Without port-cities, there would be no civilizational project associated with nineteenth-century liberalism. Port-cities evolved at the interface between the expanding dominion of European economies and the old lands of the East. They emerged as specific urban forms mediating the expansion of the world economy into weak agrarian empires. Port-cities emerged as an essential dimension of western expansion against the backdrop of free trade and the gold standard, the two pillars of British domination of the global system. They were primarily populated by men pursuing commercial interests; but they quickly became cities approximating the nineteenth-century ideal form, accommodating rapidly modernizing urban populations. These new populations inhabiting new urban spaces, served as ‘agents of change’ in the terminology of modernization theory of a later vintage. They played their part in expanding the boundaries of what once were enclaves. As new cultures flourished, these new populations shaped ever-expanding spaces into a new urban form: the peripheral version of the nineteenth-century city, carrying modernity.

Port-cities flourished in liminal spaces where Europe could expand because the local state receded. They represented nodes in a world order based on the network model, where long distance flows provided the logic of existence. The territory around them was weakly governed, and
care was taken to guarantee that the states nominally in control agreed to liberalize economic activity along the networks, with minimal restriction. This liberalism following the British prescription spilled over into the political sphere as well, for instance in the Ottoman willingness to accept immigrants (from within and without the empire) into port cities and to grant them quasi expatriate status, with privileges such as special courts and consular protection.\(^5\)

Thus, port-cities became locales for new populations, new forms of economic activity, social space, and material culture. They were also models of co-existence for the rapidly emerging multi-ethnic populations of empires who now had to live together, ‘as congeries of racial, religious, and linguistic communities loosely joined in commercial endeavor’.\(^6\) *Le doux commerce* would patch over ethnic suspicion and bring together imperial populations who were once a patchwork separated in communities. Now they lived in proximity and had to devise modes of multicultural tolerance in joint adherence to the global network of cosmopolitan traders. In their allegiance to a new model of development, transformed social conduct, and needs for different rules and guarantees, port-city populations thus became agents of a modernization-from-below, in a century when states in these empires were still too weak to embark on modernization-from-above.\(^7\)

**II**

The typical port-city was the outlet for exports from its hinterland. Its economy depended on intermediation between producers inland and consumers across the sea; its primary population was merchants. A city like Istanbul did not qualify because the majority of its population lived on imperial revenues and by catering to those who received them; but in the Ottoman Empire İzmir and Salonica did, as well as Trabzon, Mersin, Beirut and Alexandria. The merchants of these cities could comfortably lead their environment: they were the wealthiest individuals, their business would determine the course of economic activity, their culture and taste dominated, their lifestyles and consumption patterns would be emulated. Their choices and habits of work, modes of dwelling and leisure would imprint the evolving urban space of rapidly growing cities. None of this was possible in a city like Istanbul where the imperial presence would easily outweigh, and could choose to hamper, the release of such potential implicit in the development of a merchant class. The commercial orientation of port-cities often had historical roots, pre-dating the nineteenth century. It was, however, the relationship with world markets
that made port-cities and their merchant communities grow rapidly, eclipsing the (often inland) imperial administrative centers. As world trade increased by about fifty-fold over the nineteenth century, it was these cities that became the principal conduits of the increased flows of commodities, money, and people. Most of the direct and indirect employment associated with trade was created in these ports.

But ports were located in cities, and while they provided the centers of gravity, port-cities became more than trading enclaves: The new networks also presaged new relations and a social structure, visible foremost in the formation of urban societies. Within these societies, the glamour of the western lifestyle, its freedom and glitter, as well as its consumption patterns became attractions. Port-cities came to exhibit an alternative universe to the rest of the realm, not only because of the economic opportunities and political privilege they offered, but as places of a different cultural practice and, through the new public spaces and buildings, a built environment which so glaringly expressed these differences. There were paved streets, department stores, European style hotels, and cafes. Street cars made real the idea of urban congestion and anonymous proximity and, most importantly, gas lighting made parts of the city accessible at night. The second half of the century was remarkable for the invention of a technology of urban life in European and American cities; most of this technology was diffused to the port-cities, albeit at a reduced scale and with some delay. In fact, it was the novelty of the built environment which often struck those arriving from hinterlands.

The triumph of the nineteenth-century European bourgeoisie lay in imprinting the cities with their material and cultural needs; in doing so, they invented a new urban life. Port-cities carried this new lifestyle model to the peripheries. Their novelty immediately became attractive to the population around them. We would not be far off if we draw a parallel with the free cities of the late Middle Ages, which promised to the newcomer not only economic opportunities, but also freedom and a new élan. The territory around nineteenth-century port-cities was also characterized by a peasant economy only superficially penetrated by commodity production. The cities by the sea exerted sufficient attraction to be able to pull their hinterland into their gravitation, not only through the development of trade and credit networks toward the interior, but also because they attracted immigrants. To their new populations, the Kordon in İzmir and the Corniche in Alexandria must have seemed as marvelous as did the town square and the great cathedrals in European cities half a millennium earlier.
III

The politics that accompanied the transformation of port-cities relied on the weakness and subservience of the states in which they were located. We can be more specific in the case of the Eastern Mediterranean and talk about the impositions of British hegemony on the Ottoman Empire, which allowed for the growth of trade, a merchant class, and the cities in which they were located. Crucial in this respect was the 1838 treaty liberalizing trade, which took away from the bureaucrats the major tool of control over both the content of trade and over traders.\textsuperscript{11} Other legislation followed, regulating personal status and such irksome matters as jurisdiction in the event of conflict between locals and foreigners. Special courts were established in order to deal with novel situations. It is safe to say that the population of the interior was neither targeted nor particularly implicated in all this restructuring. In the port-cities, however, newly gained liberties and privileges created the foundations of a different life. Through the Tanzi-mat reforms, the empire was reconfiguring itself in the guise of a modern state, abolishing legal separation among the communities and millets, and instead opting for a unitary citizenship.\textsuperscript{12} Of course, for the vast majority of the population nothing much changed in the conduct of everyday life; for the denizens of port-cities, however, the new legal equality actually created a framework for a new mode of life within the bounds of these urban havens. Yet, unrestricted equality within a growing market economy, rendered increasingly autonomous from political control, carried risks of new levels of polarization due to differential success in the new economy. The new proximity of previously isolated communities could lead to new social realities, but was also pregnant with potential tension. Successful merchants got wealthier, and poor immigrants became urban proletariat. The division of labor which had always run parallel to ethnic lines now more lavishly rewarded the favored, and the relative deprivation experienced by the lower classes rankled more acutely.

Populations increased rapidly in port-cities, with growth rates similar to twentieth-century urban areas.\textsuperscript{13} There were new working classes and lumpen groups, and eventually cultural and political intelligentsia, who found a more liberal environment in these outposts. The emergence of competing elites who were not all connected with trade indicated that the échelles would not remain the exclusive domain of the merchant princes. The new elites and middle classes who were not part of the commercial nexus did not all commit themselves to the liberal tenets of the world economy. In fact, more and more port-cities came to be known for their political fervor. Ethnic groups which had been contained in the separate
legal regimes and traditional economies of former spaces of habitation were now thrown together into fast boiling cauldrons. Within this mixture, the more successful elements began to shift allegiance toward the true masters of the emerging world system, banking on continuing support and protection. Relatively freed from the need to curry imperial favors, they became more cosmopolitan. At the same time, the new stratification and intensifying inequalities lead others to imagine what a more principled embrace of the local could potentially offer. This potential divergence within the expanding urban population was one of the various rivulets feeding into the deluge that brought down the liberal construct.\textsuperscript{14}

Yet, port-cities also attracted political activity which was not the product of real or perceived conflict on site. In the end-of-empire political frenzy, which seems to have engulfed the globe during the quarter century before the Great War, port-cities became privileged theaters where all kinds of political projects were launched: religious, ethnic, and secular-political. There were pan-Islamists, Zionists, Christian supremacists, revivalists; nationalists of every identifiable group in the vicinity; Marxists, socialists, and universalists. Whether in Salonica, Baku, Beirut, or Alexandria, one could find politics of all hues, ranging from cosmopolitanism to nationalism, from imperial atavism to urban separatism. Alongside merchants who were content with the smooth working of the gears of commerce and opposed any radical change, there were those in search of states that they could promote and perhaps influence. There were also imperial modernizers who naturally based their ‘revolutionary’ organizations in port-cities where an exposure to the reformist ideas wafting in from Europe was most likely. A center of Greek irredentism, Macedonian and Bulgarian nationalisms (and less importantly of Zionism), as well as the launching pad of the Young Turk revolution, Salonica is a good example.\textsuperscript{15} Ottoman port-cities became crucibles of all shades of political activity during the pre-War period.

