

**The 1912 Ottoman elections and the Greeks in the Vilayet of Adrianople:
A view from the Greek Archives.**

The Young Turk governments of the Ottoman Empire (1908-18) are widely considered as a part of the latter's modernization process.¹ The reforms, which had been initiated in the midst of the 19th century, were aiming at the homogenization of the society under the principle of Ottomanism. This was an effort of the Ottoman administrations to attract the loyalty of all their subjects to a new "Ottoman Nation" so as to block the centrifugal tendencies threatening the very existence of the empire.² However, there was an inherent dualism in this concept of egalitarianism promoted through the reforms: the millet system, the old classification of the Ottoman subjects in semi-autonomous religious communities governed by their own law, was preserved and gradually secularized resulting in the stimulation of the separatist nationalist movements.³ Regarding the Greek-Orthodox communities, the Bulgarian ecclesiastical schism of 1870 and the resulting Greco-Bulgarian dispute over Macedonia had strengthened the Greek character of the millet (Rum millet) while the Greek Kingdom was gaining increasing control over its institutions.⁴

Still the road to an open rift between the Greeks and their Ottoman context was a long one. Developments were shaped and evolved in a changing social and political landscape which was dominated by continuity rather than specific turning points. The examination of the 1912 Ottoman elections presents an excellent opportunity for the exploration of this landscape. Until then, all the important factors that would cause the impressive future developments had been crystallized. In this article, it will be argued that, although by that time Athens had prevailed over the Patriarchate as the main "political center" of all the Greeks, a large amount of opposition had to be overcome at a local level. The elections, also, pointed to all the

¹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7.

² Allegiance to the principle of Ottomanism did not mean the exclusion of other ethnic or even national identifications. See, Ileana Moroni, "The Transformation of Loyalties as a Continuous Process: Ottomanism and its Different Versions in the Aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution." In *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Dimitris Stamatopoulos, Vol. III, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2015), 61-78.

³ Roderick H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire (1856-1876)*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 56 and Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey, A modern history*, (Tauris, 2004, 3rd edition), 62.

⁴ See, Dimitris Kamouzis, "Elites and the formation of national identity: the case of the Greek Orthodox millet (mid-nineteenth century to 1922)" in *State-Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey Orthodox and Muslims, 1830-1945*, Benjamin C. Fortna et al, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 13-46 and Sia Anagnostopoulou, *Μικρά Ασία, 19^{ος} αι.-1919, οι ελληνορθόδοξες κοινότητες*, [Asia Minor, 19th century-1919, the Greek-Orthodox communities], (Athens, Hellinika Grammata, 1997).

cleavages which had been created in the Ottoman society and had alienated the Greeks from the Ottoman context. Thus, this article will discuss the issue at a local level taking as a case study the Vilayet of Adrianople (Edirne) corresponding to the geographical region of southern Thrace. The vilayet included the following sanjaks: Edirne, Dedeağaç, Gelibolu (Kallipolis), Gümülçine (Gumuljina), Kirkkilise kilise (Saranta Ekklesies) and Tekfurdağı (Raideostos). Ottoman Thrace could be described as a miniature of the multi-ethnic empire. According to the 1905/6 Ottoman census, there existed unevenly distributed populations of Muslims (618,604), (618,604), Greeks (340,908), Bulgarians (Exarchists) (119,476) and Armenians (26,144).⁵ Furthermore, Thrace, without presenting the tensions of Macedonia, was a bone of contention between the Greeks and the Bulgarians while it was considered as a core province by Ottomans themselves. Thus, the elections in this region were a crucial issue for communities, governments and political parties for both symbolic and practical reasons.

The Young Turks, the Greeks and the road to the 1912 elections

The Young Turks were a heterogeneous body with conflicting interests and ideologies. Their only common goal was the opposition to Hamidian absolutism and the restoration of the 1876 Constitution, which had been suspended by the oppressive Sultan.⁶ From the beginning, the movement was divided between two dispositions: there were the liberals, who believed that the Empire could survive through some form of decentralization and through the cooperation with the various ethno-religious groups; and the nationalists, who favored the creation of a centralized, unitary national state on the western model.⁷ The latter's instrument was the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which dominated Ottoman politics from the proclamation of the Constitution in 1908 to the end of the First World War.

On the other hand, the Greek Kingdom, after the defeat of 1897, was pursuing a policy of friendship with the Ottomans and its primary aims were to contain Bulgarian nationalism in Macedonia and Thrace and improve the position of the Greeks in the empire. The inability of the Greek State to liberate the "unredeemed" Greeks instigated two chief architects of the Greek Macedonian Struggle, Ion Dragoumis, a Greek diplomat and, Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis, a former officer of the Greek army, to believe that the Ottoman Empire could be succeeded by an Eastern Federation, in which all the ethnic groups would be equal under the aegis of Hellenism. For this purpose, they had formed a secret society in Constantinople (Society of Constantinople – SC), which had a great success between the upper and middle Greek bourgeoisie of

⁵ Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914, Demographic and Social Characteristics*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 166-7.

⁶ Doğu Ergil, "A reassessment: The Young Turks, their Politics and Anti-Colonial Struggle," *Balkan Studies*, 16.2 (1975): 26.

⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (London and New York: Oxford University Press 1968, 2nd Edition), 213.

the Ottoman capital.⁸ Although their cooperation with the Greek Embassy under Ioannis Gryparis was close, their relationship with the Greek government was not always smooth. The Foreign Ministry was reluctant to approve the venture but had no reason to stop it.⁹

After the restoration of the Constitution, the SC set up a new organization, the Ictical League (PL), in order to direct the political activities of the Greeks. Initially, PL adopted a cautious attitude towards the Young Turks. The first frictions in the 1908 elections when the CUP did not accept Greek demands on proportional representation in the Ottoman Parliament and the Greek electors were unwilling to support candidates among the few Unionist Greeks. Finally, 24 Greek deputies were elected and this caused disappointment among the Greeks, who believed that they were underrepresented in the new Parliament.¹⁰ After the elections, the CUP embarked upon aggressive nationalist policies. The fusion of all the various ethnic groups into one nation and the imposition of complete equality between the subjects of the empire meant that all the communal privileges under the millet system had to be abolished. This was perceived as a major threat by the Greeks, who believed that their position as a distinct ethnicity in the Ottoman context was in danger. As a response, the Greek deputies of the PL formed a “Greek Party” in the Parliament in 1910 and promoted the “program of the ethnicities,” a policy which advocated the creation of a common front with the other ethnic groups so as to impose their demands on the Ottoman government. This, as could be expected, created a rift between them and those Greek deputies who resented the PL’s policies of confrontation. Thus, from then onwards, the Greeks were divided into two groups representing two contradictory policies for the future of the community.¹¹

At the same time, a major reexamination of the Greek foreign policy was taking place in Athens. In 1910, Eleftherios Venizelos, who was to dominate the Greek political scene for the next decades, formed his first government. He adopted a more active foreign policy, aiming at ending isolation and unconditional attachment to the Ottoman Empire out of fear of Bulgaria. Believing that a war was inevitable in the Balkans, he pursued a policy of rapprochement with Bulgaria in which the first step was the cooperation between the Greeks and the Exarchists against

⁸ For the Souliotis and Dragoumis’ “Eastern Federation” see, Thanos Veremis, “The Hellenic Kingdom and the Ottoman Greeks: The Experiment of the Society of Constantinople.” In *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi, (New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1999), 181-191; Diogenis Xanatalos, “The Greeks and the Turks on the eve of the Balkan Wars, A frustrated plan,” *Balkan Studies*, 3.2 (1962): 277-296 and A. J. Panayotopoulos, “The “Great Idea” and the vision of eastern federation: a propos of the views of I. Dragoumis and A. Souliotis-Nicolaidis,” *Balkan Studies*, 21.2 (1980): 331-365.

