

20-21-22 September, 2024

# MUNSA'24

**Historical Crisis  
Committee**

**Agenda Item:  
Ottoman Interregnum**



# HCC

**REACH TO THE FUTURE, SHAPE THE TOMORROW'S WORLD**

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## 2. Letter From the Secretary General

Esteemed participants of the Model United Nations Conference of Sakıp Sabancı Anatolian High School 2024,

It is with great pleasure and honor that I extend this invitation to you all to join us for the 4th annual session of MUNSA in İstanbul, Türkiye. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the earthquake disasters faced by our country, we are excited to announce that we are gearing up for what promises to be our best session yet, scheduled to take place from September 20th to 22th, 2024.

As Secretary General, I am deeply privileged to be a part of a conference that upholds the values of education, excellence, and collaboration. Working alongside a team of incredibly talented individuals, I am enthusiastic about organizing an event that truly showcases the essence of our club. Our conference offers a diverse array of committees, including engaging crisis committees and a variety of topics spanning different time periods and regions.

Just like every year, this year's conference is being organized by SSAL MUN Club too. Our club's academic and organizational teams are working tirelessly to bring you the best MUN conference you've ever experienced. We believe that our conference will not only provide you with three unforgettable days but also significantly enhance your academic and personal development.

This year's MUNSA will feature 9 unique committees, each led by a team of passionate people. With that being said, the tenacious team of MUNSA'24, promises to challenge delegates to engage and think critically. Through our General Assembly committees GA1: DISEC and GA3: SOCHUM, two cooperation organizations which are the OIC and G-20, the main body and the most important committee of UN which is UNSC, the mysterious BDNC and two crisis committees which are JCC and HCC; delegates will have access to a broad range of committee forms and topics. From this wide range of options, delegates have the opportunity to find a committee that fits their interests and matches their preferred style of debate.

To apply for MUNSA 2024, simply visit our website and register. Before doing so, I encourage you to explore our website, [munsakipsabanci.org](http://munsakipsabanci.org), where you can find detailed information about our team, registration deadlines, conference policies, and committees. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to our Public Relations team at [pr@munsakipsabanci.org](mailto:pr@munsakipsabanci.org).

On behalf of the Sakıp Sabancı Anatolian High School Model United Nations Club and the MUNSA'24 Team, I eagerly anticipate welcoming you all to our conference this September!

Habib Doğanay Dönmez

Secretary General, MUNSA 2024

### 3. Letter From the Under Secretary General

Dear delegates,

As the Under Secretary-General of the HCC committee, it is an honor for me to be a part of this conference. I would like to thank my team for working so diligently and creating such a well organized committee.

The Ottoman Interregnum is the biggest civil war in the Ottoman Empire's great history. In HCC, you will find yourselves as important characters in the period of Ottoman Interregnum. Delegates will have to use diplomacy, strategy and critical thinking skills while resolving the problems in the committee. Additionally I hope that HCC will create an environment where delegates can work as a team and develop their communication skills.

Thank you for being a part of this committee. I look forward to seeing you all at the conference and witnessing the incredible directives and solutions that will emerge. I am sure that all together we can save the Ottoman Empire from destroying itself.

Sincerely,

Aral Kocatürk

## 4. Introduction to the Committee

The "Fetret Devri," or Ottoman Interregnum, was a time of civil war and disintegration that lasted in the Ottoman Empire from 1402 until 1413. It started when Timur (Tamerlane) soundly defeated Sultan Bayezid I at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, leaving the empire without a definite leader. When each of Bayezid's sons Süleyman, İsa, Musa, and Mehmed claimed the throne, the empire entered a ten-year fight for supremacy. During the early interregnum, Mehmed Çelebi behaved as Timur's vassal. Besides the other princes, Mehmed minted a coin in which Timur's name appeared as "Demur han Gürgân" (تیمور خان کرکان), alongside his own as "Mehmed bin Bayezid han" (خان محمد بن بایزید). This was probably an attempt on Mehmed's part to justify to Timur his conquest of Bursa after the Battle of Ulubad. After Mehmed established himself in Rum, Timur had already begun preparations for his return to Central Asia and took no further steps to interfere with the status quo in Anatolia. The Ottoman state was split up at this time, with competing claimants in charge of various areas. The Byzantine Empire, European crusaders, and the advancing Timurid army were among the external foes and internal uprisings that posed a threat to the empire. The Ottoman state's survival and future course were at stake during the Interregnum, making it more than just a struggle for supremacy. You will assume the roles of significant characters from this era as delegates in this crisis committee, negotiating a web of coalitions, betrayals, and conflict. Your objective is to stabilize the empire and seize power, whether for yourself or for a claimant of your choosing. But take caution, your opponents are equally committed, and the Ottoman Empire's future is at stake.

## 5. Historical Background

To fully grasp the Ottoman Interregnum, one must understand the underlying processes and events that laid the groundwork for it. Said events take place during Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid's reign between 1389-1402.

### 5.1. Bayezid Taking the Throne

Ever since his birth, Bayezid I was intended by his father to be the crown prince, and take up his throne. Thus from an early age he was educated in matters of fighting, military tactics, politics, arts and leadership by the best scholars in the country.