While most of the politics conducted in port-cities in the pre-War era was directed to nationalisms and imperial renaissance, the fate of the real captains of trade and finance was tied too closely to the fortunes of the hegemonic power. They ideally preferred to be guided by the lodestar of economic gain and, in the process, to devise a form of governance of their own choosing. In this alternative the port-cities would come under a relatively autonomous administration of the patriciate, reminiscent of the urban governments of autocephalous cities of the late medieval period. Merchants’ associations, chambers of commerce, elite clubs, and masonic lodges dominated by expatriates and their local partners would
survive under the benign umbrella of British protection. The *cercles* would be the privileged locales of negotiation and informal rule. From Trieste to İzmir, from Alexandria to Shanghai, port-cities had acquired stable hierarchies, capable of delivering efficient administration, testifying to the possibility of an accommodation with empires and to a form of governance under a market-dominated globalism. Against the background of absolute and undivided rule by imperial centers, municipalities that were formed in the 1860s and 1870s in Eastern Mediterranean port-cities were perhaps a rehearsal for the envisaged devolution.16

IV

These attempts at self-governance fit well into the network logic of the global economy, but ultimately remained frustrated in the face of the destruction unleashed by the War. Multi-ethnic empires were a tried and comfortable framework for containing diversity. After the Great War, the alternative of the nation-state became the rule, even the mandates under the authority of the League of Nations gained legitimacy as preparatory forms for autonomous statehood. A religious, ethnic or linguistic principle was employed in order to invest the population with a homogenizing zeal. This was necessarily based on the presumed traits of a majority and made life difficult for minority cultures. Of the successor states to the Ottoman Empire, the only country which, with dubious success, attempted to escape the process was Lebanon. Lebanon was, of course, shaped around Beirut, the erstwhile port-city, in order to maintain its intricate confessional balances in the new world of nation-states. The trope of Phoenician ancestors permitted Lebanon to define itself as a trading nation. The country was conceived as a sea-oriented merchant entity rather than a land-based territorial unit. In this sense, it was an exception to the dominant orientation of new nation-states. As to the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean, Ankara and Cairo represented territorial preferences against network logics. Their principal openings to the wider world, İzmir and Alexandria, did not stand any chance of embracing ethnic diversity against political prerogatives to effect homogenization. Neither of the two could remain a port-city in republican Turkey or post-monarchic Egypt.

In Turkey, the suspicion toward the denizens of port-cities served as the active principle in the formation of the national entity. The existence of the new population and the new geography was predicated on the active cleansing of the territory where the very minorities whose existence had defined the port-cities had to be chased out.17 Port-cities became a collateral casualty of the immense human tragedy of ethnic clean-
sing, staged in the transition from empire to nation-state. The striking feature of port-cities had been ethnic co-existence. Population mixes in the littorals of the empires, whether China, India, or the Ottoman Empire, and especially in their port-cities, was substantially different from the interior’s. The much expanded populations of the port-cities were much less homogeneous than any urban entity in history. Port-cities had evolved as geographies where the ethnic diversity of the empire, which elsewhere could be contained in more or less segregated territories, became concentrated within urban boundaries. In the case of Turkey, with the Armenian deportation and massacres in 1915 and the compulsory Exchange of Populations applying to Greeks in 1923/24, the cleansing was especially rapid and drastic. More than two million Christians and a majority of the businessmen in the territory inherited by Turkey had thus been eliminated or driven out. If the conflagration in İzmir was a particularly extreme instance, the project of ethnic homogenization, which destroyed the social base for the operation of port-cities, was certainly the norm. Most foreigners left Republican Turkey, and non-Muslims were reduced from one-fifth of the population to less than 3 per cent. In Egypt the ousting of the ‘foreign’, global market-oriented population was more gradual, culminating in the decade after World War II. Despite this physical eradication, even after the virtual collapse of port-cities such as İzmir and Trabzon and many smaller ones, the nationalists continued to harbor a profoundly ambiguous relationship with the Ottoman legacy in confronting the previously cosmopolitan universe of the port-cities.

Structurally, the death knell of Eastern Mediterranean port-cities, les échelles du Levant, was the huge transformation of the world economy following the War. The few years of recovery during the 1920s could not forestall the end of the globalization ushered in after the mid-nineteenth century under British auspices. World trade diminished to less than half of its pre-war level, and flows of long or short term capital virtually ceased. With the drawing of new borders after World War I and the dismantling of trade and credit networks following the crises of the late 1920s, standing economic structures were rudely disrupted; old links lost their usefulness, and the logic of economic activity changed. All of this occurred in tandem with the disintegration of the global economy, thus eroding the material basis for port-city viability. The politics of the new nation-states and the restructuring of the world economy conspired to shift the center of gravity away from commercial and cultural networks.
based on trading coastal cities. The new states legitimized themselves on
the basis of an active suspicion of the geography of the old empires. Port-
cities and their inhabitants were now regarded with deep distrust and
accused of belonging to a different universe.

Port-city elites had done well under the weak umbrella of empires. They had been successful in negotiating with the imperial bureaucrats in
order to sustain a style of economic, social and cultural practice different
from the rest of the realm. Their attempts had yielded reforms at the level
of market freedom, rule of law, and citizenship rights. Along with the
empires themselves, however, port-cities were also added to the wreckage
contemplated by the angel of history. Emerging nation-states sought to
impose a substantive orientation to the economy which would necessarily
threaten the formal logic of the autonomous market as expressed in the
operations of port-cities. As a historical project, nationalism became the
opposite of the nineteenth-century world order, when Europe pretended
to modernize and assimilate the rest of the world through the agency of
port-cities. Nationalism advocated the dismantling of the global geogra-
phy of the world-economy; it promised a shift in the center of gravity
from networks converging on London to territories within national boun-
daries, centered on capital cities; it preached full control over the fate of
the nationals by the local states political as well as economic sovereignty.
Networks of the previous global order had produced socially and culturally
diversified populations; nationalists wanted to homogenize their
populations through schools and through economic and social policy.
Nationalists thought that cosmopolitanism was a chimera foolishly
pursued by a suspect population and that their brand of national identity
and belonging would provide the real thing. In this scheme the remaining
inhabitants of the port-cities would have to be absorbed into new national
societies and interact with the world only through the mediation of their
governments located in capital cities: Ankara, Damascus, Cairo.

National, territorial economies created their own potential for the ac-
cumulation of wealth. New businessmen emerged, businessmen who
were at first bound to political projects and necessarily subservient to
politicians. Later in the century, however, in the new era of globalization,
there was a sufficient development of self-standing bourgeoisies to press
for policies similar to the market-embracing liberalism of the previous
era. Of course, these policies would only make sense in the context of a
new world economy once again organized around autonomous markets.
States were forced again to accept legislating liberal rules of property and
freedom from political intervention. In this new era of market-dominated
liberalism and globalization in the final decades of the twentieth century, the history of port-cities, and especially of port-city autonomy, once again became relevant. It again seemed possible that a metropolitan order, a rule-based globalization, could connect with autonomous ‘world-cities’ contained within the weak and hopefully unobtrusive shells of nation-states, with the latter becoming less ethnic and more civic.\(^{20}\) The collective memory of the late-nineteenth-century experience may have played a part here: A re-evaluation of the port-city past could serve many purposes, not least the relativization and bracketing of the nationalist experience. A look at what port-cities were and what their denizens intended to achieve could well illuminate the political and cultural spaces available to cities and urbanites within the current wave of globalization. On the other hand, the current experience has allowed us to regard the history of the port-cities with new eyes. We now understand the aspirations and dilemmas, the ties and constraints, and the tragedy of their demise with greater empathy and foreboding. We debate newly minted concepts such as ‘urban citizenship’ and ‘right to the city’, with the full knowledge that they would have been much cherished by port-city denizens a century ago.\(^{21}\) And we indulge in an optimism that promises may yet be fulfilled the second time around.
ISTANBUL BETWEEN THE CRIMEAN WAR AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

As I followed the hambal, who was proceeding towards the lodging reserved for me, I entered a labyrinth of streets and narrow lanes, tortuous, ignoble, horribly paved, full of holes and pitfalls, encumbered with leprous dogs and asses carrying beams or rubbish. The dazzling mirage presented by Constantinople at a distance was rapidly vanishing, Paradise was turning into a slough, poetry into prose; and I asked myself, with a feeling of melancholy, how these ugly hovels could possibly assume at a distance such a seductive aspect, such a tender and vaporous colour.

Théophile Gautier, 1852

The mid-1850s marked the opening of a new era in the history of the Ottoman Empire, with the increasing influence of Europe and an array of modernising endeavours. Significant change occurred on political, social and cultural fronts and, within a short space of time, this had a deep impact on Istanbul's urban morphology. While overall city planning was never achieved, parts of Istanbul saw piecemeal urban renewal projects implemented by both local and foreign experts. Regulations and codes which were drafted in the first half of the nineteenth century were further developed and began to be applied in parts of Istanbul. The administration of the city, including civil services, was assigned to European-style municipalities though the desired outcome was not always achieved. At the same time, the city would see some remarkable infrastructure projects, although not all proposals would be implemented.

The Crimean War of 1853–56 put Britain and France in alliance with the Ottoman Empire against Russia. After the war the Ottoman Empire joined the 'Concert of Europe', the system established at the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15 by Great Britain, Prussia, Austria and Russia to maintain the balance of power in Europe. The weak financial and military structure of the Ottoman Empire, however, did not make it an equal member of the alliance and it provided further opportunities for the European powers to influence internal Ottoman politics. The Ottoman demand for the abrogation of capitulations, commercial privileges given to European states since the mid-sixteenth century, was not accepted as the Ottoman legal system, according to the European states, 'was too alien for Europeans to live under'. All these political circumstances forced the Ottomans to intensify their modernisation attempts. The reforms instituted by the 1839 imperial edict were undermined by the declaration of another decree, Hattă-ı Hümâyün, on 18 February 1856. This edict, which was dictated by Britain and France in pledging their support during the Crimean War, confirmed the reforms of 1839 and promised equality of legal rights to all subjects of the Empire, regardless of ethnicity or religion.

