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NO EMPIRE FOR OLD MEN:
THE YOUNG OTTOMANS AND THE WORLD, 1856-1878

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the rise of the Young Ottoman movement in the 1860s as a product of the new geopolitical order that emerged in the wake of the Crimean War (1853–1856). It combines a close study of the writings of three major Young Ottoman thinkers with archival research documenting the transnational sources of their ideas, and situates the emergence of these ideas within the histories of both European liberalism and modern Islamic political thought. Chapter 1 (“A Nation in Search of Sovereignty”) charts the profound shift undergone by Ottoman sovereignty over the course of the nineteenth century. It describes the model of sovereignty developed by Tanzimat-era statesmen in conjunction with their European collaborators as porous, a structure reflective of the increasingly internationalized distribution of power over the lives of Ottoman subjects. The Young Ottoman movement, I argue, was an organized response to this newly porous model of sovereignty that resisted both the loss of international prestige and the reduced political efficacy of Ottoman subjects it created; yet the movement itself arose through transnational networks that paralleled the web of formal institutions it sought to challenge, marking a newly internationalized phase of Ottoman dissident activity.

The ensuing chapters collectively explore the elaboration of Young Ottoman thought through the writings of three of its leading thinkers—Namık Kemal (1840–1888), Teodor Kasap (1835–1897), and Ali Suavi (1839–1878)—with a focus on the international sources of these thinkers’ conceptions of Ottoman nationhood, political legitimacy and justice. Chapter 2 (“Namık Kemal and the Dream of a Liberal Ottoman Imperium”) presents a reading of the political writings and career of Namık Kemal organized around the themes of

hamiyet (zeal), *hürriyet* (liberty), and *hakimiyet* (sovereignty) that I argue are foundational to his political thought. In Chapter 3 (“Teodor Kasap and the Making of an Ottomanist Public”), I turn to Namık Kemal’s friend and collaborator, the Greek Ottoman journalist Teodor Kasap. I highlight Kasap’s pivot role as both a shaper and a popularizer of the Young Ottoman conception of nationhood. My exploration of this important but neglected figure focuses on the transnational origins of his cosmopolitan patriotism, tracing the influence of the early years he spent fighting for Italian unification alongside the French novelist Alexandre Dumas on his later career as a champion of the Ottomanist cause. In Chapter 4 (“Ali Suavi and the Ottomanist Critique of Liberalism”), I focus on the life and career of the Islamic scholar Ali Suavi to challenge the widespread characterization of the Young Ottoman movement as fundamentally aligned with European liberalism. I argue that Ali Suavi’s close connections with European conservative thinkers place him within the broader anti-liberal tradition of nineteenth-century thought, even as his writings demonstrate his allegiance to the democratic and populist orientation of his fellow Young Ottomans. My conclusion suggests that Young Ottoman ideas of nationhood and legitimacy were influential in shaping both the regnant ideology of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) and that of his opponents, the Young Turks, as well as serving as a crucial link between the liberal patriotic movements that remade southern Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century and the Islamic internationalism that emerged as an important vector of anti-imperialist militancy at that century’s end.

Introduction

In May of 1867, a group of Ottoman subjects and a full set of Ottoman Turkish typeface departed Istanbul in secret, bound for France. From a certain angle, it might have looked as though they were abandoning a sinking ship. At the start of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had commanded more territory, and more subjects, than any other state except its chief rival, Russia. Yet by mid-century, it cut a far shabbier figure on the world stage. The contrast was obvious to all who visited its capital city: while in Paris and London massive structures of iron and glass were going up, funded by the public and private wealth generated by their global empires, and broad avenues were being built to accommodate their commercial bustle, in Istanbul the cityscape looked much as it had a century earlier, dominated by the domes of mosques and churches built in grander times.¹ In 1865, a devastating fire had torn through Istanbul, decimating its wooden houses and exposing the inadequacy of the firefighting system that had replaced the Janissaries.² The factories that had begun to appear in the Western suburbs were too late to rescue the city, and the empire, from their dependence on European manufactured goods. Istanbul remained a transimperial hub for intellectuals and merchants alike, but its largest pool of migrants by far were penniless Muslim refugees from the empire's outskirts. In 1843,

¹ While the central city was largely unchanged, factories were being built in the western suburbs. The city hosted an International Exhibition in 1863 to promote this burgeoning industrial production, and constructed an exhibition hall in the "new style" to host it, only to tear the building down two years later. Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 33–35.

