

STUDY GUIDE



HAFMUN'25

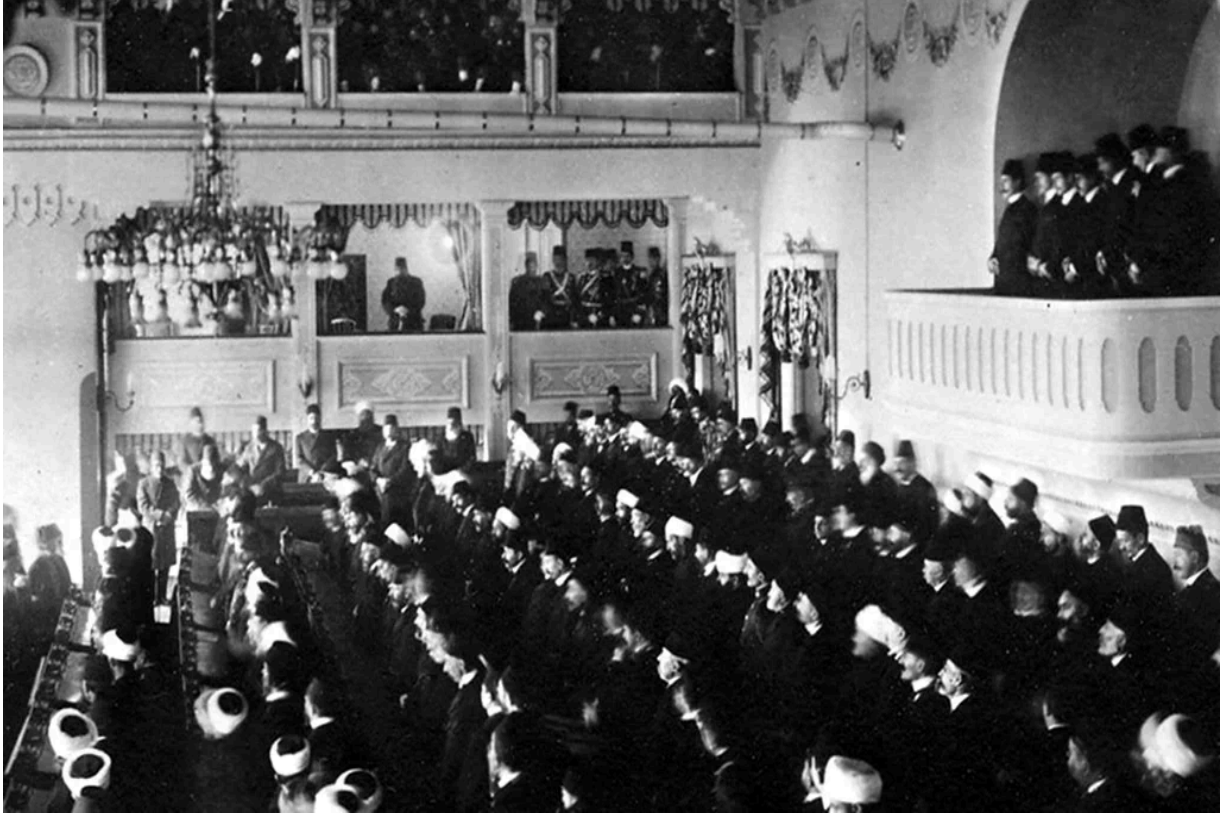
Chamber of Deputies

Agenda Item: Second Constitutional Era

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CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES: SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL ERA STUDY GUIDE



Agenda Item: Second Constitutional Era

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1. Welcoming Letters

a. Letter from Secretary General

b. Letter from Under-Secretary General&Academic Assistant

Esteemed Delegates,

We are Mehmet Emre Kuş&Uyanık, the Under-Secretary General and the Academic Assistant of Chamber of Deputies: Second Constitutional Era. To begin with our letter, at first we would like to state that it is our utmost pleasure to serve as members of the academic team in HAFMUN'25 and we would like to thank the executive team for giving us this chance.