The immediate impact of the Crimean War on Istanbul was direct contact between the city's inhabitants and British and French troops. Since the beginning of the Töreğmat era, contact between Ottomans and Europeans had gradually increased, but it was limited to high-ranking bureaucrats and officials only. After their arrival in 1854, the European troops were barracked in various parts of the city, before being sent to Sebastopol and other fronts to fight against the Russian army. The military hospitals for French and British soldiers in Fatih and Üsküdar further exposed Istanbul's inhabitants to European culture.

A significant economic impact of the European–Ottoman alliance flowed from substantially increased Ottoman trade with Europe, beginning with the Anglo–Ottoman Commercial Treaty of 1838. One notable indicator of this activity was a dramatic increase in naval traffic, which forced the Ottoman authorities to introduce new regulatory measures on maritime passage through the Bosphorus and Golden Horn. During the Crimean War Istanbul, for the first time in its history, was connected to the European telegraph network with a line constructed between the capital and Edirne. Steam ferries began service to the Asian side of the city and the shores of the Bosphorus, allowing easy access for the city's well-to-do population. More importantly, this period saw the ruling family abandon the old Topkapi Palace and move permanently to the new European-style palace built in Dolmabahçe in 1856.

The Crimean War also impacted on Istanbul's socio-cultural geography by intensifying the separation between the old walled city of Istanbul and the Galata–Pera region. The contrast between the two centres became visibly more explicit, leading Steven Rosenthal to describe Pera as a 'boom
town. The wartime shortages, together with the weakness of the Ottoman economy, helped the merchants and bankers of Galata to increase their economic and political power. According to the 1882 census records, approximately 220,000 people, a quarter of the whole urban population, lived in Galata making it the second most populous district of Istanbul after Fatih. The population of Galata was also heterogeneous, as almost half of its inhabitants were foreign subjects, Europeans and non-Muslim Ottoman citizens. They enjoyed the privileges they had gained under the infamous capitulations, as well as immunity from Ottoman law as they were under the protection of their respective embassies. Such privileges often extended to the local Greeks, Armenians and Jews who had commercial connections with European embassies. These conditions gave an unprecedented opportunity for the non-Muslim stratum of Ottoman society to increase their power, both economically and politically. The merchants and bankers, who had already begun to benefit from increased trade with Europe since the 1838 Commercial Treaty, were now hired by the Ottoman government to arrange loans from Europe.

The wealth acquired by these merchants and bankers was invested in premises along the Grande Rue de Pera, bringing a distinctly European flavour to this part of Istanbul. The newly opened shops in this street, with their displays of imported European goods, not only attracted the European and Levantine inhabitants of the city but also Muslim bureaucrats and high-ranking officials. Moreover, Pera became the hub of Western-style entertainments, a new phenomenon introduced during this period. Attractions included European-style hotels, restaurants, cafés, an Italian circus, a French theatre and an opera house.

Despite these developments, the urban quality of the city, even in its most Europeanised districts, was far from satisfactory. The narrow streets of Pera, for example, like most of the city, were poorly maintained and lacking in appropriate infrastructure. In addition to such physical shortcomings, there were growing social problems. Increased trade and wartime black markets had attracted to the city a large influx of shady fortune seekers and criminals. The lack of a modern and effective municipal administrative system became more apparent, prompting the British and French military to take matters into their own hands. They provided their own police and fire brigades, as well as health services to combat cholera, plague and other diseases. The demands of Europeans for a better built environment induced the new Ottoman bureaucrats to force their government to reassess fundamentally the issue of the urban administration of Istanbul.

Figure 11 A view of the Dolmabahçe Palace, c.1890s

Municipal Reform

In 1855 these political and social conditions prompted the establishment of the Şebromaneti (Municipality) in the form of the French préfecture de la ville, a significant milestone in the urban administration of Istanbul. The organisation of the Şebromaneti established the office of a Şebromen (Mayor) appointed by the Sultan, with two deputies and a city council consisting of 12 representatives, in addition to the Şebromen and his deputies, drawn from various strata of the population and its trade and commercial guilds. The Şebromaneti was to be given responsibility for the regulation and collection of taxes, construction and repair of roads, cleaning and general improvement of the city. The works assigned to the Şebromaneti were to be supervised by the Medres-i Vilâi-i Agham-i Adliye (Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinance) established by Mahmud II immediately after the abolition of the Janissaries.

Despite the new administrative structure, these changes produced no practical outcomes since the new municipality could only execute functions previously carried out by the kadi, such as the control of market prices and the administration of guilds. The lack of technical expertise and experience, coupled with financial shortages, did not allow the undertaking of the urgent and necessary works assigned to the Şebromaneti, and eventually led to a chaotic situation. The power and responsibility of the Şebromaneti was very limited as
all decisions required final approval in the Medev-i Valide. Furthermore, having no source of income to pay the salaries of municipal staff, the municipality had to rely on the central government for funding. Within a matter of months this led to the removal of Salih Paşa, the first mayor, and the appointment of deputys and the establishment of the city council was deferred.11

This first, unsuccessful attempt to create a Western-style municipal system led to the creation of an advisory council called İstızağ-ı Şehr Komisyonu (Commission of the Order of the City) in 1856. This was an initiative of Emin Mühlis Efendi, who as a young diplomat worked at the Ottoman Embassy in Vienna and later became an official translator for the Ottoman government and a chief officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.12 The major aim was to utilise the knowledge and experience of Ottomans and established European residents of the city who had observed municipal administrations in Europe.13 The commission, in a similar way to the Şebrenamet, aimed to establish municipal regulations in order to improve public infrastructure, hygiene in market places, street cleaning and illumination, and regularisation of the street pattern.14

The head of the İstızağ-ı Şehr Komisyonu was Hacı Hüsam Efendi, who was also the Şebrenini. Members of the commission, however, included non-Muslim Ottoman subjects who had good command of a European language and Europeans who had settled in the city and accumulated wealth during the Crimean War. Commission members included: Antoine Alleon, a member of a very rich French family which had fled to and settled in Istanbul after the French Revolution; Avram Camondo, a Jewish banker and real estate speculator under Austrian protection; Ohannes Migenic, an Armenian banker; David Revelkali, an Ottoman Greek merchant under British protection; Ferhad Paşa, an Austrian military advisor; Franko Efendi, a member of the government’s translation office; Mehmed Salih Efendi, the chief physician to Sultan Abdülmecid; Refik Mustafa; and Yusuf Efendi.15

As an advisory body, the İstızağ-ı Şehr Komisyonu achieved little to improve the urban infrastructure of the city. Among the few works it carried out were the regulation of garbage collection and the selling of goods on streets, the trial laying of European-style road pavements and the installation of gas lighting along parts of the Grande Rue de Pera. French engineers were hired to supervise the pavement works, with stones and labour supplied by the Imperial Arsenal. The gas was supplied by a plant at Ferköy that was originally set up to service the Dolmabahçe Palace. By 1857 the commission had become greatly frustrated, having achieved very little in practical terms. It therefore made various recommendations in the form of a memorandum, almost an ultimatum, to the Ministry of Commerce on issues such as street construction and illumination, sewerage, garbage collection, financial support for the municipal programme and an effective administrative structure.16

The proposals of the İstızağ-ı Şehr Komisyonu were accepted by the government and Istanbul was subsequently divided into 14 municipal districts in 1858.17 As noted by Rosenthal, the commission’s proposal was made to the Ottoman government at the most opportune time as the Ottoman Empire, being a new member of the Concert of Europe, wished to demonstrate its ability to implement European models of administration, including municipal affairs.18 Financial difficulties and lack of expertise, however, meant it was impossible to begin the intended works across the city. As an exemplar, a municipal administration was established only in the Sixth District, comprising Galata, Pera, Taksim, Pangaltı, Kumrüs, Kâşmpaşa and Tophane. Since it was in this district that European settlers, bankers and merchants were located, as well as European embassies, it was possible to collect taxes and other charges to fund the required works.19 The privileged status of the Sixth District was highlighted by its direct link to the Sadrazam, whereas the other 13 districts were under the supervision of the Şebrenamet.

The Municipality of the Sixth District, chaired by a mufid (director), was comprised of a meclis (municipal council) of seven members appointed by the government. The members of the council were required to be property owners within the municipal borders of the district and to have resided in the city for more than ten years. These were Antoine Alleon and Avram Camondo, who were also amongst the members of the previous İstızağ-ı Şehr Komisyonu, Septime Franchini, an Italian, and Charles Hanson, a member of the British merchant community of Istanbul. Kâmil Bey, the chief of protocol in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was the first director of the Sixth District. During his service in the Foreign Office, Kâmil Bey had visited many European cities and headed the commission that organised the Ottoman pavilion at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1856. This experience, as well as his previous administrative positions, was recognised by the award of the French Légion d’honneur, and positioned Kâmil Bey as the ideal person for the task. The other members of the council included two local Greeks, an Ottoman Armenian, two Muslims and Theodore Naum, an Ottoman citizen under French protection who had established the first opera of Istanbul in the mid-1840s. Four foreign advisors were also to be selected by the government to assist in civic services.20

The responsibilities of the new municipality were very broad, including all civil services such as road construction, water supply, sewerage, street cleaning
and the regulation of markets. Legislative power given to the Sixth District was also unprecedented. The district was allowed to draft its own budget, to appoint staff, to collect property tax and even to enter into contracts to obtain loans to carry out its works. With its extensive powers the Sixth District, until the loss of its privileged status in 1868 with the introduction of a new municipal model for the whole city, undertook some noteworthy works such as street widening, improvement of roads, street lighting, garbage collection and the installation of water and sewerage systems.