⁹ Helen Gardikas-Katsiadakis, *Greece and the Balkan Imbroglia, Greek Foreign Policy, 1911-1913*, (Athens: Σύλλογος προς Διάδοσιν Ωφελίμων Βιβλίων 1995), 25-26 and Kamouzis, “Elites and the formation,” op. cit., 27.

¹⁰ Catherine Boura, “The Greek Millet in Turkish Politics: Greeks in the Ottoman Parliament, (1908-1918).” In *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, op. cit., 194-196.

¹¹ Ibid., 196-197 and Anagnostopoulou, *Μικρά Ασία*, op. cit., 488-494.

the aggressive policies of CUP. Thus, the program of the ethnicities received the support of Venizelos' administration. Gryparis was appointed Foreign Minister and he promoted the cooperation of the Greeks with the PL.¹² In this way, the policies of the PL became a weapon in Venizelos' diplomatic arsenal.

In the meantime, the nationalist measures of the CUP had provoked the opposition of various elements in Ottoman society. In November 1911, the Liberal Union was formed (or Freedom and Accord Party), a political organization which united all those opposing the CUP. The Liberals were attacking the CUP's nationalistic policies and asked the cooperation of the ethnic groups.¹³ The Greeks, despite their hesitations, helped the new party to score its first victory over the CUP in the Constantinople by-election on 11 December 1911 giving a great impetus to the opposition. The unionists, alarmed by those developments, hastened to dissolve the Parliament and proclaim new elections in order to strengthen their position.¹⁴

Before discussing the electoral process, a few important details need to be delineated. All males above the age of twenty-five were eligible to vote, provided they paid some direct taxes. The Electoral Law stipulated the sanjak as the basic electoral unit, and one deputy corresponded to 50,000–100,000 residents. Importantly, Ottoman elections were indirect: the voters of each nahiye (electoral district) elected electors (their number depended on the population – usually one elector for every 250–750 residents), who in their turn assembled in the capital of the kaza and voted for deputies.¹⁵ It is evident that the two-stage indirect nature of the electoral system fostered corruption since the candidacies were determined by the local communal authorities, namely according to the existing patronage relationships in each region. Moreover, the small number of the electors of the second phase made manipulation and bribes easier. Thus, political parties and ethnic groups had to use every means at their disposal to secure the success of their electors, whose final number reflected their political power in every constituency.

Electoral alliances and expectations

Although the PL was responsible for the electoral arrangements of the Greeks, the decisions were made in Athens. The Greek Consular authorities, cooperating with the Bishops, were in control of the entire procedure while every move, even on a local level, had to be met with the Ministry's approval. Although the decisions made in the center were meant to be applicable to the Greek population of the entire Ottoman territory, their application depended on the local circumstances.

¹² Gardikas-Katsiadakis, *Greece*, op. cit., 33.

¹³ Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks, The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 99.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100-102.

¹⁵ For more details see, Hasan Kayali, "Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1919," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27.3 (1995), 269-271 and Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis, *Οργάνωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως* [*The Society of Constantinople*], ed. Thanos Veremis and Catherine Boura, (Athens: Dodoni, 1984), 74.

Gryparis' first instructions concerning the Greek attitude to the Liberal Union were to combine "good intentions alongside reservation until this party demonstrates in practice that it shares the program of the ethnicities."¹⁶ When the Liberals agreed to ensure egalitarianism in the empire and to broaden the participation of the ethnic groups in the government, a protocol of cooperation was signed between them and the PL. However, this did not mean that the Greek authorities had ruled out the possibility of local cooperation with the CUP, if it accepted that the candidates would be chosen by the PL, something which the Unionists would find, of course, hard to accept.¹⁷ Antonios Chamoudopoulos, who was involved in these events, later recalled that the agreement with the Liberals provided for the election of 52 Greeks, a claim which should be considered an exaggeration, since for the region of Thrace this meant the election of at least 10 Greek deputies, something which went far beyond the most optimistic predictions of the journalistic organ of the PL.¹⁸ It is more likely that the election of about 40 Greek deputies was agreed upon, namely, the number that the two sides settled on for the next elections.¹⁹

Even before the signing of the protocol, the Liberals had been making overtures toward the Bishops of various cities in order to secure the support of the Greek element in every constituency. For example, in Adrianople, the representative of the Liberals approached the Bishop and suggested collaboration. The latter, waiting for instructions from the embassy in Constantinople, was positive to the prospect, but essentially referred him to the political association which would be founded in the city in the following days.²⁰ These associations were run by people loyal to the consular authorities and were in charge of directing the electoral activities. Such clubs appear to have been established in Adrianople and Xanthi, where cooperation with the Liberals was open and the Greek candidates were included in their ballots. Although in the Sanjak of Gomuljina the Greek population's small size did not warrant parliamentary representation, their militant attitude against the CUP and their close cooperation with the Liberals during the pre-electoral period resulted in the inclusion of a Greek candidate alongside the prominent opposition member Ismail Hakki in the liberal ballot.²¹ In the Sanjak of Adrianople, where the Greeks comprised one third of the total population, two Greek candidates were included in the liberal ballot along with the prominent Liberal Rıza Tevfik.²² These

¹⁶ Diplomatic and Historical Archive of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter DI-AYE), 1912, 104.1, Gryparis to Constantinople Embassy, November 25, 1911.

¹⁷ DIAYE, 1912, 104.1, Alexandropoulos (Constantinople) to Foreign Ministry, December 13, 1911, 104.3, Alexandropoulos to Gryparis, January 12, 1912 and 23.3, Alexandropoulos to Foreign Ministry, January 7, 1912.

¹⁸ Antonios Chamoudopoulos, *Ελληνισμός και Νεότουρκοι [Hellenism and the Young Turks]*, (Athens: 1926), 48 and «Η Εκλογική Κίνησης», *Τα Δίκαια των Εθνών*, January 15, 1912.