We really believe that this conference and this committee will offer you a lot of chances to improve yourselves and spend some quality time. We worked hard to make this committee happen and with all of your efforts and attendance in this committee, we know that we are going to have a unique experience together.

Our request from you is that we want you to read this study guide carefully and do some extra research about your allocations before the conference so that we can have better debates and a smoother committee running. Please do not forget that this is really important for all of us.

Lastly we want to say that you can reach out to us whenever you have a question whether it is something about the committee or personal.

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2. Introduction and Purpose of the Committee

Shortly after Abdul Hamid II was forced to restore the constitutional monarchy following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. The Second Constitutional Era of the Ottoman Empire began. With this, the Chamber of Deputies (known as Meclis-i Mebusan by locals) resumed its duties for the second time.

The Chamber of the Deputies is the major legislative body of Ottomans. It had major authorities which we will be explaining later. In this committee you, delegates, will be the Deputies(Mebus) of the Ottoman state. Your purpose is to do your best to solve essential existing problems in the best way for the Ottoman Empire in the current situation.

Currently, the Empire has some serious troubles in every field. The economic situation is unstable, the military is weak and in need of reform, and cultural and social life is nearly nonexistent, unless you are part of the upper class. In short terms, the Ottoman Empire is the "Sick Man of Europe."

Now, in this committee it is in your hands to fix this situation. You can work hard for your people and bring peace, freedom, and justice to your New Empire by deciding what reforms and changes should be made in order to strengthen the military, stabilise the economy and fulfill the need for reforms.

3. Background of the Chamber of Deputies

a. First Constitutional Era and Suspension

The first constitutional era refers to a period in the late 19th century when the Ottoman Empire introduced its first constitution, Kanun-i Esasi, in 1876, marking a significant shift towards modernization and reform. This era aimed to create a more representative government and addressed issues of governance, civil rights, and administrative reform, reflecting the empire's struggle to adapt to the changing political landscape and internal challenges. Kanun-i Esasi is the first constitution that determined the transition to a constitutional monarchy and laid the foundations of the constitutional regime in the Ottoman Empire.

At the time before Kanun-i Esasi, the first constitution of the Ottoman Empire, the arbitrary and discretionary rule seen in the periods of autocracy had started again. Sultan Abdulaziz often exiled officials, and large offices became offices that were distributed in return for bribes. Some intellectuals who grew up in the European school began to oppose this arbitrary and absolutist attitude of the administration. These consisted of a group of intellectuals (Namik Kemal, Ziya Pasha, Sinasi, Mithat Pasha) called 'Young Ottomans'. The bureaucrats and intellectuals, who were not satisfied with this situation, dethroned Sultan Abdulaziz and replaced him with Murat the Fifth. Due to the mental health problems of Murat the Fifth, Abdulhamid II, who declared that he was a supporter of the constitution and constitutionalism, was enthroned. During the Tanzimat era, intellectuals and bureaucrats envisioned the future trajectory of the state as characterized by constitutional governance and the adoption of Western institutions, thereby endeavoring steadfastly towards these objectives. After Abdulhamid II came to the throne, Mithat Pasha forced the sultan to establish a commission for the preparation of a constitution. Working under the influence of Mithat Pasha, the commission was inspired by the French and Belgian constitutions, prepared a draft constitution and presented it to the sultan. The Sultan made some changes in the draft as a result of the examinations he had made. These changes were made to increase the powers of the sultan. In 1876, the first constitution of the Ottoman Empire was proclaimed.

The first constitutional era officially began with the proclamation of the Ottoman constitution on December 23, 1876, which established a parliamentary system. The Young Ottomans played a crucial role in advocating for the constitutional movement; they were instrumental in shaping the discourse around constitutionalism during the first constitutional era. Their advocacy for reforms emphasized civil rights, education, and modernization, influencing public opinion and political debates. The movement fostered a climate that allowed for the introduction of the constitution.

