

Elke Hartmann. *Die Reichweite des Staates: Wehrpflicht und moderne Staatlichkeit im Osmanischen Reich 1869-1910.* Paderborn: Paderborn Schöningh Paderborn, 2016. 470 pp. EUR 58.00, cloth, ISBN 978-3-506-78373-8.

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The focus of this book is on the implementation of compulsory military service in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ottoman Empire as an element of its transformation into a modern state. Hartmann emphasizes the significance of conscription for the military and defense policy of a modern state. Its introduction began roughly at the same time as in France and Prussia, which provided in many respects the blueprint for the Ottoman reform efforts of the period under investigation—notwithstanding the rather different exit conditions, which were arguably closer to those of other multiethnic, multicultural empires like Tsarist Russian or the Hapsburgs than those of already well-established, homogeneous national states like France and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Prussia.

The Ottoman need to rebuild and standardize its profoundly battered and disrupted military establishment in the early nineteenth century was triggered by a series of military disasters against almost every European competitor and several domestic enemies over a couple of decades. A thorough reform of the military system was a *conditio sine qua non* to be able to face its domestic and foreign foes on equal terms. As demonstrated by the successful military reforms in Muhammad Ali's Egypt during the first half of the nineteenth

century, they could only succeed if accompanied by a broad range of economic, fiscal, and administrative measures. As part of the wide range of this reform program, the introduction of compulsory service served, however, also as an instrument of a recentralization of an empire which resembled more an agglomeration of autonomous, semi-autonomous, tribal, or simply anarchic territorial entities than that of a state under an undisputed central authority.

This is Hartmann's main thesis as reflected in the subtitle "*Die Reichweite des Staates*," literally to be translated as "the range (or reach) of the state," but more precisely as "extending the limits of governmental control." In this respect, compulsory service helped to tackle the problem in a two-pronged approach. On the one side, registration and recruitment of a major part of the male individuals over an extended period of their lifetime firmly integrated them into the fabric of the Ottoman state and at the same time forged the instrument with which the sultan's authority could be forced upon unruly or defiant parts of the realm. Consequently, the grade of the implementation of the military reforms against all sorts of open and clandestine resistance served as a yardstick for progress of the state reform as whole, in which the new military order held a central posi-

tion, with far-reaching social and political implications.

Hartmann mostly uses sources from the central Ottoman state archives, augmented by selected source material from German, British, and French foreign and defense ministries, mainly reports of military attachés. Impressive as the vast amount of investigated documents is, she also points to the many gaps, of which some will most probably never, but others hopefully will be filled by subsequent research. The permanent gaps are those created by the archives themselves, which simply did not record certain data and statistics. Those to be filled are particularly the ones related to the local and regional aspects of military reforms. The major recruitment decrees of the *tanzimat* period dating from 1869/1870-71 and 1886 under Abdülhamid II were by no means implemented at once for the whole empire. According to the different levels of resistance and the presence of sufficient bureaucratic and infrastructural resources, registration and recruitment was gradually and very flexibly enforced, starting with the areas where the least resistance was to be expected. The proceedings are clearly seen from a central perspective, opening windows into the periphery wherever available—any attempt to cover all the provincial *varia* in any field of nineteenth-century Ottoman history would require a whole team of highly specialized researchers. Hartmann time and again points out desiderata for future researchers who hopefully will be lured into this highly rewarding field of military, administrative, social, economic, and political history. Being a pioneering work of the topic, it opens at least as many new questions as it answers old ones.

The text is organized into six chapters, each with several subdivisions. The first one provides a short summary of the major intentions of the work, an overview of the sources and their limitations, the research approach, and some basic outlines about the relevance of the compulsory service in the framework of nineteenth-century Ot-

toman reforms and the implications of this research for other branches of science concerned with this period of Ottoman history.

Second, armies of conscripts led by a professional officer corps are presented as the characteristic military organization of the modern nation-state. On the one hand the obvious solution for the security requirements of a vast territorial state with long and open borders, it depended on the other hand on an appropriate level of economic, industrial, technological, fiscal, and infrastructural development, towards which the Ottoman Empire still had a long way to go. From there Hartmann moves to a closer investigation of different models of conscription and experiences for the Ottomans to look at, and discusses the particular Ottoman contradiction of building an inclusive military body inside a basically exclusive society—and the ideological question of how to create an Ottoman nation as the point of reference for a national army. Besides presiding over a multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural society, the ruling elite had to face the fact that any concept of universal Ottoman citizenship would collide head-on with the Islamic principle of the non-equality of non-Muslim subjects, which made them ineligible for military service in particular.