¹⁹ DIAYE, 1912, 104.4, Souliotis to Foreign Ministry, August 25, 1912.

²⁰ DIAYE, 1912, 104.3, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry and Constantinople Embassy, January 4 and 11, 1912.

²¹ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Chalkiopoulos (Xanthi) to Foreign Ministry and Constantinople Embassy, January 16 and 21, February 18 and March 2, 1912.

²² DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry, April 2, 1912.

brave concessions on the Liberals' side show the extent of their reliance on the non-Muslim vote, as well as their uncertainty concerning the final result.

The other equally important pillar of the Greek electoral strategy was the cooperation with the Exarchists. The understanding between the two sides started at a high political level with the meeting of the deputy of Thessalonici G. Chonaïos with the Exarch Joseph. They agreed to collaborate and stressed the need for the election of "national-minded" deputies.²³ The final agreement was reached on January 19, 1912. As for the Vilayet of Adrianople, the agreement stipulated the appointment of six Greeks and one Bulgarian deputy. The Greeks would include in their ballot a Bulgarian candidate in the Sanjak of Kirkkilise (Saranta Ekklisies) while the Bulgarians would have to support the Greek candidates in all the other sanjaks of the vilayet.²⁴ Then another condition was added to the agreement, according to which, if the Bulgarians did not manage to elect their candidate in Saranta Ekklisies and more than two Greek deputies had been elected with the exception of the Sanjak of Gelibolu (Kallipolis), then a Greek deputy would have to resign and relinquish his post to a Bulgarian. This condition caused the fierce opposition of Gryparis but since the balance was fragile due to the suspicion between the two sides, evidently no attempt to revise it was made.²⁵ At the same time, the Greek Minister in Sofia, Dimitrios Panas recommended that "we should avoid everything that can create suspicions to the Bulgarians."²⁶ Nevertheless, this agreement as a whole recognized the predominance of the Greek element in Thrace and was actually used later to support the Greek character of the region.²⁷

Simultaneously, the Unionists, observing the creation of this network of alliances against them, did not remain idle. Aiming either at wooing the Greeks or at breaking their alliances, the Ministers of the government and leading members of the CUP, Talaat Pasha, and Halil Pasha visited the Patriarchate and proposed collaboration to Patriarch Ioakeim. They promised an increase in the number of Greek deputies to 37, the participation of Greeks in the administration and the resolution of the issue of the communal privileges for a specific period of time.²⁸ Ioakeim seemed to favor those proposals. However, The Patriarchate, no longer controlled the mechanisms behind the politicization of the Greeks and was unable to impose its political wishes. As a result, it was enough for the PL to state via its journalistic organ that "the Holy Ark of the most valuable ethno-religious rights of Hellenism [...] did not need or have to become party chairman of the CUP or of any other party or union"²⁹ to deprive Ioakeim of every opportunity to be involved in the electoral process. The CUP made similar

²³ DIAYE, 1912, 105.1, Alexandropoulos (Constantinople) to Foreign Ministry, January 14, 1912.

²⁴ DIAYE, 1912, 88.1, Alexandropoulos (Constantinople) to Foreign Ministry, January 20, 1912.

²⁵ DIAYE, 1912, 105.1, Gryparis to Constantinople Embassy, February 12 and 16, 1912.

²⁶ DIAYE, 1912, 88.1, Panas (Sofia) to Foreign Ministry, February 3, 1912.

²⁷ Chamoudopoulos, op. cit., 47.

²⁸ Antonios Chamoudopoulos, *Η Νεωτέρα Φιλική Εταιρεία*, (Athens: Tsailas, 1946), 48; Boura, op. cit., 197-198 and DIAYE, 1912, 88.1, Alexandropoulos (Constantinople) to Foreign Ministry, January 18, 1912.

²⁹ «Αι Μαγδαληναί», *Τα Δίκαια των Εθνών*, January 21, 1912.

attempts at a local level as well. One day after his meeting with the Patriarch, Talaat visited the Bishop of Adrianople promising a parliamentary seat in the sanjak “as a sample of his sympathy towards the Greek element” and as an exchange, he asked for the contribution of the latter in Raidestos and in Saranta Ekklesies. Although the Consul General K. Dimaras did not totally reject the proposal, the two sides never reached an agreement because the Greeks could not accept the selection of their candidates by the CUP.³⁰

In Saranta Ekklesies, where the collaboration between the Greeks and the Bulgarians commanded the majority of the votes, some members of the CUP proposed to the Bishop collaboration and the appointment of a Greek and a Muslim instead of a Bulgarian deputy. The bishop answered in accordance with the instructions of the consulate but it seems that he favored the proposal while at the same time various members of the community acted in favor of the CUP opposing cooperation with the Bulgarians.³¹ This reaction must not be attributed only to the anti-Bulgarian sentiment of the population but also to the local notables, whose interests would be better served if the CUP remained in power. Thus, the consular authorities were called to face at the level of local micro-politics all those factors who would dispute the policy of the national center. As the Greek Vice Consul of Saranta Ekklesies mentioned:

*“Here there is the micro influence and the local interests of those who are called çorbacı in Turkey [...]. It is true that everyone pretends that they will sacrifice all personal interests for the sake of the nation, but having studied people and things and knowing the secret desires and interests of a lot of people, I question their honesty. Luckily, I found the appropriate people who deserve my trust and obey the consulate and if I manage to secure their election, we have nothing to be afraid of.”*³²

Moreover, apart from local interests, the fear of the locals towards the “Turkish rage” was an equally important factor.³³ Thus, the fear of retaliation from the CUP, the local interests and the anti-Bulgarian sentiments made the work of the Greek Consul unachievable:

“As you can see, we are facing the risk of failing no longer because of the action of the Turks but instead because of the plots of the circles of those who like vultures surround the Bishops and Consuls and try to impose their opinion, which under the pretense of patriotism serves their own personal interests. In my opinion, we should either succumb to their desire giving a parliamentary seat in another region to the

³⁰ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, January 19, 1912.

³¹ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Tserepis (Saranta Ekklesies) to Constantinople Embassy and Foreign Ministry, January 27 and 31, February 20, 1912.

³² DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Tserepis (Saranta Ekklesies) to Constantinople Embassy and Foreign Ministry, January 31, 1912.

³³ DIAYE, 1912, 88.1, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, February 28, 1912.

Bulgarians or I should be given a small credit and your approval so as to impose your will using specific means."³⁴

On the other hand, the Bulgarians were right to protest against the coldness with which the collaboration was treated and against the refusal of the locals in Saranta Ekklisies to commit themselves that they would support the Bulgarian candidates, as the agreement stipulated. Similar accusations can be heard by the Greek Greek authorities, too: that the Bulgarians did not cooperate with them in the Sanjak of Adrianople where a Greek candidate had to be supported.³⁵ These examples prove that it was not the intervention of the CUP that caused the cracks in the fragile electoral alliance. In fact, the recent Greco-Bulgarian confrontation in the area had not been forgotten.³⁶ This becomes evident by the preference of many local people to cooperate with the Muslims instead of the Bulgarians. Anyway, it is certain that although Athens had imposed its choices in a central level, they had to fight a different battle in every region so as to implement them.