As soon as he reached the ripe age of 21, he was appointed by his father to be the Bannerlord of Kütahya and began taking part in battles alongside him, leading thousands of men into battle. He truly showed his military prowess in the critical First Battle of Kosovo, during which his acts of heroism while leading the right wing armies won the Ottomans the battle. His sheer speed and versatility with armies during the battle earned him the nickname Yıldırım, forever engraving him as a legend in Ottoman history.

On top of his military success, he was a fair and intelligent ruler of his banner. The people of Kütahya prospered under the young Şehzade's rule, proving him both as a ruthless commander in the battlefield and a glorious ruler on the throne. This earned him the favor of the people and officials in the Divan-ı Hümayun, solidifying his claim to the throne.

After his father was assassinated while traversing the battlefield after the First Battle of Kosovo, Yıldırım Bayezid immediately stepped up as his successor and took swift action to legitimize his rule. As first order of business, he summoned the Prince of Serbia to have him pledge allegiance to himself, then had his brother Yakub executed in his throne room in front of all his officials. While this act upset the army, who beloved Şehzade Yakub, it also cast fear in their hearts and strengthened their loyalty to the new Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid.

These actions set a great example of the personality and ruling style of Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid, as a smart and brave Sultan beloved by his people, but ruling over his court and army with an iron fist and commanding loyalty by fear. This would keep being the case for most of his time on the throne.

## 5.2. Reign of Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid

### 5.2.1. Anatolian and Balkan Affairs

After completely solidifying his place on the throne, Sultan Bayezid had a very busy and fast reign, running from battle to battle and subduing every one of his enemies one by one. He first began by eliminating threats on the western border, as they held much bigger military and political power than the Anatolian Beyliks he would later need to deal with. Thus between 1389 and 1396, the Sultan went ahead to;

- 1389: Marry the sister of the Serbian King and impose annual taxes on the Kingdom of Serbia
- 1390: Send akıncı forces led by Hoca Firuz Bey and Paşa Yiğit to subdue Wallachia and Moldavia, preventing any potential uprisings
- 1391: Defeat the Wallachian armies marching on his lands in Karınabad, vassalizing the country and taking their Voivodina as prisoner during the process
- 1393: Defeat the Hungarian and Bulgarian armies at the same time, conquering the capital of Bulgaria Tırnova and imprisoning the Bulgarian king and prince after the battle
- 1394: Conquer Thessalonica, Morea, Thessaly and Albania
- 1395: Conquer the rest of the Greek Peninsula down to the Attican Peninsula
- 1396: Defeat the Crusader Armies in the legendary Battle of Niğbolu, dismantling them completely

Doing all of these in just the span of seven years was unheard of in Ottoman history up until that point, and it is theorized Sultan Bayezid might have gotten his nickname thanks to his speed in doing all these deeds in such a short time period.

Unrest wasn't limited to the Balkans however, since Şehzade Yakub was beloved by many of the Anatolian Beyliks, they were enraged at Sultan Bayezid's killing of his brother and usurping the throne. Thus with the political excuse of avenging Yakub's death, the Beyliks of Germiyanlı, Aydınlı, Saruhanlı, Menteşeli, Hamidli and the ruler of Sivas Kadı Burhaneddin joined forces to rise up against Bayezid.

Seeing all of these, Bayezid orchestrated many military campaigns to launch a grand offensive and unite the Anatolian Turkish nations once and for all. Thus, between the years 1390 and 1398 he went on to;



- 1390: Completely erase the Aydınoğulları, Germiyanogulları, Menteşeoğulları and Hamitoğulları Beyliks from the map, sending their rulers to exile in various parts of the world
- 1390: Conquer the Byzantine Castle of Philadelphia
- 1390: Besiege the city of Konya in order to break the alliance between the Karamanoğulları, Candaroğulları and Kadı Burhaneddin, then annex the city in the following peace treaty.
- 1392: Launch an attack on the Candaroğulları Beylik that saw the conquests of Kastamonu and the subsequent dissolution of the beylik.
- 1392: Send his oldest son Şehzade Ertuğrul Çelebi to conquer subdue the lands of Kadı Burhaneddin, who would go on to conquer the Fortress of Osmancık but fall in the following Battle of Kırkdilim.
- 1393: Conquer the regions of Amasya, Merzifon, Turhal and Tokat and organize these regions into a new sanjak to put his son Mehmet Çelebi in charge of.
- 1394: Start friendly diplomatic relations with the Mamluke Sultanate
- 1395: Besiege the city of Sinope, which led to the capitulation and vassalization of the Candaroğulları Beylik who were centered there.
- 1396: Defeat the Crusader Armies marching towards his land in the critical Battle of Niğbolu, and spend the war treasures towards the development of Bursa, ordering construction of many important buildings which contain the Bursa Ulu Camii, that still stands to this day.
- 1397: Defeat the armies of Karamanoğulları Beylik who had launched an attack towards the Ottomans, which saw the execution of their ruler and complete annexation of their lands after Bayezid's clear victory.
- 1398: Conquer the lands of Kadı Burhaneddin after his defeat against the Akkoyunlu State.
- 1399: Launch an invasion of the Anatolian lands owned by the Mamlukes, conquering the regions of Malatya, Darende and Divriği in complete violation of their previous treaties and good relations.