This chapter points to one of the major merits of this book. Here as well as time and again later, the author links her highly specialized research to the more general features of European and military history, drawing also comparisons to the Ottomans' neighbors and competitors. Written in a lucid style—not the least achievement for German scientific writers—this makes the book digestible for readers of general interest as well: a military historian does not have to be an Ottomanist to benefit from it and vice versa.

Chapter 3 briefly outlines the first projects of Sultan Selim III and his son Mahmud II to modernize their armed forces. Adding militia elements to the existing standing army, the legislation of 1834 took the first steps towards the intro-

duction of conscription. Initially raised only in a couple of provinces under firm control, these *asakir-i redife-i mansure* (Victorious reserve soldiers, or *Redif*, for short) were intended to distribute the burden of providing soldiers more equally among the provinces and wrest control over local populations from the hands of provincial governors and local notables. Raised and trained in peacetime, they were to be called up in times of war as a reserve pool for the regular forces or in case of domestic strife for local operations. After a few years of further study and discussion and after the Edict of Gülhane called for a thorough reform of the administrative and political structure of the empire, in 1843 a new body of legislation introduced a full conscript army with a fixed term of service in the active army followed by an extended period of time in the reserves, with obligatory retraining and exercises at regular intervals. In 1869 the system became even more elaborate and sophisticated with regard to the classes of reserves and the territorial organization of the recruiting districts as well as the recruitment procedure itself. The disaster of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877/78 and the influence of foreign advisors triggered further change and refinement. This whole history of the military element of Ottoman reform is described in great detail and connected to the overall course of domestic reform policy as a whole.

In the fourth chapter, beginning with the recruitment procedure the author starts diving into the administrative details of building a conscript army. An aspiring Ottoman youngster could, of course, volunteer for military service and by doing so, he reduced the overall number of soldiers to be provided by this respective recruitment district. On the opposite side, those who were less keen to serve their sultan found numerous ways of dodging the draft. Evading registration or the draw were as virulent as outright desertion, but more frequent were protests or mutinies. Arrear of payment, sometimes over several years, was a ubiquitous reality for all ranks of civil and mili-

tary service, fostering mutinies, desertion, and corruption. The better-offs, however, could escape compulsory service in a perfect legal way by providing a human replacement or two horses or by paying a compensation, which reduced the service to only a short period of basic training. Finally, the procedures of registration and drawing lots as well as the regulations for the duration of basic and rehearsal training are discussed in great detail, not least because the drawing developed into a public ceremony with a highly symbolic display of Ottoman statehood among the common subjects.

No rule and law operates without exception, and so chapter 5 numbers the exemptions from service, of which there were quite a few. Set aside individual permanent or temporary exemptions for health reasons or hardship cases; whole groups of the population were exempted from service. Christians, of course, were not eligible at all, but neither were inhabitants of several provinces with a special international or administrative status, like Egypt, Lebanon, or Cyprus, as well as the region around the capital. Obviously, the educated and economically advanced elite concentrated there was not to be disturbed or weakened by the draft. In some tribal regions like Kurdistan, men were not drafted into the Redif battalions but formed into irregular auxiliary regiments instead.

The final—and arguably most lucid and penetrating—chapter connects the findings of the descriptive chapters to the book's central thesis, that the Ottoman state expanded and intensified control over its population by, among other reform projects, the establishment of a European-style conscript army, and organizes the findings into the framework of overall Ottoman and also European history. Readers not familiar with the intricacies of nineteenth-century Ottoman history might well read these closing remarks as an introduction before delving into the details of the main topic. Military historians in particular will appre-

ciate the appendices of charts and tables on organization, dislocation, and strength compiled from a wide range of dispersed sources.

The book is a pioneering work on a so far rather barren field. It closes a gap in the history of the modernization of nineteenth-century European armies and its social implications. Unknowingly—I did not find it mentioned in the notes—it supports and confirms David Ralston’s observations and conclusions concerning the pivotal role of military reform for the transformation of whole societies.[1] With regard to the availability of archival sources, it is certainly the final say in many respects. In her conclusion, Hartmann, however, suggests a number of rewarding topics for further research.

Note

[1]. David B. Ralston, *Importing the European Army* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 173-80.

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