Based on this strategy, the aim of the Greek authorities was the election of six or seven deputies in the Vilayet of Adrianople.³⁷ However, how could they set such maximalist goals when during the last elections of 1908, which were held in a more liberal environment, only one deputy had been elected in the Sanjak of Kallipolis, with its overwhelming Greek majority? The answer is that they expected they would be able to repeat the success of the by-election of Constantinople, taking advantage of the division of Muslims into two political parties. So, where the Greeks and the Bulgarians outnumbered the Muslims, they could win the elections by themselves and where the Greek element was less powerful, this could determine the confrontation of the Muslims. In other words, the whole point was to ensure "the biggest possible number of electors... so as to hold the fate of the election in our own hands."³⁸ This called for the employment of different strategies in each sanjak. In Kallipolis, the Greeks could prevail because they formed the majority of the population. In Raideostos, with 53,000 residents in a total of 159,000, the Greeks could prevail only on condition that the Muslim element was divided although in this case the collaboration of the local Armenians with the CUP made this prospect difficult, as the Greek consular authorities readily noticed.³⁹ This strange collaboration could perhaps be attributed to the commercial competition between the Greeks and the Armenians on a local level. In Saranta Ekklisises, the Greek-Orthodox communities and the Bulgarians were the majority,

³⁴ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Tserepis (Saranta Ekklisies) to Constantinople Embassy, February 20, 1912.

³⁵ DIAYE, 1912, 88.1, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, February 28, 1912 and 24.4, Dimaras to Foreign Ministry, February 18, 1912.

³⁶ See for more, Paraskevas Konortas, "Nationalist infiltrations in Ottoman Thrace (ca.1870–1912): the case of the Kaza of Gumuljina." In *State Nationalisms*, op. cit., 73-100. Additionally, for the social factors that determined the national affiliations of the Greek-speaking and the Slav-speaking populations, see, Basil C. Gounaris, "Social cleavages and national 'awakening' in Ottoman Macedonia," *East European Quarterly* 29 (1995): 409-426.

³⁷ DIAYE, 1912, 105.1, Gryparis to Constantinople Embassy, January 23, 1912.

³⁸ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, January 13, 1912.

³⁹ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Koutsalexis (Raideostos) to Foreign Ministry, January 13, 1912.

so they could ensure success based on their own power. The same applied to De-deağaç, but since the preponderance was marginal, the support of the liberals was necessary because it was a single-seat constituency. In Adrianople, despite the compact Greek and Bulgarian populations, the majority was Muslim, and cooperation with the Liberals was necessary as it was in Goumouljina with its overwhelming Muslim majority.

Selecting the candidates

The effort of the Greek state to consolidate its control over the process is evident in the selection process of the candidate deputies. Despite the fact that sometimes the role of the PL is over-emphasized, the final responsibility for the selection laid with the Greek diplomats always in collaboration with the religious authorities. From the beginning, Gryparis made it clear that no candidacy should be announced unless it had his approval. Furthermore, the ex-deputies that had joined the “Greek Party” had to be supported again.⁴⁰ This meant the exclusion of all those who had cooperated with the CUP and those who were opposed to the PL. The only nationally legitimized candidates were those indicated by the PL and, by implication, by the Greek government. The “anti-nationals” were fiercely fought by the PL, which made the gap between the two rival parties of millet even greater. A characteristic example is a rumor according to which Pavlos Karolidis, a Greek deputy collaborating with the CUP, had converted to Islam.⁴¹ The intensity of the confrontation proves that a part of the Greeks disapproved of this ethnocentric turn of the millet. Apart from those who disagreed with the PL policies on ideological or practical grounds, there were also those who opposed it simply because they had not been included in its tickets. The latter believed that a clique was excluding the “competent” candidates. This very issue emerged during the selection of the candidate for the Sanjak of Kallipolis, where, due to the Greek preponderance, the election of any candidate was deemed easy. Gryparis had promised the nomination to the editor of the newspaper *Salpinx* in Mytilene, N. Paritsis, provided that the ex-deputy St. Narlis withdrew his candidacy.⁴² Eventually, Narlis did not withdraw and the minister appealed to Paritsis’ patriotism to withdraw his nomination so as not to divide the Greek votes. In his answer, the latter stated angrily:

“Nobody allowed ex-deputies who have done nothing to appoint themselves as national candidates whose negative vote is allegedly a crime against the nation [...]. I love my nation both in words and deeds. I have always in my mind the atrocities of the Young Turks, I am the right arm of our consulate and I boast about

⁴⁰ DIAYE, 1912, 23.1, Gryparis (Circular), January 5, 1912 and Gryparis to Constantinople Embassy, January 11, 1912.

⁴¹ Pavlos K. Karolidis, *Λόγοι και Υπομνήματα*, [Speeches and Memoranda], (Athens: 1913), τ’ and Emmanuel Emmanuelidis, *Τα τελευταία Έτη της Οθωμανικής Αυτοκρατορίας*, [The last years of the Ottoman Empire], (Athens: 1924), 307.

⁴² DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Gryparis to Constantinople Embassy, January 17, 1912.

it. I could ask for the greater sympathy from my free nation whose offspring I am too. I also appeal to Your justice and I dare to make the claim to be granted this."⁴³

Eventually, the minister, furious at Paritsis' attitude, imposed the will of the "national center" but he also promised him nomination in another sanjak of Thrace.⁴⁴ Thrace.⁴⁴ Together with displaying the national centre's difficulty in imposing options, this interesting incident nevertheless indicates the willingness of the candidates to recognize Athens as their authority. Aiming at changing the minister's mind, Paritsis showed great patriotism. It is therefore clear that the candidates largely depending on the acceptance of Athens were trying to claim from the Greek government their role as representatives of the nation.⁴⁵

Another crucial issue was the imposition of the consular authorities on the religious hierarchy. Even though the general rule was the clergy's obedience to the commands of Athens, the extent of their cooperation with the consular authorities varied according to the character, ideological identification and the interests of each Bishop. In fact, the confrontations between Consuls and Bishops were still recent in many parts of the vilayet where the former were trying to dismiss the latter if they did not serve the "national ideas." These confrontations had divided the local elites and the communities for many years.⁴⁶ In Saranta Ekklisies, where the opposition to the choices of the national center was strong, the Bishop had succumbed to the will of the local notables, thus making Greek Consul's work even harder: "I am afraid that our actions for the elections will fail because of the weakness of Bishop's character."⁴⁷ On the other hand, the example of the Bishop of Ainos, Ioakeim, is totally different. A strong and influential person, Ioakeim tried to impose his own choices on Athens. He threatened that if his candidate for Dedeğaç was not approved "he is discharged of any responsibility towards the R. Government."⁴⁸ Gryparis reacted decisively: "it is imperative that the Bishop of Ainos be informed that no excuse can exempt him from responsibility towards the R. Government and that he is not in charge of appointing candidates as this belongs to the responsibility of the national centers."⁴⁹ Consequently, the Minister had to confirm his authority not only towards the religious authorities who were against nationalist penetration but also towards those who, despite subscribing to a nationalist policy, exhibited tendencies towards independence.

