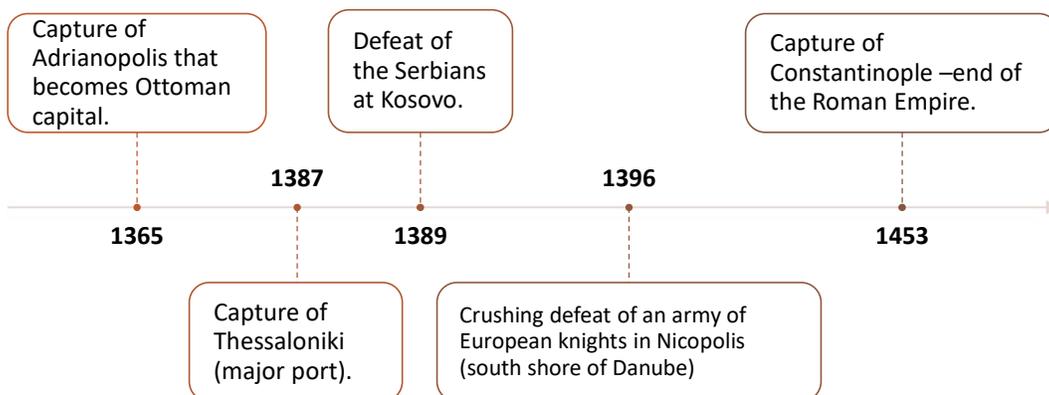


Ottoman Politics

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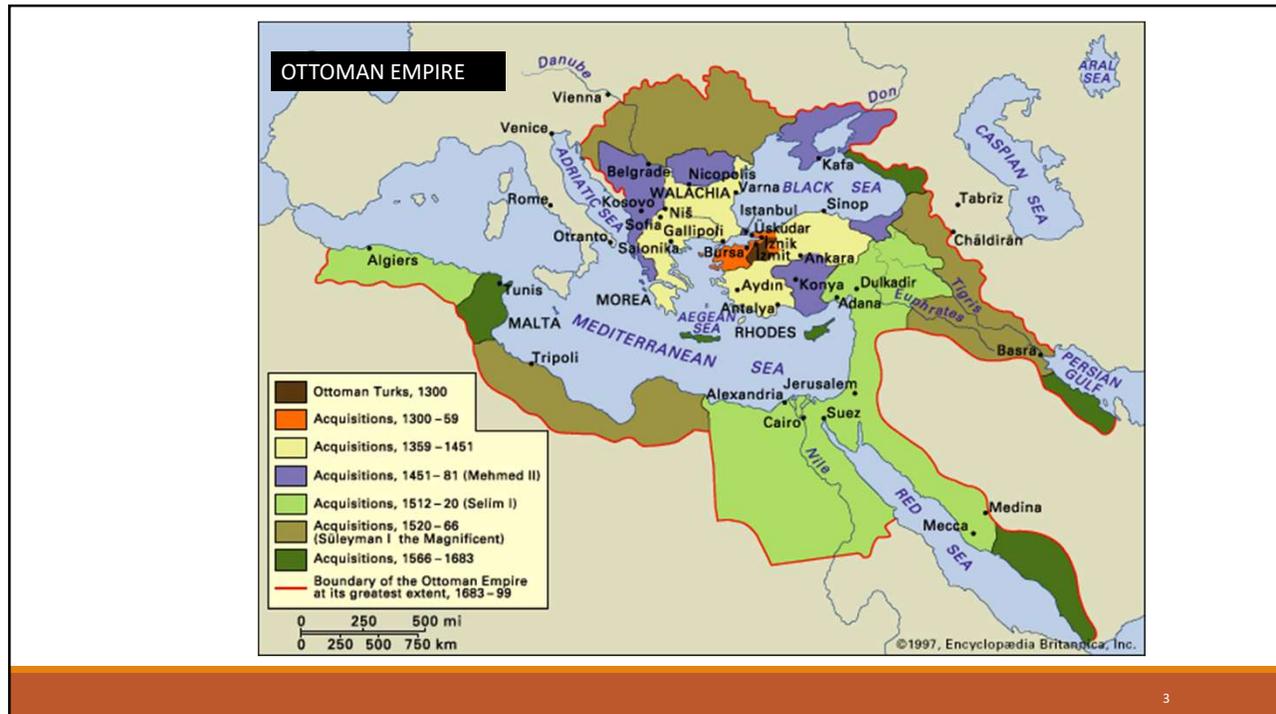
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Highlights of Ottoman Expansion