Although the constitution was introduced in Kanun-i Esasi, the powers of the assembly were kept narrow. For example, before a councilor can propose a law, he must first obtain permission from the sultan. Bills approved by both assemblies do not enter into force unless the sultan approves them. In addition, the responsibility of the government to the parliament

is not clearly stated in the Kanun-i Esasi. In addition to these, the sultan has a say in the election of the presidents of the assemblies. He directly elects the head of the Heyet-i Ayan (the chamber of notables). He elects the chairman and two vice chairmen of the Heyet-i Mebusan (the chamber of deputies) himself from among the three candidates nominated by the assembly. The entire delegation of the Heyet-i Vükela (the council of ministers) is appointed by the sultan. On the other hand, the sultan can dissolve the assembly at any time.

Sultan Abdulhamid II was aware of his right to dissolve the assembly at any time and he was looking for an excuse to do so. He found that excuse when the Ottomans were defeated in the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian war and dissolved the assembly. Sultan Abdulhamid II's suspension of the constitution in 1878 marked a turning point that significantly impacted future reform movements within the Ottoman Empire. The abrupt halt to constitutional governance led to disillusionment among reformists and fueled opposition against his autocratic rule. This ultimately set the stage for further revolutionary activities, such as those by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which sought to restore constitutional governance. The suppression of early reforms highlighted ongoing struggles between tradition and modernization, shaping political dynamics leading into the 20th century. Despite its short-lived nature, the first constitutional era laid the groundwork for future reform efforts and movements towards modern governance in the empire.

b. Times Without Chamber

When Sultan Abdulhamid II dissolved the assembly and suspended the constitution, the Ottoman Empire entered an era(*in Turkish: İstibdat Dönemi*) in which Sultan Abdulhamid II ruled the Empire himself and published a lot of new restrictions and innovations.

During this period, while many steps were taken towards modernization, a policy of oppression and censorship was also implemented. It was forbidden to criticize the administration of Abdülhamit II. Newspapers that questioned or criticized any action taken by the state were shut down and books were collected. Also, the ideas of pan-Islamism(known as “*ümmeîçilik*” by locals) and a political union which would be established by Islamic countries were supported. Sultan Abdulhamid II made some appointments with the leaders of other Islamic countries but his endeavours did not result as he wanted and a kind of establishment never came to life.

Sultan Abdulhamid II implemented some serious restrictions and was serious about ensuring that these restrictions were well implemented. Internal and external incidents that developed and took place during this era made Sultan AbdulHamid II establish an intelligence agency directly subordinate to him. An example of these scandals is when it was found out that his own Grand Vizier was working on behalf of others and against the state. As a result, the Yıldız Intelligence Agency was established. The agency is often informally referred to as being the Mossad of the Ottoman Empire.

Later on in his reign, the organization was divided into two factions; those working in favor of Sultan AbdulHamid II and those working against him. The organization was engaged in intelligence activities all around the country, especially against the Committee of Union and Progress members and the Young Turks. Alongside this, the agency was very well organized abroad. Abdul Hamid closely followed people and institutions in various centers abroad such as Paris, New Delhi, Vienna among many other cities. Cities where it was found out that the Young Turks plotted against the Ottoman dynasty were the most important ones for Sultan Abdulhamid II.

Thanks to his agents, spies and detectives, who spread over the world in a very short time, more than 3000 intelligence reports and journals were arriving to the Yıldız palace every month. The Sultan read all of these reports in person and delivered those that were in need of further investigation to his personal secretaries after he cut out the part where the signature of the spy was visible, in an effort to keep their identities a secret.

In this there were also some important changes and innovations in some areas like economy, media, education and health. For instance the first women's magazine was released and heavy censorship was implemented in the media. Although this would eventually result against him and increase the support for the constitution in the country, Sultan Abdulhamid II also established 350 new secondary schools and increased the number of high schools from 5 to over 100.