However, the greatest difficulties emerged in the attempt to cooperate with the local elites. In order to eliminate local antagonisms, the consular authorities repeatedly

⁴³ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Gryparis to Mytilene Vice-Consulate, January 27, 1912 and Paritsis to Gryparis, January 29, 1912.

⁴⁴ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Gryparis to Mytilene Vice-Consulate, January 31, 1912.

⁴⁵ See also, Anagnostopoulou, *op. cit.*, 485.

⁴⁶ Evangelia Choleva, "Εθνικές Αντιπαραθέσεις στη Νότια Θράκη: κοινωνικές, οικονομικές και ιδεολογικές παράμετροι," [“National Confrontations in Southern Thrace: social, economic and ideological parameters”], (PhD diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2015), 294-411.

⁴⁷ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Tserepis (Saranta Ekklisies) to Foreign Ministry and Constantinople Embassy, January 31, February 12 and 20, 1912.

⁴⁸ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Drosos (Dedeğaç) to Gryparis, February 28, March 2 and 16, 1912.

⁴⁹ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Gryparis to Dedeğaç Vice-Consulate, March 3, 1912.

tried to impose candidates who did not directly belong to the community, in the hope that such persons would be acceptable to all local factions. In Saranta Ekklesies, the elders preferred the local doctor Kirkos instead of the lawyer Eukleidis from Constantinople. The consular authorities consented on the condition that Kirkos, if elected, would resign to offer his place to another prominent candidate who had failed to be elected in another region.⁵⁰ Eukleidis had to face even more negative reactions in Raidestos, where the elders sent a letter to the Patriarchate to support the nomination of their preference. Although the Vice Consul finally managed to impose his candidacy, Eukleidis himself finally declined the nomination, disillusioned with the reactions.⁵¹ Eventually, Eukleidis was appointed in Dedeğaç where his candidacy was a mere formality since the outcome of the elections there had already been judged.⁵² In Adrianople, there was a big number of competing candidates and none of them could ensure the acceptance of all local factors. The Consul General Konstantinos Dimaras and the Bishop tried to further a compromise so as not to wither “their sought-after zeal for the elections.” The consultations lasted for more than one month but led anywhere and at the end, the two men were asked by the community to select the candidates themselves.⁵³ Those who were finally selected were close associates of the consulate and had distinguished themselves in the attempts to dismiss uncooperative Bishops over the last two decades. It is therefore apparent that the Greek diplomats had to take into account local alliances, personal interests and the ambitions of the local elites. Whether they opted for consultations or for a confrontation with the local element, they usually managed to impose their choices.

However, which were the criteria for the selection of the candidates? The primary condition was to commit themselves in advance that they would join the Greek Party in Parliament and that they would be loyal to the “Greek program,” something that was sometimes considered humiliating for their “pride.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, their influence in the community, their origin from a good family, their education and, of course, their “pure patriotic feelings” played a cardinal role. Equally impressive is the fact that those candidates characterized as “rather conservative” were excluded, even if they met the other criteria.⁵⁵ What did the Greek Consuls mean with this characterization? All the selected candidates were doctors or lawyers; none of them belonged to the upper social strata of the rich merchants, bankers, and powerful civil servants. They belonged to the middle classes which were not directly associated with the Ottoman establishment. Thus, the term “conservative” evidently meant people who were not close to the Ottoman administration.

⁵⁰ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Alexandropoulos (Constantinople) to Foreign Ministry, February 9, 1912.

⁵¹ DIAYE, 1912, 88.1, Koutsalexis (Raidestos) to Constantinople Embassy, February 17, 1912 and 24.4, Alexandropoulos to Foreign Ministry, February 27, 1912.

⁵² DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Drosos (Dedeğaç) to Foreign Ministry, March 16, 1912.

⁵³ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry and Constantinople Embassy, January 13, February 12 and March 12, 1912.

⁵⁴ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Gryparis, March 14, 1912.

⁵⁵ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, January 10, 1912.

The electoral campaign

Despite the fact that the elections of 1912 became known as "the big stick elections" due to the illegal means used by the CUP, they constitute a milestone in the political development of the Ottoman Empire. For the first time, two parties confronted each other in a full-scale electoral campaign, massive rallies were held, while while the press not only covered the campaign but also took a lively part in the debate debate thus contributing to the political agenda. Nevertheless, the new legislation on on press, public gatherings and society worked for the benefit of the CUP, as did its empire-wide organization.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the acute political rhetoric articulated by all sides instilled ethnic and sectarian-religious discord, which survived long after the elections.

In the Vilayet of Adrianople, the CUP managed to neutralize the efforts of the Liberals to organize themselves, let alone to conduct an electoral campaign. With violence, intimidation, displacement of candidates and open intervention by the local authorities in favor of the CUP, the Liberals avoided "to step out of their houses for fear of being murdered by the Committee and they are thinking of migrating to save their lives."⁵⁷ Even in the Sanjak of Gumuljina, where the opposition was stronger, the Greek Vice-Consul mentioned that "the lack of representatives of the Freedom and Accord Party in order to organize, encourage and indoctrinate the opposition to the Committee gives the impression that in the center of the opposition and throughout the Muslim community, the Young Turk autocracy prevails."⁵⁸ The Greek Consuls were disappointed with the lack of organization and the idleness of the new party and they were trying to give it a boost, even with financial contributions to its clubs.⁵⁹ They were also striving to mobilize the Greeks to help the opposition and they achieved it in Gumuljina, where the Liberals finally took action. This provoked the violent reaction of the Unionists. The peak of violence was the fierce beating of the prominent member of the opposition, Rıza Tevfik, who was transferred to the hospital only after the intervention of the Vicar Archimandrite Nikolaos.⁶⁰ With the exception of some isolated threats against specific persons, similar incidents did not take place against the Greeks, a fact indicating that the primary target of the CUP was the elimination of Muslim opposition. Indeed, in view of the decisiveness with which the CUP dealt with the situation, many of its members who had left before the elections, re-

⁵⁶ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 273 and Kayali, "Elections and the electoral process," *op.cit.*, 273-277.

⁵⁷ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Tserepis (Saranta Ekklisies) to Foreign Ministry, February 14, 1912.

⁵⁸ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Chalkiopoulos (Xanthi) to Foreign Ministry, February 9, 1912.

⁵⁹ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Drosos (Dedeğaç) to Gryparis, February 28, 1912.

