the large caliber Ottoman Mauser than the small (5 rounds). See al-Washali, *Dhayl*, 69.
823 See Chapter 5, 294-295.
control in the Zaydī highlands from the time of his arrival in Ḫūdayda. In 1905, it would take him over four months. The major towns of the highlands were only retaken by mid-October, about the time that the rebellion had begun in earnest in 1904.

The “attritional” aspects of Feyzi Paşa’s campaign were most evident on the march to Ṣan‘ā’. Feyzi Paşa had arrived in Ḫūdayda on June 1, 1905. In 1891 the objective had been to relieve Ṣan‘ā’ as quickly as possible. Therefore he had set out for Ṣan‘ā’ on the day after his arrival, going ahead of his supply train. Now, however, the objective was to retake Ṣan‘ā’. Since this could involve a lengthy siege, Feyzi Paşa would have to reestablish complete control of the Ṣan‘ā’-Ḫūdayda route, so supplies and men could be brought up as needed. This meant clearing the road of the rebels who had established themselves in force there.

To do this, Feyzi Paşa would employ the “juggernaut” strategy we have noted. As it happened, Ṣan‘ā’ itself would be retaken with comparative ease. To clear the Ṣan‘ā’-Ḫūdayda road, however, would take approximately one month. In this campaign, Feyzi Paşa adopted a two-stage system of advance. First, a base would be established, and a large quantity of men, equipment, and supplies concentrated there. Second, the Ottoman troops would advance against the enemy positions on the section of the route east of the base, usually in several well-manned and heavily armed columns. Once the rebels were cleared from that section of the route, the base would be moved forward, and the process begun again. It was understood that battles might be hard fought and exhausting.

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825 See Chapter 5, 294-295.
826 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:252.
828 See Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:245-52.
Therefore, Feyzi Paşa could not afford to risk losing contact with his supply lines as he had in 1891.

The first base, of course, was Ḥudayda. Feyzi Paşa spent the entire month of June organizing his force and its supply train there, making sure that he had a sufficient number of mules and other beasts of burden to carry his supplies. On June 29, he set out for Ṣanʿā'.\(^{829}\) On the highland section of the road, the supply base was moved four times: first to Manākha, then to Bayt an-Najd, then to Sūq al-Khamīs, and finally to Sinan Paşa. In between there were intervals of fighting, growing progressively longer and harder as Feyzi’s force approached Ṣanʿā’.

In the fighting on this march, the tactics employed were partially derived from those developed by Feyzi Paşa during his years of service in Yemen: bold assaults against the rebel positions, coupled with attempts to surround their forces. When combined with heavy barrages of rifle and artillery fire, these tactics had been deadly to the poorly armed tribal armies of 1891, and comparatively easy victories had resulted.\(^{830}\)

Because the rebels had almost achieved a parity of firepower and discipline in 1905, however, battles of this type could turn into prolonged and brutal slugging matches. This was not inevitably the case, and particularly at the beginning of the campaign, the rebels sometimes fled after offering only a token resistance. The closer the Ottomans got to Ṣanʿā’, however, the stiffer resistance became. The climax came at Yāzil, where the Ottomans had to bring up men and artillery in massive quantities to punch their way through a heavily entrenched rebel force. This battle is particularly interesting, as it


\(^{830}\) See Chapter 5, 297 ff.
shows how the increased firepower on both sides could transform mobile tactical patterns into stationary and attritional ones.

Feyzi Paşa’s second-in-command, Şakir Paşa, had been detailed to go up to the post of Sinan Paşa. The column accompanying him consisted of seven battalions, six mountain guns, and two Mantelli field guns. The road was intersected by the wādī of Yāzil; and on the eastern edge of this wādī, the rebels had set up an extended line of defense (hatt-i müdafāa), with emplacements for artillery. The line of defense began at the summit of Jabal Shu‘ayb and ended at the village of Bayt Sha‘bān, a distance of two hours. On the western side of the wādī, they had taken the three villages of Bayt Qaramānī, Bi‘l-Mufaḍḍal, and az-Zahr as forward positions (ileri mevzi), together with the ridges on which they were located.831

Here then, the rebels employed a traditional principle of Yemeni warfare: maximum exploitation of difficult terrain and local fortifications for the purpose of defense. What was new was, in the first instance, the rebels’ possession of the Ottoman artillery they had captured. This would enable them to do something which had previously been rare in Yemeni warfare: concentrate men and firepower in field fortifications for an extended battle in the open with a heavily armed Ottoman force, relying almost strictly on defensive tactics.

In 1891, in battles such as the battle of ‘Aṣur,832 there had been a tendency to combine mobile surrounding tactics with stationary defense. The rebels would occupy key fortifications directly on the army’s path, while launching surrounding attacks from the

831 Atif Paşa, Yemen, 2:250-51.
832 See Chapter 5, 298-299. The battle of ‘Aṣur played the role in 1891 of the battle of Yāzil in 1905; that is, it was the last battle on Feyzi Paşa’s march to Ṣan‘ā’, and the one where the rebels offered the most stubborn resistance.
ridges on its flanks. Because of their poor armament, they could not rely solely on purely
defensive tactics in the field, where the Ottoman artillery would have made short work of
them.

At Yâzil, however, they had clearly dug in for a stationary battle, based on defense in
depth. The line of defense was extended so that the key peaks and ridges on both sides of
the road were occupied. In the center, the Ottomans had three obstacles to cross: the
forward positions in the villages, the wâdî of Yâzil itself, and the line of defense on the
eastern slope of the wâdî. The defenses may have been made as long and deep as they
had to prevent a surrounding attack by the Ottoman forces, to deny them an easy victory
and compel them to engage in a grueling battle to force their passage.

This was exactly what happened. To break through this position, Şakir Paşa would
have his troops make a frontal assault combined with a surrounding action. One battalion
made an assault on the village of Bi’l-Mufaḍḍal, one attacked the rebel positions from the
north side of the road, and two others made their attack from the ridges to the south. In
doing this, he was employing tactics which had been perfected by Feyzi Paşa in his years
of conducting military operations in Yemen.

The norm for Feyzi Paşa’s expeditionary force in 1891 was to divide an assault force
to attack the enemy positions from several places at once. This acted to counter
surround-and-surprise tactics by the rebels, and facilitate their employment by the
Ottoman force; and quick victories could result if the rebels were successfully
outmanoeuvred in this fashion. At Yâzil, however, the length and the depth of the
rebels’ defenses would not allow Şakir Paşa to surround the rebel force as a whole. It
appears that this initial assault was directed at the rebels’ forward positions alone, and this exposed them to very heavy fire from the rebels’ main defense line in the rear.

By noon of that day, Bi’l-Mufäḍḍal and Bayt Qaramānī had been occupied, but the rebels still held their other positions. Thus “[the rebels] in a final stubborn and savage despair, undertook an intense rifle and artillery fire,” and continued to resist the Ottoman assault until evening. Despite the fact that “shrapnel and shells (gülle) were being poured down like rain [from the rebel positions],” however, the Ottomans managed to take the final forward position of az-Ẓahr after sunset.833

The fighting was difficult enough that Şakir Paşa felt the need for additional troops. The details of that day’s battle were communicated to Feyzi Paşa, and reinforcements requested. On the following day, then, seven battalions, two field guns, and four mountain guns were sent up to join Şakir Paşa’s force; and on 21 August, four battalions finally succeeded in crossing the wāḍī of Yazil. Evidently Sakir Paşa’s force broke through the final defense line on the next day, for Atıf Paşa records that the Ottomans took the village of Bayt Sha‘bān and a portion of the Sinan Paşa plain at that time.