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The Janissaries - 1

- Sultan Murad I (1362 - 1389) is credited with establishing the corps of the *Janissaries* (meaning new soldiers in Turkish).
- The recruits were young boys (12-14 years of age) that were selected mainly from amongst European Christians under the *devsirme* system. This was a human tax system under which Christian communities had to provide a certain number of boys at regular time intervals.
- The boys were converted into Islam and educated in special schools. They were educated not only in the military matters but also in the knowledge of the Koran and the Arabic and Persian languages.
- They ended up not only as soldiers but also, depending on their aptitude, as administrators or as religious scholars.

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The Janissaries - 2

- Those serving in the army were required to stay single but were allowed to marry upon retirement. (The father of the famous corsair Hayreddin Barbarossa was a retired Janissary who had married the widow of a Christian priest.)
- While the recruits of the *devsirme* were considered slaves of the sultan, they held a high status and occupied many powerful positions in the empire.
- For example: There were 16 individuals who held the office of Grand Vizier (equivalent to prime minister) during the 64 years between 1453 and 1517, several serving more than one term. Of the 16 only three were Muslim Turks. Five were products of the *Devsirme* system. The other eight were all members of noble Christian families.

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A famous Ottoman Architect

- Sinan (died around 1470), the most famous of Ottoman architects was a product of the *Devsirme* system and rose to become an officer in the Janissaries where he distinguished himself in designing fortifications, bridges, roads, and aqueducts.
- Eventually he was appointed chief royal architect and he stayed on that position for nearly half a century, spanning the reign of three sultans.

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The Slave Kingmakers

- Very soon the Janissaries became “kingmakers.”
- In 1444 (about 60 years after their founding) they overthrew the sultan (succeeded by a relative) because they were unhappy with certain economy measures he had taken.
- In 1512 the Janissaries forced sultan Bayazid II to abdicate in favor of his son Selim who reigned as Selim I.

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Suleyman I the Magnificent (1520-1566)

- Suleyman I became sultan upon the death of his father Selim I and reigned for 46 years, longer than any other sultan.
- He continued the expansionist policies of his father and in 1521 he captured Belgrade (then part of Hungary).
- After solidifying Ottoman rule in Syria and Egypt, Suleyman attacked Hungary in 1526 capturing the capital Buda. Hungary remained part of the Ottoman empire for over 100 years.
- In 1529 the Ottomans set siege to Vienna, but they gave up after only three weeks. This was the first Ottoman siege of Vienna.

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The Janissaries - 3

- When Suleyman died he was succeeded by his only son Selim who faced an immediate crisis because the Janissaries demanded the customary accession donative, and the imperial treasury could not afford it.
- The Janissaries bared the entrance to the palace and Selim had to scrounge up the money so he could enter his residence. Such a humiliation of the sultan by his troops was unheard of.

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More Kingmaking by the Janissaries

- It seems that sultan Osman II (1618-1622) made plans to create a new army of musketeers from Anatolia and the Janissaries got wind of the plans and rose in revolt. His predecessor, Mustafa I, was re-instated to the throne and Osman II was killed, the first sultan to end that way in the history of the empire.
- Mustafa I did not last long. In 1623, he was deposed and replaced by Murad IV who was only 11 years old. His mother Kösem (a Greek concubine of Ahmed I) acted as regent and effectively ran the state with her political allies.

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The Janissaries - 4

- Selim II recognized the right of all Janissaries to marry and eventually most of them were married men living with their families. Later he agreed to let sons of Janissaries join the corps. "By 1592 they constituted the majority of the corps".
- Eventually, anybody could join the troops and Turkish chronicles lament the sad state when "Tatars, Gypsies, Jews, and townsmen of unknown faith" could become Janissaries.

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The 1683 Siege of Vienna

- An Ottoman army of about 150,000 men (including 12,000 Janissaries) besieged Vienna in July of 1683.
- However, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth put aside their differences with the Hapsburgs and came to their help. A fierce battle was fought on September 12 that ended with a crushing defeat of the Ottomans.
- The Ottomans had to ask for peace and the negotiations took place in the town of Karlowitz (In today's Serbia). On January 26, 1699, a treaty was signed where the Ottoman Empire gave up all its territories in central Europe.