### 5.2.2. Byzantine Conflicts

Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid paid great attention to the conflicts regarding the Byzantine throne, as he saw dictating their game of thrones as a stepping stone towards conquering Constantinople. Thus, he often got involved in internal affairs of the struggling Byzantine Empire.

#### a. **First Conflict: Attempted Coup**

In the year 1389 Sultan Bayezid supported a coup by Ioannis VII to overthrow the current emperor Ioannis V. However, even though Ioannis VII managed to subdue the City of Constantinople with the help from Sultan Bayezid, the coup was unsuccessful in the end after Ioannis V's son, Manuil, launched a counter attack from Morea with a bigger army and naval fleet.

Ioannis V was returned to the Byzantine throne after a civil war that only lasted three weeks.

This turn of events angered Sultan Bayezid, as his supported candidate had lost the throne and his plans of growing influence over the Byzantines had failed. As an act of vengeance, he forced Manuil to aid him in his Anatolian Offensive in 1390, humiliating the young prince.

#### b. **Second Conflict: The Walls Dispute**

The next conflict arose the very next year in 1390, when the Byzantine Emperor Ioannis V took advantage of Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid being at war in Anatolia and had the Theodosian Walls strengthened using materials from broken down rubbles of buildings.

Bayezid took this as an act of treachery, and sent an ultimatum to Ioannis V threatening that if the reinforcements on the walls aren't broken down immediately, it would mean war between the two states. Ioannis, not being able to risk war with the Ottomans, begrudgingly ordered the reinforcements be taken down. This was a great humiliation in his eyes, one which sent him into a spiral of panic attacks due to excessive rage and ended up killing him.

#### c. **Third Conflict: The Cultural Dispute**

The year after that incident, in 1391, Bayezid demanded from the new Emperor Manuil that the taxes they pay be increased, a Muslim district in Constantinople be constructed and at least one mosque built in the city.

After Manuil refused these demands, Sultan Bayezid launched an all out invasion and besieged Constantinople from both land and sea, however this was only designed to intimidate the Byzantine administration.

#### **d. Bayezid's Attempted Conquests**

Bayezid went ahead to besiege Constantinople three more times, yet all were unsuccessful attempts. The second one in 1395 was cut short due to coming of winter, third one was in 1396 which saw the Ottoman armies flat out get defeated and the final one in 1400 was cut short after news arrived that Emir Timur had marched into Anatolia.

### **5.3. Battle of Ancyra**

The Battle of Ancyra was an infamous and critical battle between the two strongest rulers of Eurasia at the time. Ottoman Sultan Bayezid and the Timurid Emir Timur.

#### **5.3.1. Ottoman-Timurid Relations**

Before the Battle of Ancyra, Ottoman-Timurid relations relied on a silent agreement of keeping minimal contact, as rulers of both states had a deep sense of admiration and respect for the other one. It was also known that they were aware of their shared Turk-Muslim origins, thus while not considering each other allies, they weren't exactly enemies either.

##### **a. First Threat: Ottoman Isolation**

That isn't to say it was all peaceful coexistence either, as Timur made constant political maneuvers to gain power over the Ottoman State. The most obvious of which came when Timur embarked on his Seven Year War, or his Third Western Offense, defeating and neutralizing both the Golden Horde to the north and the Mamlukes to the south, effectively isolating the Ottomans by leaving no nearby state for them to cooperate with

##### **b. Second Threat: Diplomatic Maneuvers**

The former rulers of Anatolian Beyliks who had been defeated by Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid, (Germiyanoğlu Yakub Bey, Menteşeoğlu İlyas Bey, Aydınoğlu İsa Bey, Saruhanoğlu Hızır Şah) sought refuge in Timur's court and pledged allegiance to him. Timur promised their lands back in exchange for their help in defeating Bayezid, which they happily obliged.

Timur also convinced the Akkoyunlu Ruler Kara Yülük Osman Bey and Emir Mutahharten of Erzincan, vassals of the Ottomans, to change sides and help him in his rivalry against the Ottomans.

##### **c. Third Threat: Letters of War**

After Emir Mutahharten announced his shift of allegiance in favor of Timur, Sultan Bayezid still sent him a letter demanding the delivery of his owed

yearly taxes and his return to Ottoman ranks at once. Emir Mutahharten did not respond to this letter, showing it to Timur instead, making him furious.

In response, Timur wrote a condescending letter to Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid, vaguely applauding his victories against the Christians of Europe, yet advising him to *know his place* as a war like this would be one that damaged the political standing of the Islamic faith and certainly one that he would lose.

In response to this insulting letter by Timur, Bayezid sent one final letter declaring war on the Timurid Empire, stating;

*“I have long wished to face you in the battlefield, and now am determined to make that wish a reality. If you refuse to come to me, I will come to you at Süleymaniye and Tebriz to face you.”*

After this response, Emir Timur immediately mobilized his armies and prepared for war against Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid.