It took two more days of fighting, however, before the entire plain and the military post of Sinan Paşa were finally brought under control; this was on 24 August.834 By that time, the fighting had gone on for almost a week. By contrast, the battle of ‘Aṣur in 1891 lasted for only one day, and the forces engaged on the Ottoman side would not have

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833 Atıf Paşa, Yemen, 2:251.
834 Atıf Paşa, Yemen, 2:251-52.
numbered over eight battalions.\textsuperscript{835} It is evident that the battle was not won by manoeuvre and surprise, but by hard fighting, with men and firepower in massive quantity.

The battle at Yāzil marked the end of serious resistance by the rebels in the Ṣan‘ā’ campaign. The Imām’s garrison at Ṣan‘ā’ put up relatively little resistance. The Ottoman force was able to get inside the wall through the connivance of the shaykh of the quarter of Bi’r al-‘Azab, and the Imām’s partisans fled. This was at the end of August, two months after Feyzi Paşa’s arrival in Ḥudayda, and one month after he had set out for Ṣan‘ā’.\textsuperscript{836}

It would, however, take Feyzi Paşa another month to restore control elsewhere in the highlands; and when he marched north to crush the Imām once and for all, his forces were routed in a major defeat before the fortress of Shihāra. In 1905, Feyzi Paşa would only restore the status quo, as he had done in the 1891 rebellion. This, as we have seen, required many more troops than in 1891. The character of war in Yemen had been transformed by al-Manṣūr and his son Yahyā; and with this transformation, the costs of maintaining control in Yemen had become increasingly prohibitive for the Ottomans.

\textbf{Conclusion.}

The 1904 rebellion was the culmination of the trends in warfare which al-Manṣūr had set in motion: employment of the ‘iṣābāt as a tool to mobilize the population and harrass the government, the stockpiling of grain and money in his storehouses to fund the jihād, the

\textsuperscript{835} See Chapter 5, 298-299.
\textsuperscript{836} Kuneralp, “Operations,” 69.
acquisition of modern rifles, and adoption of a long-term strategy of guerrilla war to replace the short-term tribal uprisings of the past.

In consequence, his son Imām Yahyā was able to raise an insurrection which had all the characteristics of a planned military campaign, rather than a partially spontaneous explosion of popular anger. The employment of the ‘iṣābāt to conduct the campaign gave him greater control over its overall direction, as well as furnishing him with a body of well-armed professional warriors who were experienced in fighting the Ottoman armies. In 1905, in contrast to 1891, there was a higher level of strategic planning, better control of the process of mobilization, better command and control of the Imām’s armies on the battlefield, better weaponry, and more sophisticated tactics. This, combined with the massive stores of grain bequeathed to him by al-Manṣūr, allowed Imām Yaḥyā to wage a sustained campaign of attrition to drive the Ottomans from the Zaydī regions of Yemen.

The 1904 rebellion thus signalled a major transformation in the essential character of war in Yemen, which I have summed up in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War and Rebellion 1872-1891</th>
<th>War and Rebellion 1891-1905</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmented by tribe and region</td>
<td>Supra-tribal mobilization through the ‘iṣābāt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited goals</td>
<td>“Total” goal-expulsion of Ottomans from Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-Date Weaponry</td>
<td>Up-to Date Weaponry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2. The Transformation of War in Yemen.**

The Imāms and their men had created an increasingly sophisticated system of war out of a warrior culture, in response to the challenge posed by the Ottoman state. A state which had adopted the rationalized methods of war in Europe, in essence, forced its opponent to respond in kind in order to survive. Except in the case of weaponry, however, the Imāms did not directly “borrow” European methods of war, through the Ottomans or anyone else. They fashioned their system from the indigenous methods of war in Yemen, and the immediate exigencies of confrontation with the Ottoman armies.

The development of more sophisticated techniques of warfare by the Imām’s partisans forced the Ottomans to expend ever-increasing resources to maintain their grip on Yemen, at the same time as they were confronted by increasingly serious military threats elsewhere. This in turn would ultimately lead the Ottomans to a political, rather than a military, solution to the war in Yemen. After the 1908 rebellion the problem of Yemen would become a subject of open discussion among the Ottoman elite; and İzzet Paşa, who
had witnessed the waste and expense of the 1905 campaigns, would ultimately formulate the policies which brought about a permanent peace with the Imām.
Here, we will bring our study to a close, for the bloody defeat at Shihāra marked the end of what we have described as the slide toward total war in Yemen. The specific dynamic on which we have focused, the escalation of conflict in consequence of policy aims based on the destruction of the enemy, came to an end in 1905. The Ottomans recognized that they could not destroy the Imamate, and instead began to seek a compromise based on autonomy for the Zaydīs. Guerrilla war did continue, culminating in a final major insurrection in 1911. The efforts at negotiation undertaken in this period, however, were more politically significant in the long run. The 1911 rebellion ended with the conclusion of a peace treaty between the Imām and the Ottomans, which lasted until the end of Ottoman rule in Yemen.

As an epilogue to our analysis of war in Yemen, then, we will briefly discuss the process of negotiation which culminated in this peace treaty. This process lies outside the theoretical framework of our study, and we will do no more than summarize it here. Nonetheless, it is important to understand its main points; for, if we have focused on the failure of Ottoman “total war” policy to bring peace and security to Yemen, the developments after Shihāra show us what kind of policy ultimately succeeded. This will allow us to conclude with a discussion of the larger lessons of the Ottoman experience in Yemen, which are not without relevance to the security problems of our own day.
We will begin by analyzing the political context of the Young Turk era in which the peace agreement was finally concluded. The revolution of 1908 allowed a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between center and periphery in the Empire, in which two competing currents of thought emerged. Both had the same goal, that of saving the Empire from further disintegration and conquest by foreign powers. The decentralist current emphasized political autonomy and cultural rights for the various ethnic groups of the Empire as the best means of achieving internal stability.

By contrast, the statist current focused on centralization and employment of the Turkish language as a means of ensuring the unity of the Ottoman polity. It was this ideology, espoused by the Committee of Union and Progress as the ruling party, which would ultimately triumph. The CUP’s thought represented in practice a further evolution of the centralizing and proto-nationalist policies which had drawn the Hamidian regime into total conflict with the Zaydi Imamate. This kind of policy, in conjunction with the rising internal and external conflict associated with “phase two” of the nineteenth century firepower revolution, would eventually draw the Empire into World War I.

If this was the case, then why was the trend toward total war between the Zaydīs and the Ottomans successfully halted in a period where it was escalating on other fronts? In essence, we will show that the liberal wing of the Young Turk opposition had enough influence in the early years of the Revolution to decisively influence Ottoman policy in Yemen. We have noted that negotiations with the Imām had begun even before 1908; and in the early years of the Young Turk revolution, autonomy for the Imamate was broadly favored as a political solution to the Zaydī rebellion.
This trend was briefly reversed when hard-line nationalists in the Young Turk government increased their power after a failed counter-revolution in Istanbul, and attempted to impose harshly centralizing policies on Yemen once again; and these policies resulted in a final major insurrection by the İmām’s partisans in 1911. The general who was appointed to put down this insurrection, however, was broadly sympathetic to the decentralists; and this general, Ahmet İzzet Paşa, was subsequently able to negotiate a peace agreement that gave political autonomy and cultural rights to the Zaydīs. The trend toward military-bureaucratic centralization and monolithic nationalism which had compelled the Ottoman state to wage total war against the Imamate was thereby halted, allowing Zaydīs and Ottomans to enjoy good relations until the end of Ottoman rule.