Among all the attempts for improving the economic situation the most important one was the establishment of Ottoman Public Debt Administration(OPDA also known as Düyun-u Umumiye). This institution which was established to monitor the internal and external debts of the Ottoman empire could not prevent the economy from being worse. The main reason behind that was because the Ottoman Empire could not win the wars it entered and continued to lose lands.

c. Young Turks and Afterwards

The Young Turks was a coalition of constitutionalist broad opposition movements against the regime of Sultan Abdulhamid II. Their movement emerged in response to decades of autocratic rule under Sultan Abdulhamid II, particularly during a period marked by foreign intervention and internal discontent among various ethnic and religious groups within the empire. The Young Turks sought to implement democratic reforms, promote individual rights, and foster a sense of national unity among the diverse populations of the empire, including Turks, Arabs, Kurds, and Armenians. The most powerful organization of the movement was founded in 1899 which is the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, also known as İttihat ve Terakki), though its goals, strategies, and membership continuously morphed throughout Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign. By the 1890s, the Young Turks were mainly a loose and

contentious network of exiled intelligentsia who made a living by selling their newspapers to secret subscribers.

The events leading to the 1908 Young Turk Revolution started in 1899 when a group of students in the Imperial Medical Academy in Istanbul created a conspiracy against Sultan Abdulhamid II which spread rapidly to other colleges in other cities. When the situation was recognised by Sultan Abdulhamid II, many of its leaders fled abroad, mainly to Paris where they prepared the background work for a future revolution against Sultan Abdulhamid II. One of the most important ones who emigrated to other countries was Ahmed Rıza who then became a key spokesman for the CUP. Another important opposition organisation was formed by Prince Sabaheddin. His group, called the League of Private Initiative and Decentralization, espoused many of the same liberal principles as those propounded by the CUP, but, unlike the latter, it favoured administrative decentralization and European assistance to implement reforms.

Although the CUP and the League played a significant role in spreading the liberal thought, the main reason behind the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 came from groups within the empire, particularly from discontented members of the III Army Corps in Macedonia. Many young officers from the corps came together and formed the Ottoman Liberty Society in 1906. The following year this group collaborated with the CUP in Paris, bringing the Young Turk ideologists to the command of the III Army Corps. Later the League and the CUP decided to work together to achieve their common goal. On July 3, 1908, Ahmed Niyazi of the 3rd Corps led a revolt against the provincial authorities in Resna. Other conspirators soon followed his example, and the rebellion rapidly spread throughout the empire. Unable to rely on government troops, Sultan Abdulhamid II announced on July 23 the restoration of the 1876 constitution and recalled the parliament. The Young Turks had succeeded in establishing a constitutional government.

4. Authorities of the Chamber

The Second Chamber of Deputies in the Ottoman Empire was an active part of the legislative body between 1908 and 1918, after the Young Turks revolution. The Chamber of Deputies had significant essential authorities within the Empire. Also, there were limits to its powers. Authorities and powers of the Chamber were defined primarily by the 1876 Ottoman Constitution (Kanûn-ı Esâsî), which was reactivated in 1908. We can examine them.

- **Legislative Authority**

Laws are backbones of a state. They are the rules of country. In the Ottoman Empire they were special because they provided a legal framework that limited the Sultan's authority, regulated state functions, and protected citizens' rights. By creating rules for administration,

finance, and social order, laws helped establish accountability and introduced the principle of parliamentary oversight. This shift laid the foundation for modern state governance, ensuring that power was exercised according to clear, written norms rather than personal will.

During the Second Constitutional Era, the Chamber of Deputies (Meclis-i Mebusan) had significant authority in law proposals. Any deputy or the Council of Ministers could propose new legislation. That means Deputies that chosen by public could change the rules of country. Once a draft law was introduced and examined detaily by related body of government, and then propasal brought to the general assembly for debate. After discussions, the proposal would be voted on by the deputies. If approved, it was sent to the Senate (Heyet-i Ayan) for further approval, and finally, the Sultan's sanction was required for it to become law. This process allowed the Chamber to influence legislative activity, though the Sultan's ratification remained a strong check on its authority.