### 5.3.2. Lead-Up to the Battle

#### a. First Conflicts

After Sultan Bayezid’s response to his letter, Timur quickly moved into Ottoman lands and seized control of many places in his first advance in the year 1400. In his offense, Timur went on to;

1. Take control of Sivas, executing four thousand Ottoman prisoners of war on the grounds of disobedience,
2. Seize quick control of the Dulkadir lands, Malatya and Kahta
3. Invade Northern Syria, namely Antep, Aleppo and Damascus.
4. Finish his advance by seizing Mardin and Baghdad, then return to Karabagh to camp for the winter.

Bayezid however, thought Timur would advance onto Western Anatolia after capturing Sinope, thus decided to wait at Kütahya to ambush him. Soon after though, he heard news of Timur entering Syria, thus decided to change his plans. He executed the following steps;

1. Retake Erzincan and Kemah from Emir Murahharten, whom he blamed for this entire war.
2. Promise Mutahharten his lands back in exchange for his allegiance.
3. Break his promise to Mutahharten, not giving his lands back and instead imprisoning his family in Bursa as an act of vengeance

## **b. Last Diplomatic Talks**

Bayezid's treatment of Mutahharten, who was a valued ally of Timur, enraged him, thus causing Ottoman-Timurid relations to break down completely beyond repair. Thus Timur sent a last letter to Bayezid, boasting about his victories in his invasion of Syria, and demanding he become a vassal to him.

Bayezid responded by telling Timur in his letter that his Kayı Boyu heritage and his bloodline was holy and superior, and that he was ready to face his foe.

In his response, Timur stated that they were both Turks of the Islamic faith, and were both carrying on Gaza against Christians who defied Islam. He also stated that an alliance between them would wipe out Christianity from the world, and in exchange of Kara Yusuf and Kemah be returned to him, a father-son relationship would start between them and that he would help Bayezid against Christian forces.

The two exchanged many letters and many couriers came and went between them, but the attitude was always the same. Timur demanded Bayezid to bow down and accept his superiority, while Bayezid refused and kept stating how ready he was for a battle.

## **c. Start of the Battle**

Even though all of his advisors and court officials urged him against it, Timur went ahead and captured Kemah, which Bayezid had refused to give to him, and gifted it to Emir Mutahharten. After this, while Timur still expressed that he would still be willing to make peace if Bayezid sent Kara Yusuf and one of his Şehzades to him, as proof of his allegiance, Bayezid refused this and instead sent an insulting, mocking letter which called him a "Kelb-i Akur" or a "Rabid Dog", and stated;

*"If you do not come face me after this, may all your wives divorce you with three tevak. If I do not come face you after this, may all my wives divorce me with three tevak."*

After he received this letter, Timur lost all hope of a peaceful solution to this debacle, preparing himself for all out war with Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid.

Before sending the courier back, Timur said the following words for him to take back to Sultan Bayezid;

*"Osmanoğlu is a mad idiot. The advice I gave to him fell on deaf ears, so I captured Kemah without needing his approval. Now because of his refusal to bow and deliver to me Kara Yusuf, who I have right to prosecute, he shall from now on wait bravely and ready himself for my vengeance."*

Right after he sent this message to Bayezid, Timur called for reinforcement troops from his lands in Asia Minor, as his current army wouldn't be able to withstand Bayezid's forces. Timur mobilized 160 000 soldiers in a matter of weeks and marched them around the Castle of Sivas to show his strength.

Bayezid quickly mobilized his own army as well, collecting a military force of roughly 70 000 strong. With both armies mobilized and ready for battle, the sides began marching on each other and met in Ancyra, where the superior one would be decided once and for all.

### 5.3.3. The Battlefield

#### a. Army Numbers

Though there are many different estimates by different historians, it is most widely accepted that Timur's army consisted of around 160 000 soldiers, while Bayezid's numbered at roughly 70 000.

The Timurid army was strong and well trained, consisting mostly of cavalry. There was a wide array of different kind of troops including infantry, archers, spearmen, cavalry, cavalry archers and 32 elephants. These elephants, while they wouldn't be the deciding factor of the war, would be what engraved Timur's victory into legend.

Sultan Bayezid's army consisted of many subdivisions commanded by his sons, and many troop kinds unique to the Ottomans. These troop types included Ghazis (Raiders), Janissaries, Sipahi (cavalries) and etc.

#### b. The Battle Positioning

Bayezid reluctantly withdrew his forces from the blockade of Constantinople and marched them through the midsummer heat. When they arrived, they were tired and thirsty, but were allowed no time to rest or recuperate.

Bayezid was advised by his generals to take up defensive positions and, when Timur's forces pushed back the Ottomans, to withdraw into the mountains and force Timur to break ranks and attempt to hunt the Ottomans in their own terrain during the midsummer heat.

Bayezid instead chose to take an offensive stance and marched eastward. Advancing Ottoman scouts found no traces of the Timurids, who secretly marched southwest, rested, and were situated to the rear of the Ottomans. The Timurids encamped in the same locations that the Ottomans had previously occupied, making use of abandoned tents and water sources.



Sultan Bayezid's battleplan and army positions for the beginning of the battle, which were highly criticized by his advisors for its dangerous aggression

In the Timurid army, Timur commanded the centre, his sons Miran and Rukh the right and left, respectively, and his grandsons the vanguard.