The Sixth District had a technical bureau consisting of a cadastral chief and two officers, an engineer and an architect to administer and service approximately 12,000 buildings within the new municipality. For tax collection purposes, a detailed cadastral map of the area at 1:2,000 scale, the first of its kind in Istanbul, was prepared between 1858 and 1860 by G. Cofici, under the direction of the chief engineer, G. d’Ostaya. Work then began on various street levelling works and enlargements. At the northern end of the Galata Bridge demolitions were carried out in Karaköy, the busiest section of Galata, to permit the construction of a new commercial office building for the municipality, financed by local bankers. In another important project, Karaköy was linked to the western end of the Grande Rue de Pera by the construction of a new street. Although many of them could not be fully implemented, new regulations were issued to administer civil services such as street cleaning, provision of street lighting, sewerage and gas, inspection of businesses and shopkeepers, and supervision of services.

Despite its achievements, the municipality encountered severe difficulties, both financially and administratively. Tax revenue was far below what was necessary to maintain a viable financial base. In part, this was caused by the refusal of the European and non-Muslim inhabitants of the district, who were under the protection of European embassies, to pay taxes. These financial difficulties, coupled with poor management and corruption, led the Ottoman government to intervene in 1862 and appoint Server Efendi, the former chief secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the new director of the district in 1863. While the majority of the municipal council was still formed by non-Muslims and foreigners, four Muslim Turks were appointed to the council by the government which now more strictly controlled and supervised the works of the Sixth District. Server Efendi’s appointment also brought the government’s full support to the municipality, enabling it to increase its range of municipal services. A municipal doctor, for example, was appointed to provide clinical services to the poor, as well as a free immunisation programme for the children of the area. Regular municipal duties such as garbage collection and street cleaning were also resumed.

The most significant of the Sixth District’s work, however, began in November 1864 with the demolition of the ancient Genoese ramparts under the supervision of the municipal engineer, Marie de Launay. Like the demolition of Vienna’s city walls in 1857, the aim was to link the old inner city to the new and growing outer sections of the region. Other major works executed by the Sixth District were the opening of a new tree-lined road between Taksim and Pangalou, the relocation of cemeteries in Şişli and the establishment of a Beaux-Arts style park in Taksim, the planning of a new public park in Tepebaşı. In the early 1870s construction began on a new ‘Municipal Palace’ in Şişhane as a new administration office for the Sixth District—the last major work of the Sixth District before it lost its privileged status.

Regardless of these works, Pera still remained far from a modern urban centre in European terms. Despite all efforts made by the Sixth District, most of the streets still lacked basic infrastructure. By 1875, eighteen years after the establishment of the Municipality of the Sixth District, the Grande Rue de Pera, according to a British correspondent, was not more than a lane and the streets which branched from it “would be dignified if the name of ‘lane’ were applied to them”. Most of the streets were paved with huge, uneven, sharp-pointed stones” suggesting that they were laid down during the Middle Ages. There were ‘no drains, or gutters’ and the mud that covered the streets was ‘deep, black and slippery’.

The Great Fire of Pera in 1870 created an opportunity to change the filthy appearance of the area. The fire, which started on the night of 5 June, resulted in the loss of more than 3,500 buildings with almost the entire Grande Rue de Pera burnt down, as well as 63 streets and 103 residential quarters. On 19 September the government announced a redevelopment plan that required the redesign of all burnt areas. The new plan envisaged a regularised street pattern with large streets up to 20 metres wide. A 30-metre-wide grand boulevard between Taksim and Tepebaşı, parallel to the Grande Rue de Pera, was also proposed. The new plan, however, attracted severe criticism from the residents and property owners whose interests would be adversely affected by the implementation of new streets. After long debates the government withdrew the plan and announced that the reconstruction of the burnt areas was to proceed according to the existing plan. Perhaps the most practical outcome that the government achieved following the Pera fire was the establishment of a modern firefighting department by two experts brought from Hungary for this purpose.
not help it to implement the new municipal scheme successfully. Firstly, the municipality could not collect the intended property tax it needed to achieve its goals. Except for Galata, no other parts of Istanbul had the cadastral maps that would enable an accurate estimation of tax income to be made. Moreover, the sporadic fires had resulted in a bulk loss of houses and other buildings which made tax collection even more difficult. Viable financial support from the government, which was struggling with the dire financial crisis, was also out of the question. Under these harsh conditions some of the 14 municipal councils could not be established and the general municipal council never met. In the end the new municipal model did not bring about any practical results outside the Sixth District.34

**Street Regularisations in Istanbul**

While the government failed to extend the municipal works outside Galata, the Istanbul Peninsula saw its first street regularisations in the mid-1850s. Luigi Storari, an Italian engineer who had previously prepared a cadastral plan of Izmir between 1854 and 1856, was engaged to prepare new street maps of previously burnt-out areas. He worked in Istanbul from 1856 to 1863 and carried out various street regularisation projects in parts of the city.35 In 1862 Antoine Figuère, a French entrepreneur, was hired by the Ministry of Public Works to carry out construction of European-style pavements in some major streets of Istanbul. The thoroughfares Figuère paved included Bahçekapı Street between the Bab-ı Âli and Yeni Mosque in Eminönü, some streets in Tophane and a street between Uşküdar and Büyükçamlıca on the Asian side of the city.36 However, the Istanbul Peninsula had to wait until May 1866 with the establishment of the **Istanbul-ı Türk Komisyonu** (Commission of Road Upgrading) before a coordinated approach to street regularisation projects was undertaken.

This initiative came after a devastating fire—a problem that had plagued the city throughout its entire history. The fire started in a local café in Hocapasha district at 11 o’clock on the night of 5 September 1865, and with the aid of a north-easterly breeze spread throughout the city in a short space of time.37 The fire caused great destruction. It consumed almost one-third of the Istanbul Peninsula, from the Golden Horn to the shores of the Sea of Marmara, destroying all buildings, including government offices and mosques. The conflagration became known in Ottoman history as **Harîke-i Kâbir**, the Great Fire. This catastrophic inferno, as observed by Ergin, provided an opportunity for the Ottoman administration to introduce a new regularised urban pattern and to construct large streets in the burnt-out
The 1849 building regulation and, in particular, the experience gained in Galata prompted the Ottoman administration to set up a more effective administrative mechanism to deal with problems concerning the narrow, labyrinthine street patterns and fire-prone timber buildings.

The nine members of the İstihlāšt-Tarık Komisiyonu, unlike those of the Sixth District Municipality, were all Muslim. The existing street patterns of Istanbul were harshly described in the commission’s reports as ‘narrow crooked holes which do not allow the passage of humans, let alone carriages, and are not worth calling streets’. The commission first mapped the burnt areas and then prepared a master plan which envisaged the opening of new roads between 4.5 and 16.75 metres wide according to their importance and function. No timber buildings were permitted and 20 per cent of all land parcels, except those for mosques and other religious buildings, were required to be excised for future road reservations. Financial incentives, such as waiving the levies on building materials and construction and providing cheap materials and transportation, were also included in the plan. Of the other street projects carried out by the İstihlāšt-Tarık Komisiyonu, the most significant was the enlargement of Divanyolu to a width of 25 zıra (16.75 metres). This street had formed the backbone of the city since the Byzantine period (the old mes) but had been gradually narrowed by uncontrolled building construction that had reduced its width to less than three metres at various locations. With the reconstruction of Divanyolu, for the first time in its history, Istanbul’s historic street pattern was significantly modified according to modernisation principles. This brought about the demolition of shops in the vicinity of Constantine’s Column in order to achieve a straight alignment. Additionally, parts of the mevârde of the Atik Ali Paşa complex and the Elçi Han were demolished and the dome of the hamam of Çemberli Paşa cut away.

The modernisation of the historic precinct caused a reactionary response in some parts of the community. The demolition of historic buildings and graveyards, for example, attracted severe criticism, especially within conservative circles. In this respect, it is of interest to note the colourful exchange between Fuad Paşa, a leading bureaucrat of the Tanzimat, and an elderly city dweller during the relocation of the graveyards of Köprüli Mehmed Paşa and his family for the enlargement of Divanyolu. ‘Paşa, you have been ordering the destruction of these mosques and tombs but the people will shit on your grave,’ said the elderly man. The Paşa answered, ‘I will not be a problem, old fellow. If they really defecate on my grave, their children will definitely sweep it away into the sea.’ In another conversation Fuad Paşa repaid a compliment made by the Şehremihi, Huseyin Bey, with the following words: ‘We have made these roads with the stones thrown at us’.

