Insofar as historical stories can be completed, can be given narrative closure, can be shown to have had a plot all along, they give to reality the odor of the ideal. This is why the plot of a historical narrative is always an embarrassment and has to be presented as “found” in the events rather than put there by narrative techniques.

Hayden White, *The Content of the Form*

As the reconstruction of the events of the civil war in chapters 1–5 has demonstrated, the succession struggles that followed the Ottoman defeat at Ankara are well represented in the contemporary chronicles and other literary sources. In part, that is because those years were very eventful for everyone involved. For the Ottomans themselves, what was at stake was their very existence as the dominant power in the region after a major military and political challenge posed by the powerful Central Asian conqueror Timur. The roots of Timur’s challenge lay in the political legacy of Chingiz Khan, a legacy with which the Ottomans were all too familiar, since their own ancestors had come from Central Asia and entered the limelight of history in the aftermath of the Mongol conquests.

We have seen that apart from the outside challenge presented by Timur, after 1402, the Ottomans also faced numerous other challenges that were closer to home. These resulted from the revival of the beylik of Anatolia, the strengthened position of the Christian powers of Rumeli, and last but not least, the internal divisions in their own society, whose roots can be traced to the reigns of Murad I and Yıldırım Bayezid. After 1402, Bayezid’s sons were forced to win and maintain the allegiance of many individuals and factions, both internal and external. These included the Byzantine Emperor and other Christian rulers in the Balkans, the rulers of the Turkish beylik and various tribal groups.
in Anatolia, powerful Ottoman magnates and local lords of the marches (uc begleri) in Rumeli, as well as individual fighters and the general populace. The last category included the provincial cavalry (sipahi, timar erleri), the raiders (akinci) and their leaders (tavca), and the inhabitants of fortified towns, who were often forced to decide whether to surrender their town to a particular prince or his rival.

As we have seen, the Ottoman princes of the civil war adopted different survival strategies in the complex political world that followed the disaster at Ankara, as did their enemies, the beyliks of Anatolia and the Christian powers of Rumeli. Alliances were made and broken as the Ottoman princes attempted to gain an edge over their rivals, and their enemies tried to keep them divided. In the end, only Mehmed Çelebi and his advisers were shrewd and lucky enough to navigate the troubled political waters of the civil war. The purpose of this final chapter is to identify some of the means by which Mehmed Çelebi seems to have promoted his claims as single heir to the Ottoman sultanate and legitimized his elimination of his brothers. In the immediate aftermath of the Timurid challenge, it was by no means a given that a pretender to the Ottoman throne had the right to eliminate his brothers and other relatives, as was the case in later Ottoman history after the reign of Mehmed II (1451–1481), the sultan who gave to this already existing succession practice the status of dynastic law (kânûn).

For the investigation of the political attitudes that prevailed during the civil war and Mehmed Çelebi’s response to them, one of our main sources is once again the contemporary Ahval, which was produced in Mehmed Çelebi’s court during his lifetime. This source has already been discussed extensively in chapters 1–5, in which some of the main themes to be addressed here have been introduced. In this chapter, these themes will be studied in greater detail as they emerge from a broader investigation of the narrative structure of the Ahval. Further support is provided by the Halînâme’s account of the Battle of Çamurlu, another historical narrative produced in Mehmed’s court (1414). We will also be discussing the coins minted by Mehmed during the civil war, as well as his alleged correspondence of 1416 with Timur’s successor Shahrukh, which is preserved in the chancery manual of Feridun. Needless to say, as we move into new and unexplored territory, the conclusions reached will necessarily be of a somewhat tentative nature. It is hoped that they will point the way for future research in a direction that is clearly rich in political implications.