In the Ottoman army, Bayezid commanded the center with Janissaries, his son Suleyman the left flank with the best troops, Stefan Lazarević the right with the Balkan troops, and his son Mehmed the rear guard.

### c. Meeting of the Armies

The battle began with a large-scale attack from the Ottomans, countered by swarms of arrows from the Timurid horse archers. Several thousand were killed and many surrendered to Timur.

Stefan Lazarević and his knights successfully fought off the Timurid assaults and cut through the Mongol ranks three times. Each time Stefan advised Bayezid to break out with him, Bayezid declined to do so. But the Serbians managed to save one of Bayezid's sons and the treasury from the Mongols and made their way to Constantinople.

The Serbian troops wore heavy black plate armor which was very effective against the Timurid arrows. Timur admired the Serbian troops who, according to him, "fight like lions".

During the battle the main water supply of both armies, Çubuk creek, was diverted to an off-stream reservoir near the town of Çubuk by Timur, which left the Ottoman army with no water. The final battle took place at Çatal hill, dominating the Çubuk valley. The Ottoman army, both thirsty and tired, was defeated, though Bayezid managed to escape to the nearby mountains with a few hundred horsemen. However, Timur had the mountains surrounded and, heavily outnumbering Bayezid, soon captured him.

After capturing him, Timur took Bayezid with him wherever he went, even taking him to his palace after his return. It is rumored that he treated Bayezid extremely well as a prisoner, with many luxuries no other prisoner had access to, but would constantly belittle and mock him for his defeat. It is also rumored that Bayezid committed suicide in captivity by drinking a deadly poison that he had been storing inside his ring, because of his humiliation.

## 6. Political Situation of 1402

For the purposes of this committee, it is crucial to understand the political landscape and machinations at the start of the interregnum, as it was a rather unique and peculiar state of things during that time.

### 6.1. Competitors for the Ottoman Throne

Each of Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid's surviving sons claimed rights over the Ottoman throne, and moved to prove the legitimacy of their claim through political and military action.

#### 6.1.1. Çelebi Mehmet

Çelebi Mehmet was a son of Sultan Bayezid from his second marriage to Devlet Hatun, who was a direct descendant of the well respected Islamic scholar Mevlana, thus earning Mehmet and his brother the prefix Çelebi.

Beginning at the age of twelve, Mehmet constantly took part in battles alongside his father Sultan Bayezid. During his very first battle in 1391, as a part of the Canik Campaign, he was sent to take control of the city of Amasya with an army under his command, which he completed with astonishing success. As a reward, he was appointed the Bannerlord of Amasya by his father, and continued this duty until the Battle of Ankara in 1402.

In the year 1403, one year after the beginning of the Fetret Devri, Mehmet pledged his allegiance to Emir Timur as a way of securing his way to the throne. Even though he hated bowing to the man who humiliated his father, Mehmet fought the civil war as a vassal of the Timurid Empire, for the sake of the Devlet-i Aliyye. He was appointed the Emir of Amasya, his former sanjak, the same year.

#### 6.1.2. Musa Çelebi

Musa Çelebi was the direct brother of Mehmet, from the same mother, which is the reason he also has the name Çelebi.

Musa Çelebi was an unlucky survivor of the Battle of Ankara, being captured by Timur alongside his father. However, after his father Bayezid's death in 1403, he was appointed as Emir of Bursa by Timur and sent back there along with his father's casket for a proper funeral.

Upon arrival, he saw the city taken over by his brother İsa Çelebi. Musa subsequently went on to besiege and capture the city of Bursa, establishing his control over the historic city.



However, the same year his brother came back with a stronger army for a rematch, attacked and decimated Musa's forces and took control of Bursa back. After his humiliating defeat, Musa Çelebi fled into hiding and was taken in by the ruler of the Karamanoğulları as a diplomatic guest.

### 6.1.3. İsa Çelebi

İsa Çelebi was a direct brother of Mehmet, from the same mother, which is why he has the name Çelebi. At the ripe age of ten, İsa was appointed as a Bannerlord to Teke/Antalya and continued that duty until 1402.

He fought in the center forces during the Battle of Ankara, being directly inside of the battle. After Timur's left wing armies surrounded the center forces of Bayezid's army, he was almost captured but was rescued by the sudden offense of Ottoman viziers.

After his defeat and flight in the Battle of Ankara, İsa Çelebi made his way to Bursa and started ruling as the Emir of the city. However, in a matter of weeks, Timur's armies reached Bursa and sacked it, deposing İsa and instating his brother Musa as Emir in the process.

After his banishment from Bursa, İsa gathered up a stronger force to challenge his brother. He besieged and entered the city of Bursa, and forcefully took it back from his brother, forcing him into hiding. This show of courage and strength impressed Timur, who afterwards named İsa Çelebi Emir of Bursa.

### 6.1.4. Şehzade Süleyman

Born 1377 as the oldest son of Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid, he wasn't a full brother to the other competitors. Süleyman was born out of Bayezid's first marriage, thus he didn't use the Çelebi name.