⁶⁰ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Chalkiopoulos (Xanthi) to Foreign Ministry and Constantinople Embassy, February 28, March 2, 10 and 13, 1912.

turned.⁶¹ Reporting these developments, Dimaras had taken for granted the victory of the CUP and commented scathingly:

*“In Turkey, it is widely known that there is no public opinion. The people are unstructured and lack any political education. The prominent Muslims, either because of their education or because of their wealth, with a few exceptions, lack political pendency and they succumb to the powerful. [...] Who of the powerful Beys of Adrianople, who criticized harshly the Committee a while ago, appears now as its opponent? No one, not even the so-called candidates of the Freedom and Accord ty.”*⁶²

The political rhetoric used by the opposing parties is indicative of the toughness of the electoral confrontation. The main argument of the Unionists was that their policies would save the country, so whoever opposed them was an enemy of the state. On their part, the Liberals believed that the CUP centralizing policies were destroying the state and only with decentralization and liberalism that would be saved. However, the weak ideological content of the centralization-decentralization debate and the blurred lines between the two parties made their rhetoric adjustable to the local particularities of every region. Thus, trying to appeal to the non-Muslim vote, the Liberals were attacking the CUP for pursuing a policy of Turkification while the latter was refuting those claims pointing to its patriotic agenda.⁶³ The Greek rhetoric was based on the “program of the ethnicities,” which would be the only solution for the salvation of the Empire in contrast to the “Turkish” politics of the CUP.⁶⁴ However, as long as the Greeks were confronting the CUP, they were defending their national affiliations and this gave the Unionists grounds to question their allegiance to Ottomanism.

In Thrace, with the Liberals neutralized, the Unionist propaganda dominated the electoral process. Acting undisturbed, the CUP had managed to create a wide network of supporters, who were touring urban and rural areas spreading the Unionist propaganda. The latter identified the fate of the state with that of the CUP and claimed that “whoever follows the new party is an enemy of the Turkish Nation” because the former “united with the Christians, is working on the destruction of Turkey.”⁶⁵ These should be seen as indications of an emerging Turkish nationalism. However, the Unionist propaganda targeted equally the Christians, promoting against them a kind of nationalism chiefly based on religion. The editor of the newspaper *Valkan* in Filibe (Filippoupolis) visited almost all the sanjaks of the vilayet giving fiery speeches and exacerbating the situation. In Raidestos, he “at-

⁶¹ Kayali, op.cit., 274-276.

⁶² DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, January 19, 1912.

⁶³ Kayali, op.cit., 273-274.

⁶⁴ See for examples the journalistic organ of the PL, G. Bousios, «Εις τας Κάλπας», *Τα Δίκαια των Εθνών*, January 15, 1912 and «Τα εθνικά κόμματα εν τη βουλή», *Φωνή*, January 29, 1912.

⁶⁵ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, February 11, 1912 and Chalkiopoulos (Xanthi) to Foreign Ministry, February 3, 1912.

tacked the Greeks and the Bulgarians trying to inspire the hatred and aversion of the Muslims against them. He described the Greeks as traitors of the fatherland and the state, and as unworthy of Muslim people's trust. On the other hand, he portrayed the Bulgarians as savages and vicious killers. He suggested the abolition of Sunday holiday and the domination of the Turkish language in everything, because, as he pointed out, the state is exclusively Turkish."⁶⁶ In Saranta Ekklisies, he "expressed his surprise that too many Greek houses carried the colors of the Greek flag. In other places, he said, these would be burned down" and "the crowd was fanaticized and outraged against the Greek element."⁶⁷ In Dedeğaç, the former Şeyhülislam went even further: "The spilling of Kosmidis"⁶⁸ blood and of others like him does not bring harm, in other words, sin; the assassination of such people is a godly act. I will issue a fatwa for you. Kill them."⁶⁹ However, it is worth mentioning that these excesses were not reproduced by CUP formal political rhetoric. In his speech in Adrianople, the Minister of Public Works Cavid Bey did not make any references to such harshness. Instead, he stressed the need for a strong government and commented on several issues of foreign policy including the Cretan question with moderation.⁷⁰

Thus, the strategy of the CUP is easy to interpret. After the elimination of the opposition and the rallying of the Muslim element around the CUP, the Christians were left as the only supporters of the Liberals. This deprived the latter of any legitimization in the eyes of the Muslim population. Thus, the character of the confrontation changed from political to ethnic-religious, especially in the provinces where the Christians constituted the majority of the population. And since the Greeks were "enemies of the state" because they opposed CUP policies, their Ottomanism was in question, as did the legitimacy of their presence in the Ottoman context. At the same time, an early form of the emerging Turkish nationalism was evident in the middle and lower Muslim social strata. The latter played an increasingly important role, since the political influence of the elites was determined by their own vote. Therefore, the democratization of the political process caused the transformation of the political rhetoric in an interactive process.

Electoral irregularities and protests

The CUP was determined to use every means to secure the greatest possible preponderance in the new Parliament. If they used violence and intimidation in order to eliminate the Muslim opposition, they committed a series of electoral irregularities in order to limit the representation of the opposing Christian element. To some extent,

⁶⁶ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Koutsalexis (Raideostos) to Foreign Ministry, April 8, 1912.

⁶⁷ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Tserepis (Saranta Ekklisies) to Foreign Ministry, February 14, 1912.

⁶⁸ Padelis Kosmidis was one of leaders of the Greek Party and the PL. During the elections he was imprisoned by the Ottoman authorities for the republication of a British article which criticized CUP policies. «Η Φωνή και ο Υπεύθυνός της», *Δράσις*, February 10, 1912. For the article, see, «Εκ Λονδίνου», *Φωνή*, January 29, 1912.

⁶⁹ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Drosos (Dedeğaç) to Gryparis, March 2, 1912.

⁷⁰ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry, March 9, 1912.

the illegalities can also be attributed to the excess zeal of the local authorities, who owed their appointment to the favor of the CUP. Thus, their possible fall from would mean the loss of their offices.⁷¹

Throughout the Vilayet of Adrianople, irregularities against the Christians were the rule. They were even more flagrant where the Christians were the majority. In most electoral districts, the Greeks were almost excluded from electoral committees while the electoral districts which, according to the law, would have to meet the boundaries of each *nahiye* were arbitrarily delineated in order to secure a Muslim majority. In the electoral constituencies where the Christians were the majority, they used the number of 700–750 voters as an electoral basis for the appointment of each elector, whereas in regions where the Muslims dominated, the base was determined at 250–300 electors. Additionally, many Christian voters were arbitrarily deleted from the electoral registers and often elections were held at times when the Christian voters were unable to participate.⁷² The procedure was described as an electoral parody by the Greek Consul General of Adrianople while in his protest towards the government, the Patriarch complained about “the neutralization of the electoral forces of the Greek population.”⁷³ These irregularities did not determine the overall outcome of the elections since the CUP would probably have won even without them, but they significantly reduced the representation of the Greek element, actually placing it outside the Ottoman political frame. Nevertheless, the Ottoman authorities were not alone in the use of unfair means. In Dedeğaç, after primary elections were conducted and the Muslim electors commanded the majority, an attempt was made by the Greek consulate with Gryparis’s approval to bribe the Muslim electors in order to convince them to vote for the Greek candidate. However, this attempt was fruitless because even if the climate were favorable, they would have to bribe 7–10 electors, which would be very difficult.⁷⁴