We will conclude with a brief discussion of the broader lessons to be drawn from the Ottoman experience in Yemen. Here, we wish to stress the failure of a total war policy to achieve peace and security in Yemen, and the likelihood of failure in similar wars in the present. Peace was only achieved by a pragmatic compromise with the rebels in the Treaty of Da‘ān, representing both a return to the traditional policy of respecting the autonomy of local elites, and a modernizing liberalism emphasizing administrative decentralization. We will argue that a similar pragmatism, emphasizing a willingness to negotiate and attention to underlying political grievances, is essential in dealing with violent opposition to the state and the international order in the present.
I. The Context of the Young Turk Revolution.

The Hamidian regime would last for only three years after the 1904 rebellion, and the final denouement of the war in Yemen took place within the political and ideological context of the Young Turk revolution. That the cycle of violence should have been halted in Yemen is surprising, as in most regards the Young Turk period witnessed an intensification of the trends which drew the Ottoman Empire into total war: external conflict and internal rebellion, the spread of weapons, centralization under an increasingly bureaucratized state, and monolithic nationalism.

First, the Young Turk period witnessed the climax of what we have described as phase two of the nineteenth century firepower revolution: the race toward the destructive internal and external conflicts of World War I, in which the imperial monarchies of eastern Europe would be destroyed, and the newer colonial empires of Western Europe fatally weakened. Apart from the Greek War of 1897, Abülhamid had managed to keep the Empire out of foreign conflicts by adroit manipulation of regional and great power rivalries. Yet throughout his reign internal revolt in the Empire became ever more serious, fuelled by the rifled small arms which began flooding into the Middle East, even as imperial rivalries sharpened among the European nations.

In the Arabian Peninsula and the Red Sea region, a complicated pattern of rivalries developed among the French, British, Italians, and Germans. The most aggressively expansionist power in this region was Italy, which had seized control of Eritrea and much of Somalia, and had ambitions in Yemen. The Italians provoked repeated confrontations

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837 Tahsin Paşa, Abdülhamid, 85.
with the Ottoman authorities on the coast of Yemen, on the pretext of attacks by Yemeni pirates against their subjects. As Ottoman allies, the Germans were meanwhile attempting to expand their influence toward Arabia through the construction of the Baghdad railway, and the establishment of a coaling station for German ships on the island of Fursân, off the coast of Yemen. The British thus drew increasingly close to the Italians as a means of checking the expansion of French and German influence in the region.  

The 1908 revolution played a significant role in drawing the European states into open war with the Empire to realize their ambitions. Political instability at the Porte after the 1908 Revolution upset the equilibrium established by Abdülhamid in foreign affairs, tempting adventurism by the European states, and causing the relatively inexperienced Young Turk rulers to draw closer to Germany to protect the Empire. Italy went to war with the Ottoman Empire in 1911, successfully seizing control of Libya. Encouraged by the Italian success, the Balkan states of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro formed the Balkan league and invaded the Empire in 1912, seizing Macedonia from the Ottomans and dividing it among themselves.

These invasions were preceded and accompanied by covert support to rebels against Ottoman authority in the conflict areas. The Balkan War of 1912 was the culmination of a long insurgency in Macedonia dating back to the 1890’s, in which the neighboring states had supplied the various Macedonian rebel organizations with arms, money, and bases. In the Ottoman-Italian War, the Italians provided weapons and supplies to a rebel on the coast of ‘Asīr called Muḥammad al-Idrisī, scion of a locally prominent family.

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838 Farah, Yemen, 195 ff.
839 Jelavich, Establishment, 216-221.
which had founded the Şüfi brotherhood of the Idrisiyya. Al-Wasiti implies, in fact, that al-Idrisi had begun his rebellion at the urging of Italy. The heavy cannon which he obtained from the Italians enabled him to win important victories in the Ottoman Tihama. Later the Idrisi would ally with the English, fighting against the Ottomans in World War I along with the other Arabian rebels whom they supported.\textsuperscript{840}

The Ottomans were victims of World War I rather than agents, unable to escape entanglement in the Great Power rivalries that actually caused the war. Nonetheless, Ottoman involvement in this war and the regional wars preceding it was facilitated by the transformation of the Ottoman state in the Young Turk period. The bureaucratic and nationalist ideas in the Ottoman Empire, whose emergence we have traced in the Tanzimat and Hamidian periods, finally triumphed over the “traditional” sultanic absolutism on which the regime of Abdülhamid was based. The Islamic and paternalist traditions of sultanic absolutism which had served to moderate the violence of the Hamidian regime now gave way entirely to a ruthless focus on the supremacy of the bureaucratic state.

The Committee of Union and Progress, which ultimately established itself as the dominant party of the Young Turk opposition movement, represented in part a continuation of the German-influenced statist and nationalist thought which had influenced Abdülhamid’s pan-Islamic policies.\textsuperscript{841} To preserve the Ottoman Empire and

\textsuperscript{840} Izzet Paşa, \textit{Feryadın}, 1:105-106.

\textsuperscript{841} See, for example, Karpat’s discussion of Namık Kemal’s thought as an influence on the Young Turks. Kemal’s thought was essentially corporatist. The state, representing and defending the national community, was given priority over the individual; the individual existed to serve the state. While Kemal viewed Islam rather than Turkish nationalism as the fundamental Ottoman political identity, he did advocate the “Turkification” of Ottoman Muslims as a means of strengthening this cultural and religious bond. Karpat, \textit{Politicization}, 357-358.
its territorial integrity, the central state must be supreme. Therefore, the control of the
government over the provinces should be expanded, and administrative uniformity
imposed. Such ideas may have been strengthened by the organization of the CUP itself
as a highly centralized and secretive revolutionary organization, dominated by Ottoman
military officers stationed in Macedonia.842

This central state was to represent the national community, ensuring (and, if necessary,
imposing) national unity. Here, current scholarship differs on exactly how the CUP
conceived this community. It is clear that “national identity” to the ideologues of the
CUP was composed of Ottoman, Turkish, and Islamic elements. In Şükrü Hainioğlu’s
view, Turkish nationalism was the dominant element of CUP ideology from an early
period.843 Hasan Kayalı, however, argues that the Turkish-nationalist orientation of the
CUP has been overstated. In his view, the CUP emphasized Ottoman identity and unity.
An emphasis was placed on Turkish as the official language of government in the context
of the CUP’s centralizing policies. This emphasis, however, was essentially
“Ottomanist” in purpose. The Turkish language was to serve as a primary cultural bond
holding the Muslim ethnic groups of the Empire together, rather than as a reflection of
the cultural domination of the Turks.844 Whatever the exact degree of Turkish
nationalism in CUP ideology, the Young Turk period did mark a watershed in the
evolution of Abdülhamid’s pan-Islamic “proto-nationalism” toward the explicitly secular
nationalism of the Republic of Turkey.

842 For a detailed analysis of the restructuring of the Committee of Union and Progress as a highly efficient
revolutionary organization, see M. Şükrü Hainioğlu, Preparation for a Revolution (Oxford: Oxford
843 Hainioğlu, Preparation, 173 ff., 295 ff.
844 Hasan Kayalı, Arabs and Young Turks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 77-79, 82 ff.
In this context, the “politicization of Islam” which had been so marked under Abdülhamid was taken a step further. Young Turk thinkers such as Ahmet Rıza were “Islamist,” in the sense that they believed Islam to be a key instrument in strengthening awareness of Turkish national identity and preserving the social order. They themselves, however, were generally not personally devout or even religious. Islam was a tool to strengthen the state and the nation, rather than vice versa.

The close links of the Committee of Progress and Union with the Prussian-trained army no doubt accentuated the resulting orientation toward discipline, hierarchy, and repressive militarism. We have seen that the works of Colmar von der Goltz had been readily available to the officers of the Military Academy in Abdülhamid’s time; and the thinkers associated with the CUP appear to have been influenced by his ideas, directly or indirectly. In The Nation in Arms, von der Goltz focused on the right of the militarized state to dominate society and exploit its resources to achieve its own political ends.

