

Abdul Hamid -II : Rule

Abdulhamid or Abdul Hamid II (Ottoman Turkish) was the 34th sultan of the Ottoman Empire, from 1876 to 1909, and the last sultan to exert effective control over the fracturing state. He oversaw a period of decline, with rebellions (particularly in the Balkans), and presided over an unsuccessful war with the Russian Empire (1877–78), followed by a successful war against the Kingdom of Greece in 1897, though Ottoman gains were tempered by subsequent Western European intervention.

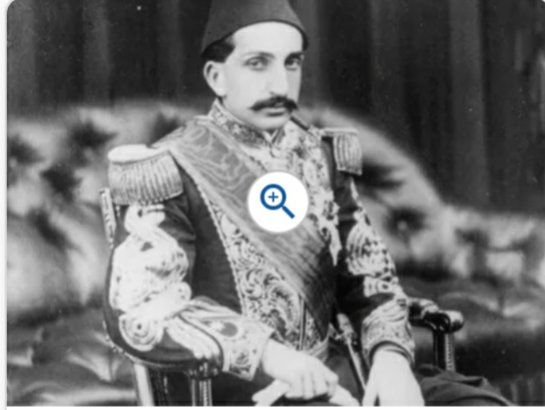
Elevated to power in the wake of Young Ottoman coups, he promulgated the Ottoman Empire's first constitution, a sign of the progressive thinking that marked his early rule. But his enthronement came in the context of the Great Eastern Crisis, which began with the Empire's default on its loans, uprisings by Christian Balkan minorities, and a war with the Russian Empire. At the end of the crisis, Ottoman rule in the Balkans and its international prestige were severely diminished, and the Empire lost its economic sovereignty as its finances came under the control of the Great Powers through the Ottoman Public Debt Administration.

In 1878, Abdul Hamid consolidated his rule by suspending

both the constitution and the parliament, purging the Young Ottomans, and curtailing the power of the Sublime Porte. He ruled as an absolute monarch for three decades. The Hamidian era was defined by Abdul Hamid's convictions and personality. Ideologically an Islamist, the sultan asserted his title of Caliph to Muslims around the world. His paranoia about being overthrown, like his uncle and brother, led to the creation of secret police organizations and a censorship regime. The Ottoman Empire's modernization and centralization continued during his reign, including reform of the bureaucracy, extension of the Rumelia Railway and the Anatolia Railway, and construction of the Baghdad Railway and the Hejaz Railway. Systems for population registration, sedentarization of tribal groups, and control over the press were part of a unique imperialist system in fringe provinces known as Borrowed Colonialism.

The farthest-reaching reforms were in education, with many professional schools established in fields such as law, arts, trades, civil engineering, veterinary medicine, customs, farming, and linguistics, along with the first local modern law school in 1898. A network of primary, secondary, and military schools extended throughout the Empire. German firms played a major role in developing

the Empire's railway and telegraph systems. Ironically, the same education institutions that the Sultan sponsored proved to be his downfall. Large sections of the pro-constitutionalist Ottoman intelligentsia sharply criticized and opposed him for his repressive policies, which coalesced into the Young Turks movement. Under similar conditions, minorities started organizing their own national liberation movements. Armenians especially suffered from massacres and pogroms at the hands of the Hamidiye regiments. Of the many assassination attempts during Abdul Hamid's reign, one of the most famous is the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's Yıldız assassination attempt of 1905. In 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress forced him to recall parliament and reinstate the constitution in the Young Turk Revolution. Abdul Hamid II attempted to reassert his absolutism a year later, resulting in his deposition by pro-constitutionalist forces in the 31 March incident, though the role he played in events is disputed.



Abdülhamid II