The Chamber had another way to effect legislative process. It was amendments. Amendments meant request of change for an currently existed law. These proposals required the approval of both the Chamber and the Senate and needed the Sultan's ratification to become valid. (In the Committe we will not be using this authority of Chamber)

Although these powers marked a shift toward constitutional governance, the Sultan's role as the final authority limited the Chamber's independence. Nevertheless, the ability to propose laws and amend both legislation and the constitution represented a major step in the development of parliamentary government within the Ottoman Empire.

Another topic under legislative process is approval of international treaties. According to the constitutional framework, significant international treaties, financial agreements, and state contracts could not take effect without the Chamber's consent. So we can say that Chamber had an effect at diplomatic issues and foreign afffairs.

Lastly, Before 1908, the Sultan held almost absolute power, but the restoration of the constitution and the re-opening of parliament created a system where legislative and executive powers were shared. The Chamber gained authority to make laws, approve budgets, and monitor the government. With that, Sultan, the government (Council of Ministers), and the Chamber of Deputies shared powers. This caused sharing of powers and created a balance of power in the state.

- **Oversight over Government**

Before the Young Turk revolution at 1908, Sultan had nearly limitless power. He could do whatever he wanted, without any observationery power over him. There were no accountability in the government. But when revolution happened and Chamber opedned again it became the oversight over the government. Government and Sultan had to obey the

request and needs of Chamber and Public. One of its key powers was the ability to question ministers about their policies and decisions through interpellations. Deputies could demand explanations regarding state administration, budget spending, and implementation of laws. This created a level of accountability, as ministers were expected to justify their actions in front of the elected representatives. Additionally, the Chamber could influence the stability of governments by expressing confidence or dissatisfaction through debates, which put political pressure on the Cabinet.

This oversight function was particularly important in areas such as financial management and public works projects, where corruption and foreign influence were major concerns. While the system was not fully democratic, these mechanisms marked a significant step toward parliamentary control and accountability in Ottoman governance.

- **Control over the State's Finance**

In the Second Constitutional Era, one of the Chamber of Deputies' most significant powers was its control over state finances. According to the constitution, the government could not introduce any new taxes, tariffs, or state loans without parliamentary approval. This meant that financial policy, which had long been under the Sultan's absolute authority, now had to be discussed openly in a representative body.

This authority was particularly important because the Ottoman Empire was burdened with a massive foreign debt. Since 1881, much of the empire's revenue had been controlled by the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (Düyûn-ı Umûmiye), a European-run institution that collected certain taxes to pay back foreign creditors. The Ottoman Public Debt Administration is one of the main topics that will be discussed in the discussions.

- **Limits of the Chamber**

Although the Chamber of Deputies had important powers, its authority was limited in several key ways. The Chamber could not act independently in foreign policy, military matters, or internal security—these areas remained under the Sultan and his appointed ministers. Deputies could discuss such issues, but they had no binding authority over them.

Another limit was the role of the Senate (Heyet-i Ayan). Every law passed by the Chamber had to be approved by the Senate before reaching the Sultan. Since senators were appointed by the Sultan, this body acted as a filter that could block or alter legislation.

In addition, the Chamber could not collect taxes or impose loans on its own; it could only approve or reject financial proposals presented by the government. It also had no direct control over executive appointments, as ministers were chosen by the Sultan.

Most importantly, even after both chambers approved a law, it still required the Sultan's sanction to become valid. This meant that the Sultan's veto power was a major limit on the Chamber's independence.

In summary, the Chamber of Deputies could not directly conduct foreign policy, control the army, appoint ministers, bypass the Senate, or enact laws without the Sultan's approval. These restrictions ensured that while it was a legislative body, ultimate power remained in the hands of the Sultan and his government.

5. Main Topics of Discussions

a. Economic Policies and Foreign Debts

One of the most important topics is shaping the economic policies and handling the issue of reducing foreign debts because when we ensure stability in economic policies and reduce the bad effects of foreign debts it becomes a lot easier to decide which reforms to implement and to create better relations with other countries.