Similarly, Ahmet Rıza Bey developed the idea of a military elite that would dominate the state in the larger interest of the Ottoman “nation.” This elite would impose an ordered society in which the unitary interests of the nation would take precedence over fractious and self-interested local politics. Likewise, the ruling officer class would undertake the defense of the homeland and the guidance of the masses toward a progressive and modern social order. Lacking initiative and closely bound by “traditional” values, Ahmet Rıza believed that the Ottoman peasant masses were incapable of undertaking this role themselves, and that therefore their political role

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845 Hanioğlu, Preparation, 305-308.
should be limited. Only the officer elite could preserve and strengthen the Empire, enabling it to take its rightful place among the nations of the modern world.847

Such ideas were further strengthened by the increasing closeness of the CUP government to Kaiser Wilhelm’s Germany. The Germanophile Enver Paşa, who had been a member of the CUP’s Internal Headquarters before the Revolution in Macedonia, became the Ottoman Minister of War after leading a coup in 1913. As one of the three principal rulers of the Empire after this coup, he shaped Ottoman military policy thereafter. Enver, it appears, was deeply influenced by the militarist-nationalism, exaltation of heroic violence, and rejection of conventional morality which was influential among German thinkers of the time. Ultimately, he would play a key role in bringing the Empire into World War I on Germany’s side, and carrying out the genocide of the Armenians in Anatolia.848

If the statist, nationalist, and militarist policies of the Young Turks tended generally to accelerate the Empire’s race toward total war, then why was the Zaydı conflict resolved peacefully in their time? The answer lies partially in the existence of a countervailing current of thought in the opposition to Abdülhamid’s rule, which was ultimately defeated by the nationalists of the CUP, but had enough influence in the early years of the Revolution to decisively influence Ottoman policy in Yemen.

The chief ideologue of this movement was Prince Sabahaddin, a nephew of Abdülhamid who had joined the Young Turk opposition movement in 1899, when it was still in a relatively inchoate stage in terms of organization. Prince Sabahaddin had the

847 Mardin, Fikirler, 155-160.
848 For an account of Enver Paşa’s German sympathies and personal outlook, see Henry Morgenthau, Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story (Garden City: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1918), 30-32.
same fundamental concern as the CUP, to strengthen the Empire internally and thereby rescue it from disintegration and conquest. He believed, however, that this would best be secured by allowing cultural and political autonomy for the various peoples of the Empire, rather than the centralist policies of the CUP. In 1905, then, he founded the League of Private Initiative and Decentralization to advance his political goals. Although the League was merged with the CUP after the 1908 Revolution, the decentralists quickly reconstituted themselves as a loyal opposition in the Ahrar (Liberty) party. Later reorganized as the Hürriyet ve İtilaf (Liberty and Entente) party, it constituted a formidable opposition to the CUP until the Committee crushed its opponents by violence in World War I.849

Prince Sabahaddin’s central ideas constituted in many regards the antithesis of the ideas of the CUP. First, Prince Sabahaddin explicitly opposed the corporatist model of social organization (teşekkül-i tecemmü’i) espoused by the CUP in favor of an individualist model (teşekkül-i infiradi) derived from Anglo-American culture. In fact, he contended, the fundamental problem of Ottoman society was its historically corporatist character. Ottomans were socialized to view themselves as part of a larger group, rather than as individuals; as members of a village or family community and subjects of the state, rather than as autonomous persons making their own destinies. This stifled individual initiative, and specifically the economic initiative which Prince Sabahaddin viewed as the key element in the strength of the Anglo-Saxon world.

Secondly, Prince Sabahaddin opposed the statism which, in his view, was the logical outgrowth of the corporatist social model. Corporatist societies were dominated by the

849 Hasan Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 38, 116 ff., 178. 422
bureaucratic and paternalistic state, constituting the community writ large. People looked to the state to provide them with a living as they did the community, and the state was the only avenue of social advancement. The result was a society dominated by a suffocating bureaucracy, which served to further stifle individual initiative and keep Turkey weak with respect to the European powers.850

Thirdly, Prince Sabahaddin advocated political decentralization (adem-i merkeziyet) on the English model as a result of his suspicion of the bureaucratic state.851 Persons from among the local elite, particularly those who had distinguished themselves in private enterprise, should be given an extensive role in provincial government. Officials sent from the center should not be shifted from one position to the next, but allowed time to familiarize themselves with the regions where they were appointed. The security forces should be placed under the control of the local authorities, to prevent them from committing abuses against the population.852

Finally, Prince Sabahaddin stressed cultural and political autonomy for the non-Turkish peoples of the Empire, a logical outgrowth of his decentralist ideas. This, he believed, was the best way to reduce the threat of ethnic separatism, and replace the nationalist enmities of the Empire’s peoples with the bonds of friendship and common purpose. Prince Sabahaddin’s efforts before the revolution were aimed at achieving a rapprochement between the Young Turk and Armenian nationalist opposition movements to Abdülhamid on this basis, and in this he enjoyed a partial success. Between 1905 and 1907 the League and the Armenian Dashnaksutian Party cooperated in raising a series of

851 Prens Sabahaddin, Türkiye, 41-45.
852 Prens Sabahaddin, Türkiye, 48-49.
revolts against the authorities in Eastern Anatolia, in which Christians and Muslims participated jointly. After the revolution, Prince Sabahaddin’s decentralist policies also found favor among non-Turkish peoples such as Greeks, Arabs, and Albanians, who were anxious to achieve a measure of political and cultural autonomy.

To the CUP ideology exalting the supremacy of the bureaucratic state and the military elite, Prince Sabahaddin opposed an alternative vision of Ottoman identity. His ideas were aimed in part to break the cycle of violence we have outlined for the “totalizing” guerrilla wars of the late Ottoman Empire and the modern world generally: the growth in the monolithic power of the bureaucratic nation-state, the resistance this triggers among the groups marginalized or oppressed by it, and the hardening of group identities as a result of the subsequent escalation of violence. The relentless centralization of the Empire was to be halted, power distributed more evenly among its various nationalities, and individual achievement encouraged over the exaltation of the group and its norms. These measures would reverse the deepening alienation of the Ottoman state and the nationalities, and break the cycle of internal conflict and external intervention which was destroying the Empire.

Prince Sabahaddin’s ideas find their echo today in the increasing discussion of federalism as a means of reducing ethnic conflict in multinational states, in places such as the Sudan, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Whether his ideas could have preserved the Ottoman Empire amid the hyper-nationalism and predatory imperialism of his own time is not a question we can address here. A set of favorable circumstances in Yemen,

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853 Hanioğlu, Preparation, 82 ff.
854 Kayalı, Arabs, 75, 81-82; ızzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1:72.
however, did allow ideas like his to play an important role in bringing about the final resolution of the Zaydī conflict.