Figure 13 Newly enlarged Divanyolu, Constantine’s Column and the sliced dome of the hamam of Çemberli Paşa, c.1890s
In the early 1870s a major event occurred with the visit of the important historical figure of Georges-Eugène Haussmann, who created modern Paris in the mid-nineteenth century. The initial contact with Haussmann was made during Sultan Abdülaziz’s visit to the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris at the invitation of Napoleon III. Abdülaziz was the first Ottoman sultan to venture into Western Europe for other than military reasons. His visit allowed him to inspect at first-hand the French capital, which since 1853 had been transformed by extensive public works under the prefecture of Haussmann. Following the expiration of his contract in Paris, Haussmann arrived in Istanbul in February 1873 on the invitation of Ismail Paşa, the Viceroy of Egypt, who had also visited the 1867 exhibition and had carried out noteworthy modernisation works in Cairo.

During his visit to Istanbul Haussmann was accompanied by a Monsieur Cameré, a road and bridge engineer, and a Monsieur Duparchy, a building contractor. Whilst there he also visited the gardens in Tarabya which were designed by his ex-gardener, Monsieur Barillet-Deschamps, who had worked in Istanbul between 1869 and 1871. At this time Haussmann had several meetings with the Grand Vizier and the Sultan. After spending a couple of months in Istanbul, Haussmann returned to Paris in June of the same year. Today little evidence remains concerning Haussmann’s contribution to the urban renewal of Istanbul during this visit. According to Fazıl Halil Edhem Bey, director of the Imperial Museum, Haussmann worked on the preparation of maps after the fires that took place in the Aksaray region. Again, architect Mazhar Bey claimed that Haussmann worked on the opening of a new boulevard around Hagia Sophia, but this project, requiring five million liras, was not approved by the Sultan. Despite this slender evidence of Haussmann’s contribution to Istanbul’s urban planning, it is now known that he saw the dire financial conditions of the Ottoman Empire as a promising business opportunity. Haussmann offered to establish a subsidiary of his finance company, Crédit Mobilier, in Istanbul through which he would organise loans for military and other purposes. His local contact in Istanbul was the famous land speculator, Avram Camondo, who played a significant role in the municipal organisations of Galata. After the Ottoman government defaulting on its loan repayments to Crédit Mobilier, Haussmann proposed a model for collecting taxes which was accepted by the Ottoman administration eight years later.

While the street regularisation projects were carried out in a piecemeal fashion, additional planning legislation was introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century. These legislative reforms included the 1853 Sokaklara Dair Nizamnamesi (Regulation on Streets), the 1863 Tarak ve Ehiye Nizamnamesi (Road and Building Code), the 1863 Rahîmlar Nizâmnâmesi (Code for Wharves), the 1875 İstanbul ve Bülent Selâsîde Yapışma Ehiyeyin Suveri İstasimgi Dair Nizamnamesi (Regulation on Construction Methods in Istanbul) and the 1882 Ehiye Kanunu (Building Act).

**Improved Transport**

An important initiative to follow the Crimean War was the improvement of the city’s public transportation. Chief amongst these improvements was the renovation of bridges over the Golden Horn in 1853 to provide a more convenient connection between the two shores. The first bridge constructed between Üsküdar and AYazapkapı was replaced with an iron bridge in 1872. Regular steam ferry services between the European and Asian shores of the Bosphorus had been started in 1850 by two foreign investors. A year later the Şirket-i Hayriye, a maritime transport company owned by members of the ruling family, high-ranking bureaucrats and Galata bankers, was established to provide regular ferry services. In 1869 Istanbul welcomed a new mode of public transport with the establishment of the Derâücka Tramway Şirketi (Istanbul Tram Company), which operated a horse-drawn tram service in the Istanbul Peninsula and Pera. The first line was opened between Beşiktaş and Tophane with horses brought from Hungary and Austria. This was followed in 1871 by the opening of new tram routes in the Istanbul Peninsula between AYazapkapı and Aksaray, Aksaray and Yedikule, and Aksaray and Topkapı.

By far the most ambitious public transport project was the opening in 1875 of an underground railway tunnel between Kanköy and Galata, designed by the French engineer Eugène Henri Gavand in 1869. In 1872 the Metropolitan Railway of Constantinople from Galata to Pera secured a 45-year concession from the government to operate a rail link between the two busiest financial districts of the city, which were occupied by Levantine and European inhabitants. The railway tunnel, which was the second of its kind in the world, consisted of a 554-metre funicular system operated by steam engines with stations at each end. This short line remained the only underground railway in Istanbul until a new line opened between Aksaray and Topkapı in 1989.

This period also brought with it the first international railway line connecting Istanbul to Europe. The contract for this ambitious project was granted in 1869 to the Société des Chemins de Fer Orientaux, a company established by Baron Maurice de Hirsch, a Belgian-based banker, and financed with Austrian, British, French and Belgian capital. Istanbul was
connected first to Edirne (Adrianople) by a 355-kilometre line in 1871. In 1873 a 91-kilometre line was constructed between Haydarpaşa and İzmit on the Asian side of the city. The Istanbul–Edirne line was further extended to Dedeağac (Alexandropolis) in 1872 and Sofia in 1874. Leaving Istanbul, the European railway followed the shore of the Sea of Marmara where it pierced the southern city walls at various points. Because the terminal was located at Sirkeci, the commercial hub of the walled city to the west of Sarıçamlı Point (Sarayburnu), the railway was forced to pass through the lower reaches of the southern gardens of the Topkapı Palace. This controversial decision was made after Sultan Abdülaziz’s famous statement, ‘The railway must come to Istanbul, even if it has to pass through my own back’. Although the major reason for the construction of the railway lines was to link Istanbul to Anatolia and Europe to facilitate increasing international trade and commercial activity, the railways on each of the European and Asian shores soon began to run suburban train services linking the outer sections of the city to the historic centre. The steam ferry services and the newly opened suburban train services pushed Istanbul’s urban growth on an east-west axis around the shores of the Sea of Marmara and on a south-west axis along the Bosphorus.

Istanbul during the Hamidian Years

The infrastructure works of the 1850s and 1870s were carried out to modernise Istanbul at a time when the Empire was surviving on borrowed European money. The loan capital was spent on endless wars, the construction of a modern navy and financing modern educational institutes and Western-style palaces. This excessive level of spending brought the Ottoman Empire to financial ruin and bankruptcy in 1876. The ensuing bitter economic conditions led to a bureaucratic coup that ended with the removal of Sultan Abdülaziz from the throne on 30 May 1876. He was found dead in the Çırağan Palace shortly after. The short-lived rule of Murad V, who suffered from serious psychiatric problems, was followed by the stable 39-year reign of Abdülmecit II from 1 September 1876.

Sultan Abdülmecit came to the throne after promising to establish a constitutional monarchy. This was a reflection of the reaction to the extreme Westernisation of the state apparatus and bureaucratic oligarchy, which first crystallised in the political movement known as Genç Osmanlılar (Young Ottomans, also known in the West as Juni-Tarihi). The reforms of Tanzimat were not based on popular demands, but were the initiatives of an elite who saw the introduction of Western institutions and practices as the only way to save the Empire from collapse. The reforms, however, held little appeal to the wider Muslim stratum of Ottoman society since they only helped non-Muslims to increase their wealth and power within the current political system. The reforms, moreover, failed to establish a sustainable modern economy and only intensified Ottoman dependence on the Great Powers, forcing the Empire into a subordinate and increasingly indebted role in the international financial system.

Criticising this growing dependence, the Young Ottomans—who had grown up under the Tanzimat regime and were influenced by the European ideals of liberalism and nationalism—advocated a political ideology called Osmanlılık (Ottomanism). They believed that liberalism and nationalism could be merged with Islamic culture to help create an Ottoman national identity. All Ottomans, regardless of their religious and ethnic differences, would be unified under the political ideology of Ottomanism, which required loyalty to the new concepts of millet (nation) and millet (nation) and not necessarily to the absolute power of the ruling sultan. The Young Ottomans, despite the lack of a common and clearly defined ideological standpoint in the group, demanded the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in the mid-1860s and early 1870s.  

Abdülmecit II kept his promise and the first Ottoman constitution was drafted in December 1876 and the Ottoman Parliament met in March 1877 after a two-tiered election process. This first constitutional experiment, however, was short-lived. The 1877–78 Ottoman–Russian War led Abdülmecit to suspend the parliament and assume absolute rule of the Empire. This was a decisive end to the Tanzimat era’s bureaucratic hegemony, whereby the power of the sultan had largely been usurped by senior bureaucrats who had assumed Western values and management practices.

Financial and economic conditions worsened with the Russian declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire in 1877. The Russian armies reached the outskirts of Istanbul a year later, and the invasion of the city was averted only by the intercession of the European powers. The Ottomans, however, lost control of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria in Eastern Europe and Karabagh in the east. As compensation for their help with the war against Russia, the Ottomans ceded Cyprus to Britain. This dramatic territorial loss resulted in a flood of refugees into the Empire, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, from former Ottoman provinces. In the three years to 1885 Istanbul’s population increased from 382,376 to 873,575.  