Süleyman fought alongside his father in many battles, most notable of which was the critical Battle of Niğbolu, where he commanded the right wing cavalry together with Çandarlı Ali Paşa. He showed great versatility and military brilliance in this battle, earning his father's good graces.

Şehzade Süleyman was also a key commander in the Battle of Ankara, where he commanded the left wing armies against Timur. However, he was forced to retreat when the enemy proved stronger, leading to his father Sultan Bayezid and his half brother Musa Çelebi being captured.

After the Battle of Ankara, Süleyman took off along with Çandarlı Ali Paşa to the Balkans, where he would establish himself as the Sultan-ı Rumeli, or the Sultan of the Balkans by 1403.

## 6.2. Internal Challenges of the Ottoman State

### 6.2.1. Fragmentation of State

#### a. Division of Territory

The empire was effectively divided among the sons of Bayezid I, each ruling over different territories. Suleyman Çelebi controlled the European provinces (Rumelia), Musa Çelebi governed parts of Anatolia, and Ahmed Çelebi and Mehmed Çelebi held other regions. This fragmentation weakened centralized authority and created multiple power centers within the empire.

#### b. Palace Intrigues

The imperial court experienced significant fragmentation, with rival factions aligning themselves with different claimants. Palace officials, including high ranking bureaucrats and military leaders, were often involved in shifting allegiances, contributing to further instability.

### 6.2.2. Military and Administrative Disarray

#### a. Shifts in Military Loyalties

The lack of a single, strong sultan led to shifting loyalties among the military elite. Commanders and soldiers who had previously been loyal to Bayezid I were now divided among the competing claimants. This weakened the Ottoman military's effectiveness and hindered its ability to respond to external threats and internal unrest.

#### b. Administrative Breakdown

The fragmented control over the empire led to administrative disarray. The provincial governors (beys) and other officials were often more focused on supporting their preferred claimant than on maintaining effective governance. This lack of cohesive administration contributed to economic difficulties and lawlessness in various regions.

### 6.2.3. Economic and Social Impacts

#### a. Economic Disruption

The internal strife and lack of centralized control led to economic disruptions. Trade routes were often unsafe, and economic activities in some regions were

severely impacted. The instability also affected agricultural production and revenue collection.

#### **b. Social Unrest**

The power struggle created social unrest and insecurity among the populace. The constant conflicts and changes in administration led to local instability, affecting both urban and rural communities.

### **6.3. Outer Relations of the Ottoman State**

#### **6.3.1. Balkan Relations**

Though the civil war left the Ottoman State in a power vacuum that was very easy to take advantage of, the Balkans were where the state suffered the least amount of land loss during the Fetret Devri. This was thanks to the strong assimilation policy of the state which saw many Turkmens and other Muslim peoples placed into newly conquered territories, and also the great tolerance and understanding shown to the inhabitants of the conquered provinces.

Even though many European states tried desperately to manipulate local governors and peoples in the Balkans to rebel against Ottoman rule, these attempts yielded no success. And as the Europeans were spending all their resources on the currently ongoing Hundred Years War, the Ottoman State faced no trouble in the Balkans.

#### **6.3.2. Anatolian Relations**

After the death of Sultan Bayezid and the start of the Ottoman Interregnum, the former Anatolian Beyliks didn't hesitate to take advantage of the subsequent power gap, quickly trying to rebuild their states.

##### **a. Anatolian Beyliks**

After the Battle of Ankara, many of the beyliks that Bayezid I had previously subdued regained their independence. Most of them managed this by pledging their allegiance to the Timurid Empire and becoming vassals. These beyliks were;

- Saruhamanoğulları
- Menteseoğulları
- Etna
- Karamanoğulları
- Germiyanoğulları
- Aydınanoğulları
- Hamitioğulları

##### **b. Timurid Influence**

The power gap that was created in the Anatolian Region was naturally filled by the Timurid Empire. Emir Timur gathered all the former beys of Anatolian