External debts taken on from abroad in the period before the second constitutional era deeply shook the Ottoman economic structure, and the Ottoman treasury, which was struggling to stay afloat, came largely under the control of foreign states with the establishment of the Public Debt Administration(also known as Düyün-u Umumiye). As a result, the Ottoman Empire became a source of raw materials and a market for European countries, acquiring the characteristics of a semi-colony. The aim of the Young Turk movement and its continuation, the Committee of Union and Progress, was to rescue the country from its semi-colonial state.

In order to stabilize the economy and rescue the Ottoman Empire from this situation some changes in the policies and reforms should be made. The questions we need to address in the committee in order to do that are as follows:What kind of economic policies should be implemented in order to strengthen the economy? What should be done in order to reduce the amount of foreign debts and to rescue the Ottoman Empire from foreign debts' negative effects?

b. Possible Military Reforms

Another important topic that was discussed in the Chamber of Deputies was possible Military Reforms. The Balkan Wars which took place in 1912-1913 revealed the weaknesses of the military at the time and that led to the need for urgent reform in the military. Some examples for the main reforms that are needed to be discussed upon are: reforms regarding the order of the army and the amount of budgets to make these reforms.

In the years following the proclamation of the second constitutional era, the backbone and core of the army consisted of seven armies and two additional independent divisions, made up of the youngest and most reliable soldiers, known as the regular army. With the addition of independent divisions and reserves, the army is complete. The main ideas of reform and our questions upon this issue is that should the current order of army be developed and should the current army be modernized by imitating European armies? Also how should the usage of the country's budget be used in accordance with these reforms.

c. Foreign Affairs

When the second constitutional era started foreign affairs became an important matter that needs to be addressed. Because with the establishment of the chamber of deputies for the second time it is expected from the chamber to arrange the external policies of the Ottoman Empire upon entering the WW1 and the relations with major countries such as Germany, France, Britain, Russia. So handling the foreign affairs successfully is crucial to ensure longevity and stability for the second constitutional era. The important questions that need to be answered in order to stabilize the foreign affairs are as follows: What kind of policies needs to be implemented for the relations with the major countries? In accordance with those policies will the Ottoman Empire enter a possible World War, if so what will be the policies of the Ottoman Empire for the World War?

6. Procedure of the Committee

Law Proposal Authority

Process of Law Proposal:

1. Submission:

A deputy or the government introduced a draft law.

2. Discussion in Committees:

The proposal was first reviewed in a specialized committee (e.g., finance, internal affairs, justice).

3. General Assembly Debate:

After committee review, it was debated by the entire Chamber.

4. Vote:

Laws passed by majority vote were then sent to the Senate (Heyet-i Ayan) for approval.

5. Sultan's Role:

After both chambers approved, the law required the Sultan's sanction (irade-i seniyye). Without this, the law could not take effect.

In order to make it easier for you our procedure will be a little bit different. We will follow the steps that are mentioned above as follows: first discussion in committees than submission, general assembly debate, vote, Sultan's Role.

7. Matrix

İstanbul

AHMET NESİMİ BEY
KONSTANTİNİDİ EFENDİ

Bursa

MEHMET MEMDUH BEY

Edirne

ÖMER NACİ BEY
AHMET ZİYA EFENDİ

Bitlis

NAZIM BEY
MEHMET NURETTİN BEY

Bağdat

SASON EFENDİ
ALİ HAYDAR MİTHAT

Aydın

HÜSEYİN KÂZİM (ŞEYH MUHSİN FANİ)
NESİM MAZALYAH EFENDİ
GANİ BEY

Adana

HASAN SEZÂİ BEY
HAMPARSUM BOAYACIYAN

Ankara

MAHİR SAİD BEY

8. Bibliography

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[Young Turks | History, Ottoman Empire, & Significance | Britannica](#)

[MECLİS-İ MEBÛSAN - Çanakkale Savaşları Ansiklopedisi](#)

Allocations and more information

[Türk Parlamento tarihi : Meşrutiyete geçiş süreci : I. ve II. Meşrutiyet](#)