Reforms in technological areas, however, continued and even accelerated under Abdülmecit’s reign. During the Hamidian years the Ottoman Empire undertook significant infrastructure projects in agriculture, railways and mining, all of which further contributed to Ottoman integration into
world markets. The telegraph network was extended and Istanbul was now connected to every corner of the Empire by newly constructed telegraph lines. The existing rail network also saw a significant increase with new lines opened in Anatolia, Syria and the Arabian Peninsula. In 1892 Istanbul was first connected to Ankara and then in 1894 to Konya. In 1903 a German company proposed the famous Bagdad Railway project to extend the Anatolian railways to Bagdad and Basra. Education was one of the other significant achievements experienced during the Hamidian years. In the 1880s many primary and secondary schools were opened and modern imperial colleges established to supply much-needed public servants to the bureaucracy and educated administrative staff and medical doctors to the army.75

Another significant characteristic of the Hamidian years was the rise of political Islam. During his 39-year reign Abdülhamid used Islam as a political tool in his struggle, not only against his opponents who demanded constitutionalism and liberalism, but also against Western imperialism. He presented himself as the ‘Protector of the Islamic World’ in the hope that this new title would give him more leverage in dealing with the European powers. His international policy resulted in a close relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Germany, the new rising imperial power in Europe following the country’s unification in 1871. German Kaiser Wilhelm II, the leader of the only European power without Muslim colonies, visited Istanbul and other parts of the Ottoman Empire in 1898.58 His visit to the city was commemorated by a public fountain, Alman Çeşmesi (the German Fountain), which was built in Germany and transported to Istanbul where it was assembled in Sultanahmet Square.

The rise of Ottomanism and political Islam was reflected in the fabric of the city of Istanbul from the late 1870s. This inspired a new movement that advocated a revivalist architectural style drawn from classical forms of the Ottoman and Islamic traditions. The initial signals of this movement appeared early in 1873, with the codification of Ottoman architecture in the famous text called Uum-i Mimar-i Osmanî (Principles of Ottoman Architecture). Written by İbrahim Edhem Paşa, Minister of Public Works, this was the first book about Ottoman architecture and was prepared for the 1873 Universal Exposition in Vienna. Its aim was to represent the ‘universalistic aspirations’ of Ottoman architecture to the Western world.59 Although the Young Ottomans were soon crushed by Abdülhamid’s autocratic rule, the influence of their ideas in the 1870s led to embryonic examples of Islamic Revivalist architecture in the following decade. Whilst there is no conclusive evidence that this architectural language was supported by Abdülhamid’s regime, it was either intentionally or coincidentally represented in large-scale Ottoman public buildings in the late-nineteenth century.

Interestingly, Islamic Revivalist architecture was practised by European architects who taught at the Sanayi-i Neftî Mektebi Akbi (School of Fine Arts) established in 1883 on the model of the French École des Beaux-Arts and the Hendese-i Mühür Mektebi (School of Civil Engineering) founded in 1884. Both were initiatives of Abdülhamid’s educational reform. However, the architects’ knowledge of Islamic architecture was only sufficient to allow them to decorate Western-style buildings superficially with Islamic decorative motives. One of the most significant examples of this revivalist architecture was the Sirkeci Train Terminal, which was constructed at the end of the Istanbul Peninsula in 1890. Designed by the German architect August Jasmund, who was sent to the Ottoman Empire by the German government and taught at the School of Civil Engineering, the Sirkeci Train Terminal represented the principles of Beaux-Arts composition, such as symmetry, spatial hierarchy and eclecticism, overlaid with decorative elements borrowed from North African Islamic architecture. Another noteworthy example of the style, based on classical Ottoman forms, was the Office of Public Debt Building designed in 1897 by French architect Alexandre Vallaury, who conducted the architectural education at the School of Fine Arts.60 However, Vallaury’s most spectacular building was the Mektebi-i Sahane-i Tıbbîye (Imperial School of Medicine) completed in 1903 between Üsküdar and Kadıköy on the Asian side of the Bosphorus.

One of the noteworthy events that occurred in the Hamidian period was the introduction of a new municipal model for Istanbul. In 1877 two municipal acts were proposed in the Ottoman Parliament: Dersaadet Belediye Kanunu (Istanbul Municipal Act) and Vilayet Belediye Kanunu (Cities Municipal Act). Separate municipal legislation for Istanbul, despite the severe criticisms of the members of parliament from other parts of the Empire, simply formalised Istanbul’s pre-existing privileged status in the new legal system. Emulating the municipal model of Paris, the 1877 Dersaadet Belediye Kanunu divided Istanbul into 20 municipal districts.61 The new legislation abrogated the few remaining concessions of the Sixth District. Despite the optimistic approach, the implementation of the new municipal model was difficult. The government had previously tried, but failed, to implement a 14-region municipal model in 1868. Increasing the number of the districts obviously made it more complicated for the government which was already struggling with major financial problems. Also the 1877–78 Ottoman–Russian War did not even allow the Ottoman administration to attempt this new scheme.
government eventually divided Istanbul into 10 municipal districts in 1878 and appointed directors in each district. This model, although it did not bring about any practical outcomes for most of the city, remained until 1908.62

Unrealised Proposals
While Istanbul was witnessing the experimental stages of revivalist architecture, another significant impact of the economic and political crises of the 1870s on the city was the injection of international finance into major projects. The monetary crisis was solved by the establishment of the Deyân-ı Unvanîye (Office of Public Debts) in 1881, a model suggested by Haussmann eight years earlier. The office was authorised to collect taxes to secure debts directly on the behalf of European creditors, thus providing wider assurances to foreign investors and merchants. With the establishment of the Office of Public Debts, the Ottoman Empire's integration into the world economy was further accelerated, bringing with it some major project initiatives by Western entrepreneurs in Istanbul and many other parts of the Empire.

A remarkable proposal of the time was to connect Asia to Europe by construction of a bridge over the Bosphorus. This exciting idea generated various bridge designs from leading international engineers, though none of them were to be realised. While preliminary discussions had started in the late 1870s, a viable bridge proposal was first prepared by Captain James Buchanan Eads, an American engineer who specialised in the construction of bridges and pontoons. Eads was assisted by A. O. Lambert, a civil engineer specialising in the construction of railways and bridges in Europe and America. Eads and Lambert's proposal called for an iron bridge carrying a railway connection between Rumelihisar on the European shore and Anadoluhisar on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus. The planned bridge would be 1,828.8 metres long, 30.48 metres wide and have fifteen spans. According to the design, the Bosphorus Bridge would have a 228.6-metre-wide span in the centre, then the longest span yet constructed in the world. The wide span was to be carried by two 15.24-metre-wide central masonry piers built of granite from nearby quarries. There would also be two spans of 152.4 metres adjoining the central span. The cost of the project was an estimated US$25 million and the designers envisaged a six-year construction period. The proposed bridge was considered an extension of the intra-city transportation between the European and Asian sectors of the city which had been provided by steamships since the early 1850s. The construction of the bridge would make the Asian side of the city easily accessible, which in turn would open up new residential areas for the city's wealthier citizens who had their businesses in Pera and Galata. The revenue generated from the sale of new building allotments was intended to finance the bridge.63

The Eads and Lambert proposal was followed by another bridge project put forward by a French syndicate in 1890. Again, the proposal intended to connect Rumelihisar to Kandilli, but with only a single span over 800 metres long and 70 metres high.64 A decade later a more ambitious project was announced by an international consortium called the Compagnie Internationale du Chemin de Fer de Bosphore and submitted to Sultan Abdülhamid II on 19 November 1900. The aim of this project was to connect the Asian and European railways by means of two bridges over the Bosphorus. The first bridge was to be constructed between Sarıçam and Üsküdar and the second from Rumelihisar to Kandilli.65 The bridges were to be connected by a circumferential rail route around Istanbul. The project bore the signature of Ferdinand-Joseph Arnodin, a French engineer who was the principal inventor of the 'transporter bridge'.66

Figure 14 Arnodin's rail-ring proposal associated with two bridges over the Bosphorus
Arnoldin’s intended bridge between Sarayburnu and Üsküdar was an impressive engineering proposal. Based on his earlier works constructed in Bizerte (1898) and Rouen (1899) in France, it was a suspended cable steel structure comprising three main pylons. As a transporter bridge it was designed to carry goods and people from one shore of the Bosphorus to the other and, contrary to some contemporary interpretations, a rail connection over the bridge would not have been possible as its structure was not designed for this purpose and could not carry the required load. On the other hand, the second bridge, Hamidiye Bridge, being a suspension bridge with at least five massive masonry pylons was designed to carry a railway, as well as vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The Hamidiye Bridge, with its highly ornamental design, differs sharply from the lighter and unadorned transporter bridge. It was ornamented with bold eclectic Islamic architectural elements, such as domes and minarets, to create a series of small mosques above the piers. While no evidence has been found, the extraordinarily whimsical and overtly architectural character of the bridge suggests the involvement of an architect, perhaps Jasmund who designed the Sirkeci Train Terminus in a related style.