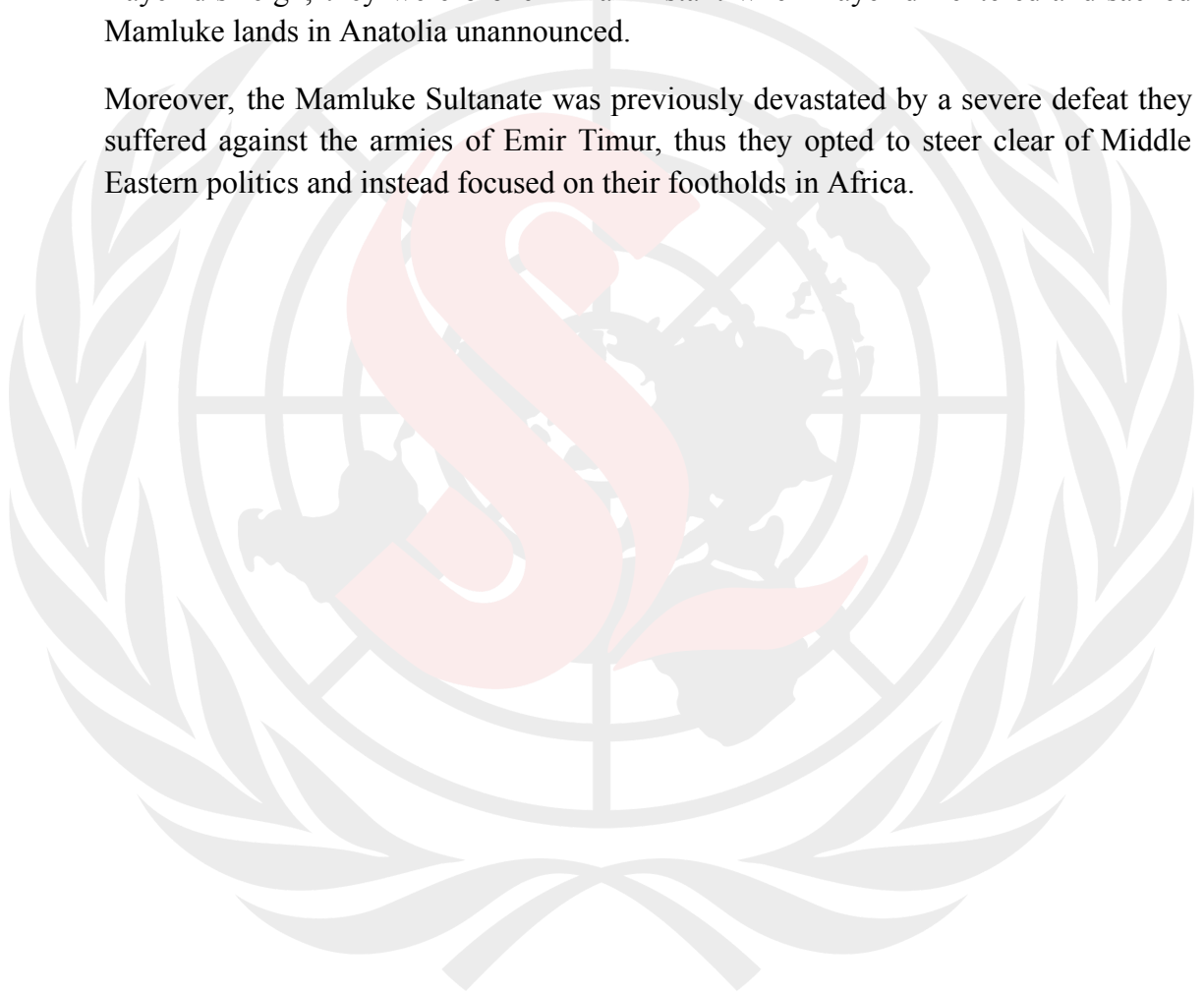
Beyliks and reinstated them as vassal states. He also took every one of Bayezid's sons under his command, making them Emirs of various provinces, thus solidifying his clear control over the region.

### 6.3.3. Middle Eastern Relations

In the year 1402, there was only one big nation in the Middle East that ruled over most of the region, the Mamluke Sultanate.

While the Ottoman State formed friendly relations with the Mamlukes during Sultan Bayezid's reign, they were broken in an instant when Bayezid I entered and sacked Mamluke lands in Anatolia unannounced.

Moreover, the Mamluke Sultanate was previously devastated by a severe defeat they suffered against the armies of Emir Timur, thus they opted to steer clear of Middle Eastern politics and instead focused on their footholds in Africa.



## 7. Military System of the Ottoman State

### 7.1. Introduction to the Ottoman Military

Being one of the most advanced and successful military systems in history, the Ottoman Empire was able to grow from a small Anatolian principality to a huge, multi-continental empire. The military was an essential institution that upheld internal order and protected the empire from outside dangers in addition to being an instrument of conquest. The military system changed over centuries, including different ethnic groups and adjusting to new strategies and technologies to maintain the empire's durability.

### 7.2. The Early Ottoman Military: Origins and Development

#### 7.2.1. Ghazis and the Warrior Tradition

The early Ottoman military was rooted in the Ghazi tradition, where warriors fought in the name of Islam against non-Muslim states. These Ghazis, or holy warriors, were essential in the initial expansion of the Ottoman state, particularly in the Balkans and Anatolia. The early Ottoman sultans, including Osman I and Orhan I, led these warriors, establishing the military ethos that would define the empire.

#### 7.2.2. Formation of a Standing Army

As the Ottomans expanded, they recognized the need for a more permanent and organized military structure. Orhan I (r. 1326–1362) is credited with forming the first standing army in the Ottoman Empire, consisting of paid soldiers rather than relying solely on tribal levies or Ghazi volunteers. This marked the beginning of a more professional military force that could be deployed year-round.

### 7.3. The Army Corps

#### 7.3.1. The Janissary Corps

##### a. Origins and Recruitment

The Janissary Corps was the elite infantry unit of the Ottoman army, established by Sultan Murad I in the late 14th century. The Janissaries were originally formed through the Devshirme system, which involved the periodic collection of Christian boys from the empire's Balkan provinces. These boys were converted to Islam, trained rigorously, and served the Sultan for life. The

Janissaries became the backbone of the Ottoman military and were known for their discipline, loyalty, and formidable battlefield presence.