Another crucial issue is how the Greeks reacted towards the electoral irregularities of the CUP. The Embassy in Constantinople organized a system of constant cycles of protests to the local Ottoman authorities up to the government itself.⁷⁵ As could be expected, most complaints were expressed by the religious authorities that formally represented the millet in Ottoman administration. This way, a plethora of complaints were evidently reaching the Ottoman authorities on a daily basis. Vague answers were given to these protests and no serious action was taken to remedy the complaints. Thus, it seems that the idea of abstention gained more and

⁷¹ Ergil, “A Reassessment,” op. cit., 43; Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, op. cit., 103–4; Kayali, op. cit., 276.

⁷² For the electoral irregularities in each sanjak see, *Ισοπολιτεία*, June 17, July 1, 15 and 22. Moreover, the sub file 24.4 of the Foreign Ministry Archive is full of such references.

⁷³ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry, March 22, 1912 and *Εκκλησιαστική Αλήθεια*, March 17, 1912.

⁷⁴ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Drosos (Dedeğaç) to Gryparis, March 16, 1912 and Alexandropoulos (Constantinople) to Dedeğaç Vice-Consulate, March 15, 1912.

⁷⁵ DIAYE, 1912, 23.1, Alexandropoulos (Constantinople), Circular, February 2, 1912.

more ground among the Greeks especially in Adrianople and in Goumouljina.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Athens was staunchly opposed to such an eventuality for various reasons. Gryparis maintained that abstention, if opted for, would need to be universal to be effective, but due to the “loose cohesion of the Liberal Party,” this was not feasible. Furthermore, as some Greeks had already been elected with the CUP, abstention would not be justifiable. Last but not least, he stressed that in order for abstention to have an impact, it had to be the “beginning of a series of other measures of protest gradually applied from the weaker to the stronger. The Nation does not seem prepared for the implementation of such a series of measures.”⁷⁷ Indeed, if the Greeks abstained from the elections, they would actually decline their last bonds with the Ottoman political system. Abstention, thus, implied a breach for which neither the CUP nor the Greeks were ready. Thus, the minister recommended “the continuation of the joint struggle [with the Liberals] regardless of any pressure or arbitrariness by the Committee and the authorities.”⁷⁸

However, why did the Greek Government insist on the “struggle until the end” while the results of the successive protests proved negligible? The Greek policymakers were well aware of the fact that these consecutive protests would not bring about any direct benefit. Yet, this process served the wider aims of Greek foreign policy. On the one hand, Athens wanted to make it clear to the Ottoman government that “the Christians keep a watchful eye on their constitutional rights,”⁷⁹ something compatible with the Greek desire for the improvement of the position of the Greeks in the empire. On the other hand, and this is of primary importance, the constant protests played a role in legitimizing the demand of the Balkan countries for the intervention of the Great Powers due to the oppression of Christian populations by the Ottoman authorities. It was not a coincidence that through the Greek diplomatic network, articles were published in Italian and Serbian newspapers that featured the oppression of the Christians during the Ottoman elections.⁸⁰ This way, an ostensibly internal Ottoman issue became an international one serving the national interests of Athens.

The electoral results

The results of the elections were a complete disaster for the opposition. The Liberals managed to elect only six deputies in a total of 275 while their most prominent members failed. The weakness of the Liberals to organize themselves into a solid party played a cardinal role in their defeat. This allowed for a drift of many of their members towards the CUP when its determination to win the elections became apparent. Furthermore, while the new party seemed to be reasonably successful in cities, it

⁷⁶ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, February 28, 1912, Chalkiopoulos (Xanthi) to Foreign Ministry, March 14, 1912 and Alexandropoulos (Constantinople) to Xanthi Vice-Consulate, March 17, 1912.

⁷⁷ DIAYE, 1912, 23.1, Gryparis to Constantinople Embassy, March 14, 1912.

⁷⁸ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Gryparis to Constantinople Embassy, March 15, 1912.

⁷⁹ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Constantinople Embassy, February 28, 1912.

⁸⁰ See the sub-file DIAYE, 1912, 23.1.1.

was almost unknown in the countryside. There, the CUP dominated fully, having managed to acquire the support of various local elites and their protégés.⁸¹ Thus, even if the CUP had not resorted to any illegal means, it is rather doubtful whether the Liberals would have been able to win the elections.

The Greeks who had identified with the Liberals saw a significant reduction in their representation in the new Parliament. In the end, only 15 deputies were the overwhelming majority of whom on the Unionist ballot.⁸² The PL failed to elect its candidates even in areas with a clear Greek majority, such as Chios and Lesbos. Only in Ioannina the two candidates of the PL were successful.⁸³ In the Vilayet of Adrianople, no Greek deputy managed to be elected. In all sanjaks, a Muslim majority in electors occurred, despite the presence of more than 300,000 Greeks in the region (see appendix).⁸⁴ Even in the Sanjak of Kallipolis where the Greek population was over twice as much as the Muslim, the candidate of the PL, St. Narlis, did not manage to be elected in contrast to the previous elections of 1908.

Despite the failure, the electoral alliances that had been contracted with the Bulgarians and the Liberals were more or less observed. At the Sanjaks of Adrianople and Dedeğaç, the Bulgarians supported the Greek candidates and only in the Sanjak of Saranta Ekklesies some leakages occurred.⁸⁵ The effective elimination of the Liberals from the electoral map did not benefit the Greek candidates. This meant that the Liberal Muslims were voted almost exclusively by Christian electors thus confirming the propaganda of the CUP accusing them of having “sold out to the Greeks.”⁸⁶ The only election that the Liberals won was that of the Kaza of Goumouljina. However, in the rest of the kazas of the sanjak, they did not manage to elect even one elector and the CUP easily won in this constituency as well.⁸⁷ These events confirm the claim of the CUP deputy Emmanuel Emmanuelidis that one of the main reasons why the Opposition “lacked any kind of power from the people, especially in the countryside, was its collaboration with the deputies of the PL.” He was also probably right in saying that “the patriotic actions and speeches of the PL were regarded by the Young Turks as useful for their own propaganda against the Turks [Turkish opposition].”⁸⁸

⁸¹ Ahmad, *op. cit.*, 104 and Kayali, *op. cit.*, 275.

⁸² Boura, “The Greek millet”, *op. cit.*, 198 and Anagnostopoulou, *op. cit.*, 493.