Arnoldin’s project is today interpreted as a major urban design scheme, with comparisons to Otto Wagner’s proposal for Vienna and Arturo Soria Matta’s for Madrid. This assumption, however, seems improbable and requires closer scrutiny. All available evidence indicates that the project was specifically prepared as part of the famous Baghdad Railway project. A German book by Siegmund Schneider published in the spring of 1900, at almost the same time as Arnoldin’s proposal, throws light on the purpose of the latter’s project and calls into question descriptions of it as a major urban design scheme. Schneider provided a detailed description of the Hamideye Bridge and published an artistic drawing of it (the same drawing that was attached to Arnoldin’s rail-ring project). Schneider saw the Hamidiye Bridge as a vital part of the Baghdad Railway project and promoted it as one of the most triumphal examples of German technology. According to Schneider, Victor Sassmann, a German engineer, dedicated his life to this project and conducted a geological survey of the Bosphorus 20 years before Arnoldin’s project.

The connection linking the rail bridge over the Bosphorus to the Baghdad Railway project is also mentioned in official documents from the Ottoman archives. A document translated by the Translation Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the time when Arnoldin’s drawings were submitted to the Sultan, states that the idea of constructing a bridge over the Bosphorus was a vital part of the Baghdad Railway project. It suggests, in part, that:

The idea of construction of a bridge over the Bosphorus was first considered before the Ottoman-Russian war (1877–78). This idea has now been re-emphasized together with the forthcoming Anatolia–Baghdad Railway project that was franchised to the Germans. The Bosphorus Railways Company aims to connect the routes of the South, South-West and the Central European Railways to the Baghdad Railway by a great bridge passing the Bosphorus at the narrowest points: Rumelihisar and Kanilli. The military bridge over which Dardus passed with 800,000 Persians and which was constructed by Mondrocles, the Corinthian architect, in 500 BC was also erected at this point of the Bosphorus.

These sources make it clear that there was a strong intention to connect the Baghdad Railway to the European rail network. What is worth noting here is that the descriptions of the bridge and its purpose in Schneider’s book are almost identical to those contained in the archival document from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In both sources it is clearly articulated that Rumelihisar and Kanilli were preferred because of their geographical position as the two closest points between the Asian and European shores of the Bosphorus, rather than because they were part of a major urban regional development scheme. And it is reasonable to assume that creating a French structural engineer, who may never have visited Istanbul, as being the author of a large urban regional development project requiring detailed knowledge of the city and experience in urban planning is unrealistic and highly unlikely. The most likely explanation is that the sponsors of the Baghdad Railway project commissioned Arnoldin to prepare a preliminary scheme in accordance with German geopolitics in the Middle East.

None of these bridge projects were built, remaining only on paper as concepts which reflected the intense foreign interest in major projects in Istanbul in the late-nineteenth century. As the Ottoman Empire became
increasingly integrated into European economic markets, such projects were seen to be good investments by international financial entrepreneurs. However, Istanbul would have to wait another 73 years before a bridge over the Bosphorus connected Asia to Europe.

Beside the various unrealised bridge proposals, another noteworthy proposal of the Hamidian period was the reorganisation of the Ottoman capital in accordance with European urban planning principles. At the beginning of the twentieth century Istanbul’s problems relating to population pressure, inadequate transportation, lack of sanitary facilities and poor development standards featured prominently in the observations and writings of European travellers. These critiques were echoed in the Palace and Salih Münir Paşa, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris, was given the task of finding an European expert to redevelop the Ottoman capital. In 1901 the ambassador approached Joseph Antoine Bouvard and offered him a commission to prepare a master plan for Istanbul. At this time Bouvard held various prestigious positions, such as inspector-general of the Architecture Department in the City of Paris and chief of the Architecture Department for the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris. Significantly, for the first time, a European architect was invited to prepare a holistic redevelopment plan for Istanbul.

Bouvard, however, never visited the city nor produced a master plan. Instead, he simply prepared a series of imaginative design concepts based on photographs of the city. His concepts included several artistic impressions of important quarters such as the Hippodrome, Beyazıt Square, Yeni Cami Square and Galata Bridge. In reality, Bouvard’s perspectives were nothing more than imprecise images inspired by scenes from European cities and applied to several central locations in Istanbul. In Bouvard’s proposal each square selected was considered independently, with no means of connection to the surrounding city. The existing street pattern and, most importantly, the highly dominant topography of the city were completely ignored in his designs. Apart from saving some monumental buildings, such as mosques and prominent government buildings, Bouvard’s sketches required the demolition of the existing urban form and its replacement by large, open, rectangular piazzas ornamented with European-style buildings, parks and wide roads. Overall, his design can be seen as a series of independent islands surrounded by the existing architectural character of the city.

Despite the unrealistic nature of his designs, Bouvard’s perspectives influenced the Ottoman administration so deeply that an imperial order to implement his project was issued. However, the financial conditions in which the Ottoman Empire found itself did not allow for the construction of such a costly project. Like other major projects prepared for Istanbul in the nineteenth century, Bouvard’s imaginative proposals never left the page.

Young Turks and Istanbul

Abdilhamid made many efforts to modernise the Empire, yet his extreme fear of, and paranoia about, conspiracies led him to impose a harshly autocratic regime. The whole of Istanbul became a virtual open-air prison with spies on every corner reporting perceived, imagined or manufactured political conspiracies back to the palace at Yildiz. The Sultan’s fear of a coup against him impacted all parts of the state apparatus. The navy, for example, was not allowed to leave its docks in the Golden Horn and the army had to conduct its military training without bullets. Curiously, his extreme paranoia led him to prohibit the introduction of electric trams, telephones and electrical appliances because he feared that such technological tools could be used against him. Even electric lamps imported from the United States were impounded at customs. It took long and protracted negotiations by their Western importers, who had the Sultan’s personal trust, before an imperial order was secured to allow their entry into the city.

Opposition to the Sultan’s absolutism began to crystallise in the 1880s when a group of military cadets, with the support of students and young bureaucrats, demanded the end of autocratic rule and the resumption of the Ottoman Parliament. The group—who like their predecessors of the 1860s and 1870s named themselves the Young Turks—formed a political
organisation called İstiha ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress or CUP). In 1908 they were able to force Abdülhamid to resurrect the parliament which had been disbanded for 30 years. They eventually brought about the overthrow of Abdülhamid in the following year, but hopes for a democratic constitutional system had to be set aside as the Ottoman Empire witnessed more turbulent political times. Numerous plots, conspiracies and oppressive rule occurred under the CUP until the Ottoman defeat in 1918 at the end of the First World War.

The Ottoman Empire lost its last remaining territories in Europe after the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913. This brought another significant wave of immigrants flooding into Istanbul, and the population rose to about 1.6 million. Despite the political setbacks, Istanbul saw some remarkable achievements in urban affairs during the first quarter of the twentieth century. According to Bernard Lewis, the ‘Young Turks may have failed to give Turkey constitutional government. They did, however, give Istanbul drains’.m

In fact, the achievements of the CUP administration of this period were considerably greater than the mere laying out of drains. A new municipal model which divided the city into nine municipal districts was developed by the Derşâdet Tesâkii-i Belediyesi (Istanbul Municipal Organisation) in 1912. In the same year a new municipal tax, Rûnun-u Belediye, was introduced as a source of revenue, as well as a new mode of financing civil works through the use of municipal loans. The first of these loans was based on a decision taken in the Municipal Council on 10 November 1909 and was approved by an imperial irade (order issued in the name of the Sultan) the following day. The loan of £1 million carried an interest rate of 5 per cent per annum for a period of 50 years and was floated on the London stock market. Loan bonds and coupons were exempt from any sort of taxes or stamp duties in the Ottoman Empire. While the obligations arising from the loan were the responsibility of the municipality, it was fully and unconditionally guaranteed by the Ottoman government. Tolls from the bridges across the Golden Horn and receipts from the petroleum depots in Paşabahçe, a small village located on the upper Asian bank of the Bosphorus, were given as security for the interest payments.

The money obtained from municipal loans enabled the Şebnemneti to order the much-needed modern bridge between Karaköy and Eminönü. The old Galata Bridge had been replaced by a new pontoon bridge in 1875. Yet it was not sufficient to accommodate the increasing pedestrian and vehicular traffic across the Golden Horn. After various projects were prepared by European engineering companies, the new bridge was finally awarded to the German firm Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg in 1907, though construction was delayed until 1910 due to the political turbulence. Completed in 1912 at a cost of 350,000 Turkish gold liras, the new bridge was an iron structure floating on pontoons 467 metres long and 25 metres wide.

Figure 17 Galata Bridge connecting Istanbul Peninsula to Galata, c.1870s

The CUP carried out other noteworthy improvements during this period. Priority was given to the introduction of technological devices banned by Abdülhamid. In 1909 a commission was established by the Ministry of Public Works to investigate opportunities to establish street lighting and a power supply for Istanbul. After a year later a Budapest-based firm was contracted to install a power station in Istanbul. The proposal included the installation of a total of 600 lamps along the major streets of the city. The construction of the first power station in Silahtarağa was completed in 1914 and the same year electricity began to be supplied to various parts of Istanbul. In 1911 the Société Anonyme Ottomane des Téléphones de Constantinople, an international syndicate established by British, French and American firms, was given a concession to establish a long-delayed telephone service in the Ottoman capital. According to the proposal, the Istanbul Peninsula, Galata, Üsküdar, the Bosphorus and the coastal settlements along the Sea of Marmara up to
Yeşilköy would be provided with 10,000 telephone lines at a total project cost of about £300,000. By February 1914 a total of 12 telephone exchanges had been constructed at various locations in the city, including three major centres in Istanbul, Galata and Kadıköy. These centres were equipped with modern technical plants, and a total of 112 kilometres of telephone conduits was laid along the streets of Istanbul. Electric-powered trams were first put into service in 1912 between Ortaköy and Karaköy. The network was extended in 1914 as the Silahtarağa power station began to supply power to the tram network.