II. Developments to the Treaty of Da‘ān.

First, there had been a gradual shift in Ottoman policy toward negotiation ever since the 1904 rebellion. The 1904 rebellion had been punctuated by three humiliating and extremely costly defeats for the Ottomans: the fall of Ṣan‘ā’, the defeat of Rīza Paşa’s force, and the bloody debacle at Shihāra. Thousands of men had died, and tons of matériel were lost. Feyzi Paşa had therefore concluded that it was not possible to crush the Imam by military means.\footnote{Farah, Yemen, 234.} Despite the ongoing guerrilla war, then, the Ottomans began increasingly to focus their efforts on negotiation. In 1906, the Ottoman government sent a delegation of the prominent ‘ulamā’ from Mecca to make peace with the Imām, whereupon the Imām sent a letter listing the conditions under which he would be willing to stop the fighting. He demanded the power to appoint judges, tax exemption for a number of the Zaydī tribes, and institution of the hudūd punishments.\footnote{al-Wāṣi‘ī, Tārīkh, 365-366.} Such conditions were rejected by the Ottoman government at the time, but eventually formed the basis for the peace agreement concluded in 1911. Later, the sultan himself received a delegation from the leading sayyids and ‘ulamā’ of Ṣan‘ā’, who were asked to give their views on the situation in Yemen.\footnote{al-Wāṣi‘ī, Tārīkh, 308.}
Second, the Young Turk Revolution gave further encouragement to this trend sweeping away the rigid Hamidian political order. The first year of the revolution was characterized by an atmosphere of hope and magnanimity, with an emphasis on the multi-ethnic brotherhood of Ottoman subjects, and rejection of the despotic methods of Abdülhamid’s regime. In Yemen, Abdülhamid became a convenient scapegoat for both sides, who regarded the revolution as an opportunity to settle their differences. Imām Yaḥyā and the Ottoman government called off the fighting by mutual agreement; and the Imām sent a delegation of his own men (khāṣṣa) to Istanbul at the request of the Porte, again to discuss the affairs of Yemen with the Ottoman sultan.858

The Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa drew up a plan calling for the withdrawal of most of the Ottoman forces from the highlands, and the appointment of the Imām as governor of the region under Ottoman suzerainty.859 The policy of the first governor of the Young Turk period, Hasan Tahsin Paşa, was to allow the Imām’s administration to coexist peacefully with his own. Thus, “the men of the Imām mingled with the men of the Ottoman authority, and each side respected the other.” Imām Yaḥyā made use of this opportunity to further entrench his authority, sending out judges, ensuring that the Shari‘a was enforced, and collecting taxes.860

Such policies of decentralization and local autonomy, coupled with pragmatic and flexible leadership on both sides, would ultimately facilitate the resolution of the Zaydī-Ottoman conflict. Before this, however, the rising influence of the hard-line centralists of

858 Ibid.
859 Farah, Yemen, 243.
860 al-‘Azab, Tārīkh, 56, 58.
the CUP in Istanbul would cause the war to break out once again; and the Imām would raise a final major rebellion in 1911, before a permanent peace was finally concluded.

An attempted coup by partisans of Abdūlhamid in the spring of 1909, the “31 March Incident,” brought the relatively open period of the revolution to an end. Abdūlhamid was now formally deposed, and the centralists of the CUP increased their influence in the new government. Talat Bey, a former member of the CUP Internal Headquarters who later orchestrated the Armenian genocide, was appointed as Minister of the Interior. Mahmud Şevket Paşa, who had commanded the “Action Army” that suppressed the coup, became Minister of War; and his ideas seem to have been broadly similar to those of the centralists. Increasing repression, with martial law in Istanbul and other places, characterized the atmosphere after the coup.861

The Minister of the Interior Talat now succeeded in having Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s plan shelved, arguing that both the Imām and the Idrisī would have to be suppressed by force before any administrative reforms could be discussed.862 Eventually, a governor was appointed to Yemen who seemed intent on putting the militarist-repressive policies of the new government into practice. Mehmet Ali Paşa succeeded Hasan Tahsin in February of 1910.863 According to Ahmet İzzet Paşa, he was also influenced by officials of Feyzi Paşa’s regime who had managed to enter the CUP club in Şan‘ā; such officials advocated a policy of violence and ruthlessness, in keeping with the preferences of their old mentor.864 Mehmet Ali Paşa therefore sought to impose martial law (al-idāra al-

861 Turfan, Rise, 161 ff.
862 Farah, Yemen, 240-243.
863 al-Wāsi‘ī, Tārīkh, 311.
864 İzzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1: 92.
‘urfiyya, Ott. idare-i örfiye) on Yemen, arresting and torturing suspected partisans of the
Imām.865 As a result, the Imām Yaḥyā declared a jihād once again at the end of 1910.
Ṣanʿāʾ was besieged, and a large force concentrated in Jabal Ḥarāz to cut the Ottomans’
communications with the coast.866

Thereupon Ahmet İzzet Paşa, Chief of the Ottoman General Staff after the revolution,
was dispatched by Mahmud Şevket Paşa to suppress the rebellion. With this decision,
however, the problem of Yemen was placed in the hands of someone who generally
opposed the hard-line policies of the CUP government. İzzet Paşa did not specifically
identify himself with the Ottoman decentralists. By temperament and necessity, however,
İzzet Paşa favored policies of moderation and compromise. He criticized the CUP for
what he regarded as its rigidly centralizing, nationalist, and militarist policies.

From İzzet Paşa’s memoirs, we can see that he had an explicit understanding of the
military dynamics of repression and total war in the Empire, and that he favored
decentralist policies as a means of halting them. The years 1910 and 1911 were a period
of serious internal disturbances in the Empire, in Albania, the Ḥawrān, and ‘Asūr.867 The
threat of unrest and external intervention was growing in Macedonia, and tensions with
Italy over Libya were also rising. In this situation, İzzet Paşa argued first that Empire
should as far as possible avoid involvement in foreign wars in order to concentrate on
settling its internal disturbances, ideas which he said brought him into conflict with the
more militarist members of the CUP.

865 al-ʿAzab, Tārīkh, 58-59.
866 İzzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1:
Secondly, İzzet Paşa believed that the internal disturbances of the Empire could only be settled by a delicate combination of force and compromise. Thoughtless and uncompromising military action would only cause the Empire to sink deeper into a quagmire of violence. Of Albanian origin himself, he opposed the harsh punitive measures which the government employed to suppress the Albanian revolt in 1910. The CUP feared nationalist revolt in Albania, he said, in part because the disturbances involved the question of the use of the local language. İzzet Paşa recognized that such cultural demands might conceal political aims for independence. Nonetheless, he argued, the Constitution guaranteed “freedom of thought and conscience.” As a result, cultural self-assertion among the nationalities of the Empire should be welcomed rather than feared. The use of brute force to crush Albanian self-assertion would simply contribute to the internal disorder of the Empire, providing additional pretexts for foreign intervention.868

These views shaped the way in which he conceived the problem of Yemen and the solutions he proposed. As a military man, İzzet Paşa was not opposed to the use of force _per se_. In fact, he had opposed Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s plan, arguing that the Ottoman government would lose prestige if it did not retain a strong presence in the highlands.869 Within the context of his sympathy with decentralist ideas, however, İzzet Paşa rejected the idea of a total struggle to eliminate the Imamate that had dominated Ottoman policy in the Hamidian period.

The Imamate, he argued, was too deeply rooted in Zaydi society to be eliminated by anything other than the mass slaughter of the Zaydis themselves. Genocide in modern

868 İzzet Paşa, _Feryadım_, 1: 77-81.
869 İzzet Paşa, _Feryadım_, 1: 90.
times may be seen as an outgrowth of the logic of total war, particularly when a stronger society attempts to subdue a weaker; and Ahmet İzzet Paşa’s moral sense, as well as his political beliefs, would not have allowed him to countenance it. Rather, he argued, the Zaydī rebellion should be brought to an end through negotiation and compromise; and if a lasting peace could be secured with the Imām, this would give the Ottomans a free hand to deal with more pressing threats elsewhere.870

Therefore, while the subsequent course of events followed the general pattern of the previous rebellions in Yemen, the use of war as a tool of policy had fundamentally changed. The force mobilized to put down the Imām’s rebellion was large and well armed (although smaller than Feyzi Paşa’s army in 1905) consisting of 30 battalions of infantry, with a generous complement of mountain and machine guns. As usual, the force landed in Ḥudayda and fought its way to the highlands by way of the Ṣanʿā’-Manākha road, reaching the capital in early April. The Ottomans had better success in 1911 than in the previous rebellion, owing in part to the fact that the Ottoman garrisons in the highlands had been reasonably well provisioned beforehand.871 Ṣanʿā’ was able to hold out until the arrival of İzzet Paşa’s force without experiencing major hardship.