⁸³ DIAYE, 1912, 23.1.2, Ioannina Consulate to Foreign Ministry, June 16, 1912. Boura also mentions that the candidates of the PL were elected in Kallipolis and in Serres, something which is not substantiated by the Foreign Ministry Archives. For the Sanjak of Serres see, DIAYE, 23.1.2, Kavalieratos (Serres) to Foreign Ministry, May 18, 1912.

⁸⁴ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry, April 12, 1912.

⁸⁵ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry, April 2, 1912, Drosos (Dedeğaç) to Gryparis, March 16, 1912 and Tserepis (Saranta Ekklesies) to Foreign Ministry, April 12, 1912.

⁸⁶ Anagnostopoulou, *op. cit.*, 492.

⁸⁷ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Chalkiopoulos (Xanthi) to Foreign Ministry, March 19 and April 20, 1912.

⁸⁸ Emmanuelidis, *Ta Τελευταία έτη*, *op. cit.*, 307-8.

Defeat led to a transient questioning of the policy of the PL. Despite the reactions and the division of the millet, however, its alignment with the Greek state could not be disputed or reversed. The Greek voters supported the policy of the PL. In Thrace, the lack of “anti-national” candidates favored the rallying of the Greek population around the PL, thus making the elections more of a national than a political issue. Moreover, no mass protests were recorded. Of course, the restrictive climate imposed by the CUP played a crucial role, but as a whole, the picture that emerges is that the Greeks were too disillusioned to act vigorously. Dimaras had tried to explain this attitude just before the proclamation of the elections:

*“I can adamantly say that [the Christian element] is characterized by disbelief, pessimism and disillusionment. The various irregularities of the Committee during the last three years, the terrorism exercised by them, the tendency to turkify everything, thing, the plotting against the privileges of the ethnicities and generally all their irregularities eliminated any hope of the Christian element that the situation can ever be improved in Turkey.”*⁸⁹

This was also a strong legitimizing factor of Venizelos’ policy to participate eventually in the Balkan War against the Ottoman Empire.

Conclusions

In the 1912 elections, the stakes were not only the control of the Parliament. The opponents projected their ideas for the salvation of the empire and an issue of this magnitude naturally raised passions. Thus, the electoral confrontation magnified the cleavages between them. The means used by the Unionists discredited constitutionalism and made apparent that the CUP domination of the political process could not be disputed through legal means. In the summer of 1912, the CUP was overthrown by a military coup resulting in its further radicalization when it returned to power, also through a coup, next January.⁹⁰ This breach with legality, which had begun with the elections, affected all aspects of Ottoman society. By shaking the whole Ottoman edifice, the already fragile connections between ethno-religious groups suffered a serious blow.

This process is evident in the case of the Vilayet of Adrianople. The electoral confrontation turned into an ethnic or religious struggle while the Greeks supported the candidates of the PL thus legitimizing the involvement of the Greek consular authorities in the electoral process. The latter managed in most cases to impose the choices of the Greek Government on the millet despite random local resistance. However, this was a reciprocal process. The illegal means used by the CUP and the final lack of representation of the Greeks in the Ottoman Parliament either with the CUP or with the PL contributed to their full alienation from a system that they felt was trying to ex-

⁸⁹ DAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry, December 8, 1911.

⁹⁰ Ahmad, op. cit., 105-120 and Kayali, op. cit., 277.

clude them. Consequently, it was quite natural that they would turn openly to Greece for the protection of their rights and the preservation of their ethnicity. This turn was accelerated and completed by the war that broke out a few months later.

Another dimension of the elections which has to be highlighted is that of Thrace as a bone of contention. For the Greek policy-makers, the election of Greek deputies in the province was considered as a testament to its undisputed Hellenic character. Respectively, the Exarchists' anxiety of electing their candidate in the Sanjak of Saranta Ekklisies was closely related to the territorial claims of Bulgaria. Moreover, although the Unionists tried to ensure the representation of Greek populations in other provinces, in the Vilayet of Adrianople, they included no Christians in their ballot except for an Armenian in Raidestos, who was considered "harmless" since neither an Armenian state existed nor the Armenians could ever claim a part of Thrace. With this move, the CUP evidently aimed to establish the unquestionable Muslim-Turkish character of the region. Besides, the symbolic value of Thrace and especially of Adrianople for the Ottomans is well-known. The fact that a few months after the elections, the CUP staged a coup in order to save Adrianople from the Bulgarian army is very telling. The whole process described here was a part of the transition from a pre-modern imperial state of affairs to one of nation-states on the western model.

INDEX

1. Electors in every sanjak in comparison with the population (male and female).⁹¹

Sanjak	Muslims	Greeks	Bulgarians	Armenians	Jews	Total
Edirne	134 (153,893)	38 (103,258)	6 (36,783)	2 (4,899)	5 (15,534)	185 (316,615)
Gümülcine	120 (239,870)	7 (21,545)	4 (28,614)	- (493)	- (1,290)	131 (292,120)
Gelibolu	32 (25,955)	26 (64,604)	- (1,474)	- (1,133)	2 (2,336)	60 (95,822)
Tekfurdağı	53 (76,813)	17 (53,427)	2 (5,746)	8 (19,014)	- (2,654)	80 (159,002)
Dedeağaç	29 (43,735)	14 (27,573)	3 (16,923)	- (456)	- (326)	46 (89,033)
Kirkkilise	64 (78,338)	21 (70,501)	6 (29,736)	- (149)	- (1,699)	91 (181,204)
Total	432 (618,604)	123 (340,908)	21 (119,476)	10 (26,144)	7 (23,839)	593 (1,133,796)

2. Electoral results of the second phase – numbers denoting electors⁹²A) Sanjak of Kirkkilise:

Emrullah (CUP): 69

Ömer Naci (CUP): 64

Bourilakov: 26

Kirkos: 22

B) Sanjak of Gümülcine:

CUP: 96 Muslim electors

⁹¹ DIAYE, 1912, 24.4, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry, April 12, 1912. For the population, Karpat, op. cit., 166-167.

⁹² DIAYE, 24.4, Tserepis (Saranta Ekklesies) to Foreign Ministry, April 12, 1912, Dimaras (Adrianople) to Foreign Ministry, April 2, 1912, Koutsalexis (Raideostos) to Foreign Ministry, April 3, 1912, Chalkiopoulos (Xanthi) to Foreign Ministry, April 7, 1912.

Liberals: 23 Muslim electors

7 Greeks

4 Bulgarians

Γ) Sanjak of Edirne:

Faik (CUP): 142

Emin (CUP): 142

Talaat (CUP): 141

Theofilidis: 44

Kallivoulos: 42

Rıza Tefvik: 33

Dilaver: 11

Δ) Sanjak of Gelibolu:

Hüseyin Ulvi (CUP): 34

Narlis: 26