One of the government's first initiatives in urban planning during this period was to renew the invitation to Bouvard to prepare a master plan for the city. In 1908 Bouvard had been working on a master plan for Buenos Aires. This time Bouvard, who had been offered 25,000 francs by the Ottoman government, travelled to Istanbul, but he later declined the job as there were no adequate maps to form the basis of the master plan. His refusal forced the Ottoman administration to engage foreign expertise to remedy this shortcoming. A French surveying company was commissioned by Halil Ethem Bey, the Şebhnam of Istanbul, to prepare a detailed set of maps of the city. This task was completed in 1911 under the supervision of an engineer, a Monsieur Schreider. Between 1913 and 1914 a German firm, Deutscher- Syndikat für Stadtbauliche Arbeiten in der Türkei, was given the task of completing the surveys of the city. Upon the completion of these maps, known as the Alman Manleri (German Blues), Istanbul for the first time in its history had sufficient and reliable cartographic material on which to build an urban planning system to guide its future development.

Istanbul also enjoyed a second phase of revivalist architectural style inspired by Ottoman forms during the early years of the twentieth century. Although various buildings were designed by European architects in Western styles in the early twentieth century—a notable example here is Otto Ritter and Helmut Cuno's Bavarian-style railway terminus in Haydarpasa in 1908—Istanbul encountered mature examples of the Ottoman Revivalist style in this period. In contrast to earlier examples designed by European architects with only a superficial knowledge of Ottoman culture, the retrospective style of this time was created by Vedat and Kemalettin, two prominent Turkish architects who had developed their architectural vocabulary under the strong influence of the ideas of Ziya Gökalp, the founder of Turkish nationalism. Retrospectively named the Birinci Milli Mimari (First National Style Architecture) in Turkish architectural historiography, this revivalist style derived its artistic expressions from the classical period of Ottoman and Seljukid architecture and used elements such as wide-roof overhangs, tiled ornamentation and arches. Under the influence of Turkism, which became the official political ideology of the CUP era, especially after the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, Ottoman Revivalism became the national architectural style and enjoyed wide popularity and acceptance. Many public buildings such as post offices, ferry wharves, bank buildings and schools were built in this style in the early twentieth century.

Figure 18 Galata Bridge from Eminönü, c.1890s

Auric's Redevelopment Scheme

André Auric, an engineer from the Municipality of Lyon, was another significant figure of this period. In 1910 he was appointed head of the Infrastructure Department of the Municipality of Istanbul for a period of three years and given the title 'Director of the Roads Service of the City of Istanbul'. His responsibilities were comprehensive, covering the organisation, surveillance and control of public works such as water, gas and trams as well as road planning, quays, sewers, bridges, water works, gas, electricity and communication systems.

Auric worked primarily on projects concerning the water supply to the city and wrote detailed reports about the design of water canals, reservoirs and distribution centres in both the European and Asian parts of the city. Perhaps the most remarkable part of his work was the preparation of a development scheme for the entire city which was published in a technical journal in Istanbul.
in the early twentieth century. The proposal was titled 'The Embellishment and Cleaning up of Istanbul'. The two main sections of the report were the construction of large boulevards and the establishment of main trunk sewers.

The large boulevards were designed to connect significant centres of the city. They were described by Auric as rectilinear, broader, sunnier and more airy streets. Borrowing the well-known proverb 'Where sun and sunlight penetrate, the doctor does not go', he termed the boulevards the 'bronchial tubes of big cities' and the streets and lanes as 'bronchioles' of a vast system of aeration. The planting of trees along large boulevards was strongly emphasised in his report. 'Trees were seen as not only giving 'a more majestic appearance for cities' but in terms of their environmental benefits were known to absorb carbon. He argued that boulevards should have a minimum width of 32.5 metres and should be augmented by squares, parks and public gardens. Furthermore, Auric considered Istanbul's redundant military properties such as barracks, fortifications and earthworks as prime sites to be transformed into public gardens or promenades. The costs of creating squares and parks were not seen as surplusary or luxury expenses, but as essential outlays for public health. They embodied the picturesque and architectural beauties and the historical and archaeological memories that every city possessed.

The Auric report recommended constructing the trunk sewers simultaneously with the boulevards to help coordinate the construction phases of the infrastructure works. He proposed two main sewer lines ending near Seraglio Point at the easternmost end of Istanbul Peninsula where the presence of a strong and permanent current would allow the discharge of waste waters without preliminary treatment. The first sewer was to run along the Golden Horn starting near Eyüp, and the second along the shores of the Sea of Marmara starting near Yedikule where the Theodosian Walls merge with the sea.

The road network was reminiscent of that proposed in the 1839 development policy. Auric's two littoral boulevards terminated at Sarayburnu with two large squares in Eyüp and Yedikule. In addition, the plan proposed the creation of new vehicular arteries between Aksaray and the various gates on the Theodosian Walls at Silivrikapı, Mevlevihane Kapısı, Topkapı and Edirnekapi.

Aksaray was an important crossroad in Auric's scheme where he proposed a large square with roads connecting it to the gates on the Theodosian Walls and to Beyazıt in the east. Finally, the two littoral boulevards he proposed along the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara were to be connected by a transversal boulevard from the new square at Aksaray to Unkapanı and Yenikapı.

In Pera, Auric proposed similar principles for the discharge of sewage and believed it would be necessary to go up as far as Ortaköy, where there was a permanent and sufficiently strong current, to discharge the waste waters into the Bosphorus. He believed that Tophane would eventually be transformed and used for the enlargement of the commercial port. For this reason, it would be necessary to plan two boulevards on the hillside, one finishing at Galatasaray and the other at Taksim. He also proposed new roads starting from Kasımpaşa connecting the Golden Horn to Taksim, Feriköy and Tatvura and a new road between Kabataş and Beşiktaş. And finally, his road scheme ended with the duplication of the Grande Rue de Pera between Taksim and Şişhane with two squares.

Figure 19 A plan published in Génie Civil Ottoman in 1912 showing the new roads proposed by Auric after the 1911 Aksaray fire, including the 50-metre-wide artery connecting Yenikapı to Aksaray

Although most of Auric's proposals never went beyond a set of general ideas, they were significant as a first attempt to plan Istanbul as a whole city and, even more importantly, to go beyond aesthetic concerns by including infrastructure projects. Auric's legacy in Istanbul could be said to be the replanning of Aksaray after a great fire that occurred on 23 July 1911. The 50-metre-wide boulevard between Yenikapı and Aksaray, which later became part of a major traffic route of modern Istanbul, together with the construction of other large axial roads and the large boulevard between
Aksaray and Beyazıt were the only works implemented in accordance with Aurié's plan. This gave Istanbul, for the first time in its history, infrastructure services and aesthetic parks and gardens designed according to geometric rules and modern planning principles.¹⁰

![Image of Istanbul map]

Figure 20 Regularised street pattern proposed by Aurié after the 1911 Aksaray fire shown on a map published by Deutsches Syndikat für Stadtbauliche Arbeiten in der Türkei

The Last Years of the Ottoman Empire

Perhaps the last influential figure to play a significant role in the modernisation of Ottoman Istanbul was Cemil Paşa, the ambitious mayor of Istanbul in 1912-14 and 1919-20. During his term of office Istanbul saw major civic works implemented, such as improvement in hygiene, regulation of commercial activities, improvement of streets, construction of parks, upgrading of fire services and many other works for improving the city's infrastructure. Cemil Paşa's position as personal doctor to the Sultan, the ruling family and other high-ranking officials gave him an unprecedented opportunity to secure approval for some of the works executed during his time in office. The creation of Gülhane Park, for example, designed within the southern gardens of the Topkapı Palace, was only possible because Cemil Paşa took advantage of his personal relationship with the Sultan to seek agreement.⁹⁹

This range of civic works, however, was carried out in bitter and harsh political conditions. The Ottoman Empire had entered the First World War aligning itself with Germany, Austria and Hungary against the Triple Entente of Britain, France and Russia. The war interrupted many projects as the municipality was fully engaged in the war effort and all resources were needed for the army and hospitals. The First World War ended with the victory of the Entente on 11 November 1918. The Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Sèvres with the Allies on 10 August 1920, resulting in the occupation of its last remaining territories in Thrace and Anatolia by Britain, France, Greece and Italy. Istanbul had already been occupied by British troops on 13 November 1918, immediately after the Armistice of Mudros was signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies to mark the end of the war on the 30 October. The French General Franchet d'Espérey entered Istanbul on 8 February 1919, emulating Mehmed II the Conqueror in 1453 by riding a white horse through the streets of the city. Finally, on 13 November the Allied navy sailed into the Bosphorus and faced their cannon towards Dolmabahçe Palace, giving a clear message that after four-and-a-half centuries Ottoman sovereignty over the imperial city was over.