Whenever major forces of this kind had been mobilized to put down rebellion before, the ultimate objective had been the destruction of the Imamate as a political institution;

870 In contrast to his position on the Zaydī rebellion, however, İzzet Paşa did recommend the swift and complete supression of the rebellion of the Idrīsī. First, he believed that the Idrīsī was an impostor and a tool of foreign intrigue; his rebellion was less deeply rooted in the society of his followers than that of the Imām, and could therefore be suppressed more easily. Second, rebellion of the Idrīsī could be much more dangerous to the Ottomans if it was allowed to spread. The people of ṬArīq were Sunnīs of the Shāfī‘ī school, belonging to the majority sect of the Arabian Peninsula. Rebellion in ṬArīq therefore might spread and take on nationalist overtones, something which could not happen with the Zaydī rebellion. The recognition of an autonomous Imamate would be much less costly for the Empire than a major revolt in the Arabian Peninsula. Ahmet İzzet Paşa therefore believed that peace should be concluded as quickly as possible with the Imām, in order to give the government a free hand to deal with the Idrīsī.

871 İsmet Inönü, Hattalar (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1985), 1:63-64.
and the retaking of the “Ottoman” highlands had usually been followed by the dispatch of large expeditionary forces to the north in fruitless pursuit of the Imāms. Now, however, the purpose was to restore Ottoman prestige in order to negotiate from a position of strength. In other words, the suppression of the Imām’s rebellion was no longer total war in the genuine sense of the word; it was limited war, a regrettable but necessary element in the process of negotiation with political opponents. This was reflected in İzzet Paşa’s treatment of the rural population on the march to Şan‘ā’. The soldiers were forbidden to bring in heads for a reward. If it was necessary to bombard a village, the inhabitants were given early warning if possible. As far as possible, İzzet Paşa wanted to ensure that no lingering bitterness would complicate the eventual negotiations with the Imām; and these negotiations were opened shortly after the relief of Şan‘ā’.

II. İzzet Paşa and the Treaty of Da‘ān.

The negotiations with the Imām were successfully concluded in October of 1911 with the treaty of Da‘ān. The treaty of Da‘ān marked, in practice, the triumph of the “decentralist” model as a means of dealing with the situation in Yemen. İzzet Paşa had

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872 İzzet Paşa, Feryadım, 1:99.
adopted a conciliatory posture with regard to the grievances of the Zaydīs, and the provisions of the treaty were based to a great extent on the demands the Imām had made in his letter of 1906. Īzzet Paşa’s recognition of these demands meant implementation of two of the fundamental principles of Ottoman “liberalism” in this period: respect for the cultural rights of the various ethnic groups of the Empire, and the partial devolution of power to local elites in the administration of the provinces.

In the Treaty of Daʿān, the Imām was given the right to appoint judges to the Sharīʿa courts serving the people of the Zaydī sect. Likewise, taxes were to be collected in accordance with the Sharīʿa. Allegations of malfeasance in the process of tax collection would be investigated jointly by representatives of the Ottoman bureaucracy and the judges appointed by the Imām. The treaty also gave the Zaydīs the right to give “gifts” to the Imām, thus recognizing the parallel system of taxation the Imāms had set up during the years of guerrilla war. A general amnesty was given for past political crimes and outstanding taxes. The tribes of Khawlān and Arḥab, as well as the region of Jabal Shirq in Anis, were exempted from taxes for a period of ten years. Finally, both the Ottoman officials and the “followers” (ʿatbāʾ) of the Imām were given the right to move freely about in Yemen, provided that they did not disturb the security of the country.873

The agreement between the Imām and the Ottomans also included a number of provisions which were not made public. The Imām would undertake not to establish relations with foreign states with them in return for a yearly stipend from the Ottoman government; the Ottomans would provide aid to the Imām to suppress refractory tribes if

873 al-Wāsīʿī, Tāriḵh, 367-368.
he asked for it; and the provisions of the Shari‘a would be implemented with regard to non-Muslims.  

The treaty of Da‘ān therefore represented the logical culmination of a process which had begun in earnest with the defeat at Shihāra; that is, a search for a modus vivendi between the Imamate and the Ottoman state, based on the recognition that a policy of total war had failed. In the previous fifteen years, the Ottomans had increasingly concentrated the military, bureaucratic, and technological resources of their state to crush the Imamate as a political entity; and they had only succeeded in incurring tremendous losses in men and money. The way to make peace, then, had been to halt the relentless expansion of the bureaucratic state, and to partially renounce the claims to a complete monopoly of legitimacy on which this centralization was based. The logic of Ottoman policy which compelled it to wage total war against the Imām would therefore be fundamentally changed, allowing room for negotiation and compromise.

As we have seen, this change in policy was inspired in part by the ideas of the decentralist wing of the Young Turk movement. As such, it may be considered a “modernizing” change in some regards, and one which has increasingly found favor in the past decade of our own time. Yet it was also a conservative solution, reminiscent of the tacit compromises which have historically defined the relationship between local elites and the imperial center in the Ottoman state. The secret provisions of the treaty, based on a monetary stipend to the Imām in return for loyalty, and promises of aid against his opponents, established a relationship similar to those obtaining historically between the Empire and local Arab potentates.

Such compromises, based on mutual recognition of the suzerainty of the one and the autonomy of the other, were necessitated by the limitations on the coercive power available to each side. Both Imām Yaḥyā and Ahmet ʿIzzet Paşa were pragmatic enough to recognize that such limitations were still in evidence, in spite of the remarkable expansion of military capability on both the Zaydī and Ottoman sides; and it was in their best interest to come to a mutually advantageous agreement. Otherwise, they realized that they both might become the prey of European powers; and in agreeing to a treaty, the Imām was motivated by considerations of Muslim solidarity as well as self-interest.875

The document’s concluding clause states that “it is incumbent on the two sides not to transgress the limits (ḥudūd) indicated [in the treaty] after the sultan’s order is issued concerning its provisions.”876 If the monolithic centralization and seemingly unrestrained violence of the Hamidian regime had broken the “limits” supposed to govern the relationship between state and society in Zaydī thought, then, the Treaty of Daʿān would reestablish them. Once these limits were put in place, the moral obligation of concord and unity within the Muslim community could come to the fore again. From the Ottoman side, it was clear that this experiment in decentralist policy was successful. By formally renouncing a part of its claim to political power, armed force, and cultural supremacy, the Ottomans did indeed break the cycle of internal revolt and external intervention (at least with regard to the Zaydī revolt. The Imām would remain faithful to the Empire to the end of World War I.

It should be clear by this time that there is considerable overlap between the Ottoman experience with insurgency in the nineteenth century and the security problems of the

876 al-Wāsīʾī, Tārīkh, 368.
present day. The relationship between “center” and “periphery” remains a central question, from the level of the international social order down to the poorest nations of the world. Islamic revivalist movements, demands for local autonomy, and nationalist conflict continue to trouble the nation-states and trans-national empires of the present. What, in this context, are the relevant lessons of the Ottoman experience in Yemen?