#### **b. Organization and Training**

Janissaries were organized into units known as "ortas," each consisting of approximately 100 men. The entire corps was divided into three main divisions: the Cemaat, the Bölük, and the Sekban, each with specific roles and responsibilities. Training was intense and included not only military tactics but also education in languages, mathematics, and religion, ensuring that Janissaries were well-rounded soldiers and administrators.

#### **c. Role in the Empire**

The Janissaries played a dual role as both military and political actors. They were instrumental in the empire's territorial expansion, participating in key battles such as the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Politically, the Janissaries held significant power within the empire, often influencing the succession of sultans and the governance of the state. However, their power and autonomy eventually led to corruption and resistance to reform, culminating in their dissolution during the Auspicious Incident of 1826.

### **7.3.2. The Sipahi Cavalry**

#### **a. Timar System and Feudal Cavalry**

The Sipahi cavalry formed the backbone of the Ottoman military's land-based power. They were the equivalent of feudal knights in Europe, and their service was tied to the Timar system. Under this system, Sipahis were granted land (timar) in return for military service. The income from these lands provided them with the resources to maintain their equipment and horses, and in times of war, they were required to raise a certain number of troops from their estates.

#### **b. Organization and Deployment**

Sipahis were divided into two main categories: the Kapıkulu Sipahi, who were part of the standing army and served directly under the Sultan, and the Provincial Sipahi, who were landholders across the empire. The Sipahi cavalry was known for its mobility, speed, and effectiveness in battlefield engagements, particularly in the vast plains of Anatolia and the Balkans. Their role was crucial in the early Ottoman conquests, including the battles of Kosovo (1389) and Nicopolis (1396).

### 7.3.3. Auxiliary Forces and Irregular Troops

#### a. Akinjis

Akinjis were irregular cavalry units that served as the vanguard of the Ottoman army. They were known for their speed and mobility, often carrying out raids deep into enemy territory to disrupt supply lines, gather intelligence, and create chaos. The Akinjis operated with a high degree of autonomy and were instrumental in the initial phases of Ottoman expansion into Europe, where they terrorized local populations and weakened resistance before the arrival of the main army.

#### b. Azaps

Azaps were light infantry troops who served as auxiliary forces in the Ottoman military. They were typically drawn from the lower classes and were not as heavily armed or armored as the regular soldiers. Azaps played a crucial role in the early stages of battles, often being used to harass the enemy and weaken their defenses before the main Ottoman forces engaged. They were also used for various support roles, such as manning fortifications and conducting raids.

#### c. Bashi-Bazouks

Bashi-Bazouks were irregular soldiers often recruited from non-Turkish ethnic groups within the empire, such as Albanians, Circassians, and Kurds. They were notorious for their lack of discipline and brutality, often used in roles where conventional troops were not suitable, such as in skirmishes or as shock troops. While effective in certain situations, their unpredictability and tendency towards looting made them a double-edged sword for the Ottoman commanders.

## 8. Summarized Timeline of Events

The Ottoman Interregnum, also known as the "Fetret Devri," was a pivotal and turbulent period in Ottoman history, marked by civil war, political fragmentation, and the struggle for the survival of the Ottoman state. This period followed the catastrophic defeat of Sultan Bayezid I at the hands of Timur (Tamerlane) in the Battle of Ankara in 1402, a battle that nearly brought the fledgling Ottoman Empire to its knees. Sultan Bayezid I, known as "Yıldırım" (the Thunderbolt) for his swift military campaigns, ascended to the Ottoman throne in 1389 after the death of his father, Murad I, at the Battle of Kosovo. Bayezid was an ambitious ruler who rapidly expanded the Ottoman Empire's territories in the Balkans and Anatolia. He successfully consolidated Ottoman control over key regions, including the incorporation of the Serbian Despotate as a vassal state and the annexation of Bulgarian territories. Bayezid's military successes earned him a formidable reputation, but they also set the stage for his eventual downfall. Bayezid's expansionist policies inevitably led to conflict with Timur, the powerful Central Asian conqueror who sought to assert his dominance over the Middle East and Anatolia. Timur's empire stretched from the Caucasus to India, and his ambition clashed with Bayezid's desire to control the same territories. The two rulers, both seeing themselves as heirs to the legacy of the Mongol conquests, were destined for a confrontation. The Battle of Ankara in 1402 was one of the most significant military engagements of the era. Bayezid's forces, though numerous and experienced, were no match for Timur's well-organized and tactically superior army. The battle ended in a decisive defeat for the Ottomans, with Bayezid himself captured and taken prisoner by Timur. Bayezid's capture and subsequent death in captivity a year later plunged the Ottoman Empire into chaos, as the sultan left no clear successor to the throne. Fragmentation and the Rise of Bayezid's Sons With Bayezid's defeat and capture, the central authority of the Ottoman Empire disintegrated. The empire, which had been held together by the military prowess and political acumen of its sultans, now faced an existential crisis. Bayezid's sons—Süleyman, İsa, Musa, and Mehmed—each claimed the right to succeed their father, leading to a decade-long civil war known as the Ottoman Interregnum.



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