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Waking Up

- The new sultan, Ahmed III (1703-1730), sought to learn from Western Europe.
- In 1720 he sent the former Janissary officer Celebi Mehmed Efendi to France to inform the French king that the sultan had granted France permission to repair the church of the *Holy Sepulchre* in Jerusalem.
- However, his real mission was to "to visit fortresses and factories, and to make a thorough study of the means of civilization and education, and report on those suitable for application in the Ottoman Empire."
- By the way, in 1729 Ibrahim Müteferrika, a Hungarian convert, and a partner received permission from the sultan to establish a printing press to print books in Arabic script.

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Trying to learn from France

- During the reign of Ahmed III's successor, Mahmud I, the French general Claude-Alexander de Bonneval was recruited to introduce European methods in the Ottoman Army. De Bonneval converted to Islam and changed his name to Ahmed Pasha, but he had limited influence.
- He re-organized the corps of bombardiers and modernized the factories that produced weapons but a military engineering school that he founded in 1734 was closed in 1750. There was opposition from both the clerics and the Janissaries.
- Conservatism kept the Ottomans back even in such practical matters as military organization.

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The Reign of Selim III (1789-1807)

- Selim III made serious efforts to Westernize the Ottoman Empire and he opened Ottoman embassies in the major European capitals. He created a committee of reformers that produced a series of new regulations known as *New Order*. They included administrative reforms but the most significant was the institution of a new infantry corps also known as *New Order* troops.
- The New Order troops were formed by conscripting Muslim men from Anatolia and by 1806 they numbered 22,500 enlisted men and 1,500 officers. The troops had European style uniforms and equipment.
- Eventually the Janissaries and other irregular troops staged a revolt and demanded the disbanding of the New Order troops. Selim obliged.

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The Reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839)

- Mahmud II was put to the throne by those who were sympathetic to the reforms advocated by his cousin Selim III. Unfortunately, the opposition to reforms was strong and four months later, on November 15, 1808, the reformist Grand Vizier Byrakdar Mustafa was killed in a Janissary revolt. Eventually the revolt was put down with 5,000 Janissaries and 600 troops loyal to the sultan losing their lives.
- The Janissaries staged another revolt on June 14, 1826. Mahmud was ready for them. He had enough loyal troops and, most important, artillery that bombarded the Janissary barracks and put them on fire. Over 6,000 janissaries were killed in that attack and then Mahmud launched a manhunt against them throughout the empire with thousands more of Janissaries killed.
- The abolition of the Janissary troops was named the *Auspicious Incident*.

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Re-ordering

- Mahmud had prepared another set of reforms, but he died in July 1839 and the reforms were proclaimed by his son and successor Abdulmecid on November 3, 1839. These reforms introduced the era of *Tanzimat* or Re-ordering.
- The thrust of the 1839 reforms was equality between Muslim and non-Muslims subjects of the empire that was hard to reconcile with Islamic religious principles.
- By the way, the reforms were introduced after two ethnic revolutions: the Serbian and the Greek.

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Breakup of the Empire - 1

- The start of the 19th century was also the start of the breakup of the Ottoman Empire.
- While Egypt remained nominally part of the Empire, it was *de facto* independent under the governor Mohammed Ali who had arrived there in 1803. Mohammed Ali was the founder of a dynasty whose last member, king Farouk, was deposed by a military coup in 1952.
- The Arabian Peninsula became *de facto* independent around 1807.
- The Serbs were the first ethnic group to launch a revolt against Ottoman rule and by 1817 Serbia had become autonomous in practice.
- The Greek revolution started in 1821 with Greece achieving formal independence in 1830.

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Breakup of the Empire - 2

- The breakup continued so that today there are over 20 states that used to be part of the Ottoman empire after the treaty of Karlowitz.
- Here is an incomplete list, roughly in geographical order from NW to SE and then to SW: Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Tunis, Algiers.
- Many of these states are small and there have often been at wars with each other.

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Wishful Thinking

- **It would have been better if the Ottoman Empire had reformed rather than broken up.**
- In an abstract sense this is true. The trouble is that by the time reforms were undertaken the breakup had already started.
- Ottoman efforts for reform had always been too little and too late.

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