IV. The Lessons of the Ottoman Wars in Yemen.

First, it should be recognized that there are serious problems with the concept of counterinsurgency itself. Counterinsurgency has been developed specifically to reinforce the monolithic dominance of the bureaucratic nation-state and the capitalist economic system. Both nineteenth century Ottoman statesmen and Western counterinsurgency thinkers assumed the universal legitimacy and moral preeminence of the imperial systems they were trying to defend, and were convinced that dissenting groups needed only to be shown the error of their ways. The opponents of their systems were to be crushed through the overwhelming power of the bureaucratic state, which the diverse populations under their control would be persuaded to support.

The pejorative terminology employed for the opponents of these systems (“bandits,” or “terrorists”) was designed to remove these opponents from the pale of legitimate political life, in preparation for their destruction. In Yemen, it was assumed that the government could and should destroy the Imamate as a political entity, and assert its

877 Israel’s characterization of the PLO as a terrorist organization provided the basic ideological grounding for its attempt to destroy that organization militarily in the early 1980’s. Examples of this kind can be found all over the world, including modern Turkey and the United States.
complete dominance over the country. It was likewise assumed that the Ottoman government, despite its numerous problems, ultimately did have the capability to win the Zaydīs’ support against the Imām. If only the army would take control of outlying regions, if only corruption among bureaucrats and officers could be eliminated, if only the government would invest in economic development to improve the lives of the people-then, surely, the people would see the benefits of siding with the Ottoman government, and realize the folly of continuing to support the “bandits.”

How realistic were these expectations? First, we have reiterated that the Ottoman government simply was too poor to implement this ambitious program, and had too many other pressing military concerns. In the rare cases in modern times when counterinsurgency has actually worked, it has usually done so only where circumstances were uniquely favorable: where rebels were isolated geographically or ethnically, where other security threats were relatively manageable, where the timely discovery of oil enabled the government to buy off opposition. Now by any standard, the situation of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century was uniquely difficult. Few states in modern times have faced the number of overwhelming threats, internal and external, with which the Ottoman Empire had to contend; and it was impossible under these circumstances to even begin to carry out the reforms in Yemen which Ottoman strategists envisioned.

878 The British victories in Malaysia and Oman are often cited as major success stories of modern counterinsurgency, and Who Will Win? devotes an entire chapter to the latter operation. There is no doubt that the commanders in this war were highly capable, and intelligent policies implemented vigorously. On the other hand, one wonders if the problems presented by Communist guerrillas in a tiny corner of a conservative Muslim country might, on balance, prove to be somewhat less intractable than those generally faced by counterinsurgency strategists. See Blaufarb and Tanham, Who, 49 ff.
Yet lack of resources was only one dimension of the problem. In reading both the memoranda of Ottoman governors and the works of Western counterinsurgency theorists, one is struck by the refusal of both to accept the fact of alien domination as a primary cause of rebellion of itself. To do so would call into question the very existence of the imperial structure in which their lives, careers, and identities were invested. An essential, and essentially flawed, premise thus runs through much of the vast literature on the suppression of rebellion in the modern era: that alien domination can be made palatable, and even desirable, if only it takes a sufficiently enlightened form.879

The subconscious awareness of the self-deceptiveness of this premise, together with the uncompromising nature of nationalist ideology and bureaucratic domination, is almost certainly a major factor in the historic construction of counterinsurgency as total war. The fact of rebellion threatens to arouse the moral unease which the defenders of an imperial system must inevitably feel, whether consciously or not. Therefore rebels must be placed beyond the bounds of legitimate political life and destroyed, as much to protect the self-concept of imperial or nationalist statesmen as the security of the state. Abdülhamid’s fanatical insistence on the sanctity of his absolutist prerogatives and ruthless suppression of all resistance, real or perceived, should be partially understood in this light.

With this rigid conception of autocratic privilege and bureaucratic centralization as a means to ensure it, it was very difficult to devise a range of flexible policy alternatives.

By virtue of claiming the leadership of the Muslim community, even in a very limited

879 Blaufarb and Tanham occasionally slip into a colonial-paternalist mode of discourse, although they are generally careful not to do so. In discussing the problem of finding resources to wage counterinsurgency, for example, they state “the needed resources must come either from cutting back new programs or from new taxation and borrowing-unless a kindly uncle stands in the wings ready to help with resources brought from outside” (italics added). See Blaufarb and Tanham, Who, 43.
sphere, the Zaydi Imāms were seen to have committed an intolerable infringement on the sultan’s prerogative. The incumbent Imām therefore simply became the “well-known bandit” (şakî-i mahud) who was to be punished as a disturber of the communal peace, rather than dealt with as a political personage. To define the Zaydi rebellion in this fashion essentially narrowed Ottoman policy alternatives to total war, once resistance among the Zaydis had reached a certain level of sophistication.

Now, how well does total war work in its variant of “soft” counterinsurgency? Usually not very well, because of the inherent contradictions of the concept itself. Theories of counterinsurgency necessarily depend on the distinction between “guerrilla” and “civilian” for their internal logic, or between the “people” (ahali) and the “bandits” (eşkiya) in Ottoman terms. The “guerrillas” should be isolated from the “civilians” physically, morally, and politically, so that the latter will eventually support the government as it prepares to deal the guerrillas the final blow.

Often, however, the distinction between “guerrillas” and civilians is artificial and even deceptive. The ranks of the guerrillas in many cases will include the sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers of the civilian population that the army is supposedly trying to protect. The soldiers of the regular army will often belong to an alien ethnic group. To gain the willing cooperation of the “civilians” in the destruction of the “guerrillas” requires (at an absolute minimum) extraordinary political skill on the part of the military leadership over a long period of time. This, too, will usually be lacking. Rivalry in the upper ranks of the military and the threat of assassination tend to shorten the careers of the most capable officers. This is particularly the case in a dictatorial system, where
corruption is encouraged as a means of retaining the loyalty of the officer corps,\textsuperscript{880} and successful generals may pose a direct threat to the dictator’s power.

We have seen that this was the case in Yemen. İsmail Hakkı Paşa, who enjoyed some success both in quelling rebellion and gaining a degree of popular support, became the object of Abdülhamid’s suspicions and was removed. Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa’s plans were thwarted by the interpersonal rivalries which the sultan tacitly encouraged among his subordinates. Abdülhamid’s perennial favorite for the governorship of Yemen was Ahmet Feyzi Paşa, who was competent enough to maintain the Ottoman grip on the province, but hated for his brutality and corruption by the population. This made him completely dependent on the sultan, which may have been one reason why he was preferred over more humane individuals.

Yet even if the quality of the military leadership in Yemen had been consistently high, this would not have changed the fundamental inconsistencies of Ottoman policy. Clausewitz defines war as a dialectic of ever-increasing force, culminating in the utter defeat of one side or the other.\textsuperscript{881} The theory and practice of total war, as it was emerging in the nineteenth century, presupposed a titanic conflict between armed nations whose purpose was to break the opposing nation’s capacity to resist. This was the specific premise of the most important “total war” of the period, the American Civil War. The Confederate rebellion was suppressed by punishing the civilians of the south and destroying their morale, not by gaining their support.\textsuperscript{882}

\textsuperscript{880} For a discussion of the problems of politicization and corruption in the officer corps, see Blaufarb and Tanham, \textit{Who}, 19-22, 72-75.

\textsuperscript{881} Paret, “Clausewitz,” 199.

Now, the idea of “soft” counterinsurgency confronts soldiers with an impossibly contradictory task. They are to wage a total war of elimination against the “guerrillas” while simultaneously gaining the trust and affection of their relatives in the villages. All the dynamics of modern war will work against the achievement of the latter goal. The natural solidarity of soldiers against civilians, of dominant ethnic groups against subordinate ones, of closely knit village societies against outsiders of any kind, is unimaginably intensified in a situation of guerrilla conflict.

The soldiers, embittered by the loss of their comrades, and unable to retaliate effectively against the frustratingly elusive guerrillas, will increasingly turn on civilians. They will come to a visceral understanding of the reality which may elude the strategists who are not immediately engaged in the conflict, that they are at war with an entire population. The inevitable dynamics of violence will therefore push them to commit increasing atrocities against the people, whose hatred for the occupying army can be expected to increase in proportion.883

It is evident that such a dynamic was present in Yemen. Ethnic hostilities were an important factor in the conflict, although not necessarily a central one. From time to time the Zaydi chroniclers speak of conflict between “Arab” and “Turk;”884 and a high proportion of the Ottoman soldiers in Yemen were, in fact, Anatolian Turks. Loyalty to sultan and state was evidently ingrained enough in the Anatolian soldiers that they fought

883 For a discussion of some of these kinds of problems in Vietnam, see Blaufarb and Tanham, Who, 80-81. Philip Caputo’s A Rumor of War, an account of the author’s service in Vietnam as a U.S. Marine, documents this process on an individual level. By his own account, Caputo began by attempting to show the Vietnamese peasants that Americans were “different” from the colonialist French, and ended by murdering an innocent Vietnamese civilian suspected of Viet Cong ties. See Philip Caputo, A Rumor of War (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977), 88-89, 315-323.

884 See for example al-Wāsi‘ī, Ṭārīkh, 293.
well in spite of the abuse to which they were subjected. No doubt, however, they were deeply embittered by the miserable circumstances in which they found themselves, essentially the result of corruption in the high command.

The temptation to take out their frustrations on the Zaydīs must therefore have been overwhelming. Apart from this, it was simply impracticable to spare the lives and property of “civilians” in the operations against the Imām’s partisans, specifically in those areas where they took refuge in the fortified villages of a sympathetic population. Therefore the soldiers continued to cut off heads, rape, and burn villages in rebel areas, no matter how much reform-minded Ottoman officials deplored their behavior; and in this they seem to have been tacitly encouraged by the high command, possibly as a means of deflecting resentment from themselves.

All these factors together combined to push the Ottomans into a deepening quagmire of violence in Yemen. The inflexibility of Hamidian absolutism essentially narrowed Ottoman policy options to a total war of elimination against the Imām’s partisans. Reform-minded officials in Yemen rationalized that the Imām could be eliminated and the Zaydīs taught unquestioning loyalty to the sultan, if only Ottoman policy was enlightened enough. Yet once this war was embarked on, its dynamics forced the Seventh Army and the Zaydī population at large into increasingly bitter confrontation with one another. That is not to say that the policies designed to gain the support of the population never worked. Efforts to reduce corruption and extend education to the Yemenis did win some popular support for the government. Such successes, however, never seemed to be permanent. Periods of reform and relative social peace were
relatively short-lived, and always seemed to cycle back into even worse violence than before.

The impasse was only broken when Ahmet İzzet Paşa changed the entire direction of Ottoman military policy. İzzet Paşa simply renounced the idea of total war against the Imām. Instead, İzzet Paşa used his military successes in 1911 as a springboard from which to launch negotiations with the Imām. War in this case was used as one tool of policy against an enemy who could be negotiated with, rather than as the only possible policy against an enemy who had to be destroyed.

The larger implications of this for security policy are self-evident. All of the policies associated with the modern idea of counterinsurgency are based on sound experience, and ought to be implemented by governments facing rebellion of one kind or another. Yet to engage in such policies as total war, without leaving other options open, is usually to engage in a self-defeating exercise. Misplaced definitions of self-interest and unwillingness to take responsibility for national wrongs lead governments to declare their enemies as beyond the pale of civilized politics. Where such foes represent deep currents of social discontent, they usually end up having to negotiate with them anyway, often after much costly and inefficient bloodshed.

None of these lessons are particularly original or profound from a historical point of view. The need to reiterate them arises from the fact that each generation of political leaders seems to fail to learn them. There are some disturbing parallels between Ottoman policy in Yemen and U.S. policy in the Middle East today. The analogy is by no means a perfect one, as the Zaydī Imāms accorded the Ottoman state a degree of legitimacy as a Muslim power. If so much bloodshed could take place between Muslim peoples in this
situation, where Islam was taken seriously by both sides as a common ground of political discourse, the implications for a non-Muslim power in the Middle East are particularly troubling.

Today, the government of the United States has declared total war against “terrorists;” that is, the militant Islamic organizations who oppose the U.S. presence in the Middle East, and who employ terrorism as a primary military and political weapon. A combination of narrowly defined economic self-interest, nationalist and imperial ideology, and Christian moral zeal has resulted in a willful refusal by the current government to recognize the essential source of the terrorists’ grievances—the imperial policy of the United States in the Middle East, with the massive military presence that this entails. The designation “terrorism,” accurate as a description of the fundamentalists’ tactics of violence, serves also to obscure the essentially political nature of their opposition. They are reduced to simple disturbers of international law and order, who must be utterly defeated if this order is to be preserved. Military action is the only viable political and moral option against terrorists.

As a result, the military position of the United States in the Middle East has been strengthened. New wars have been undertaken to pursue and destroy the terrorists, using many of the strategies of counterinsurgency developed in the Cold War. Naturally, this has resulted in steadily increasing resentment against the United States, and a rising tide of terrorist violence across the region and the world. The outcome of such policies is not difficult to predict for the student of military history (or, for that matter, any person with a modicum of education and common sense). There seem to be few nations, however, where each generation does not have to learn the hard lessons of history for itself.
GLOSSARY OF ARABIC AND TURKISH TERMS

‘ālim: Scholar learned in Islamic law and theology.

bayt al-māl: Public treasury of the Muslim community.

da’wa: Arabic term meaning “summons.” Used to denote the accession of an Imām to power in Zaydī thought, involving ideally a summons to the Muslim community to obedience, and a call to holy war against tyranny and unbelief.

Hādāwī: Follower of the teachings of Imām al-Hādī, who founded the Zaydī Imamate of Yemen at the end of the ninth century C.E.

īṣlāḥ: Arabic term denoting peace-making, pacification, and moral and social reform.

‘īṣāba: Guerrilla band of the Imām’s soldiers.

‘īṣābāt: Plural of ‘īṣāba.

kaymakam: Administrator of a district (kaza) in the Ottoman Empire.

kaza: Ottoman administrative division corresponding roughly to the term district.

mutasarrīf: Administrator of a sub-province (sancak) in the Ottoman Empire.

müdir: Administrator of a sub-district (nahiye) in the Ottoman Empire.

nahiye: Ottoman administrative division corresponding roughly to the term sub-district.

qāḍī: In the Islamic world generally, a judge presiding over a court of Islamic law. In Yemen, a hereditary honorific for members of certain notable families not descended from the Prophet Muḥammad, who have a tradition of religious learning and government service.

sancak: Ottoman administrative division corresponding roughly to the term sub-province.
sayyid: Person putatively descended from the Prophet Muḥammad through his son-in-law ʿAlī and daughter Fāṭima.

Sharīʿa: Body of Islamic law, based in theory on the teachings of the Qurʾān and the practices of the Prophet Muḥammad.

ʿulamāʾ: plural of ʿālim.

vali: Governor of a province (vilayet) in the Ottoman Empire.

vilayet: Ottoman administrative division corresponding to a province.

zakā: Canonical tax in Islamic law, constituting a principle source of revenue for the Zaydī Imāms.
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* The Gregorian date would vary depending on whether the Hicri or Rumi calendar was used, which is not specified in the publication information. The Hicri (Arabic Hijrī) calendar is the lunar calendar used by the Muslim world at large, dating from the year of the Prophet Muḥammad’s migration from Mecca to Medina in the seventh century. The Rumi calendar used by the Ottomans was a solar version of the same calendar.


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