² Firefighting had once been the Janissaries' job, but their institution had been decimated in 1826 by the aggressively modernizing sultan Mahmud II, and the replacements were inadequate. The subject was addressed by Namık Kemal in his article "Yangın" (Fire), *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 3 Zilkade 1282 (March 20, 1866).

Sultan Abdülmecid had decided to build a new palace along the Bosphorus, and the resulting construction, known as Dolmabahçe, had drained the imperial treasury and debased the currency.³ It now stood less as a testament to Ottoman imperial grandeur than as a reminder of the state's growing debt to European creditors and the heavy taxation of its subjects.

A Popular Response to the Crisis of Sovereignty

The crisis of sovereignty that accompanied this fiscal crisis was likewise well underway. The nineteenth century had brought a string of attacks on Ottoman territorial sovereignty: the Serbian revolt of 1804 set the province on a path toward independence, while the Greek revolt of 1821 led to a decade-long war and the wholesale loss of the Ionian peninsula to the new kingdom of Greece in 1832. The governor of Egypt, meanwhile, had turned his province into a de facto rival state, waging a successful campaign of imperial conquest in Sudan and then sending troops to capture Syria and threaten the Ottoman capital—a crisis that lasted the better part of the decade and involved all the major European powers, as well as Russia. Russia's assault on the Balkans and the Caucasus precipitated the Crimean War of 1853 to 1856, in which the Ottoman capital again hung in the balance. In each of these conflicts, the Ottoman state had required the support of Britain and France to broker peace, and each time it had accepted diminished sovereignty over the lands it managed to retain.

³ The Mehmet Fatih Ekinci, *Türkiye'nin mali intiharı: kapitülasyonlar ve 1838 Balta Limanı Ticaret Sözleşmeleri'nden Sévres Andlaşması'na* (Platin, 2008); Murat Birdal, *The Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt: Insolvency and European Financial Control in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 23.

By the 1850s, the future of Ottoman sovereignty seemed to rest in the hands of European powers, a fact that was rendered uncomfortably literal in the text of the Treaty of Paris that formally concluded the Crimean War. In this document, European heads of state formally declared the Sublime Porte “admitted to participate in the advantages of European public law and assembly,” and committed themselves to “respect the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.”⁴ Meanwhile, a growing number of Europeans were eager to see the empire completely stripped of its sovereignty, particularly in the Balkans: one commentator, writing in the London *Evening Star* of 1858, described the Ottoman Empire as a “barbarian horde...still encamped on the fairest fields of Europe,” adding, “If his sickness is clearly unto death, it will be a charity to teach him to ‘die decently.’”⁵ The struggles of the Ottoman state were increasingly marshalled as evidence of its unfitness to rule over Christian populations, or even to rule at all.

Yet far from abandoning the empire to its fate, the Ottomans who left for Europe in 1867 were on a mission to save it. The Turkish type they brought with them was their link to the homeland and a sign that they were not forsaking it. Over the course of the coming decades, these mostly Turkish-speaking Muslim subjects would be joined in their efforts by

⁴ Article 7 reads, “Sa Majesté la Reine du Royaume Uni de la Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande, Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Autriche, Sa Majesté l'Empereur des Français, Sa Majesté le Roi de Prusse, Sa Majesté l'Empereur de toutes les Russies, et Sa Majesté le Roi de Sardaigne, déclarent la Sublime Porte admise à participer aux avantages du droit public et du concert Européens. Leurs Majestés s'engagent, chacune de son cote, à respecter l'indépendance et l'intégrité territoriale de l'Empire Ottoman: garantissent en commun la stricte observation de cet engagement: et considéreront, en conséquence, tout act de nature à y porter atteinte comme une question d'intérêt général”; quoted in Hugh McKinnon Wood, “The Treaty of Paris and Turkey’s Status in International Law,” *The American Journal of International Law* 37, no. 2 (April 1, 1943): 263, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2192416>.

⁵ [Edward A. Freeman], Editorial, *The Evening Star*, May 22, 1858, FA2/2/21, Edward Augustus Freeman Papers, John Rylands Library.

Ottomans from nearly every corner of the empire and all of its major *millet*s, or religio-political communities, who likewise refused to let the empire “die decently.” Instead, the men who called themselves Young Ottomans embraced the troubled imperial entity as a proper homeland in the fullest nineteenth-century resonance of that word: as their best collective hope for both political recognition and spiritual redemption. While differing in their diagnoses of the empire’s problems faced and their likeliest solutions, they coalesced around the sentiment expressed in the motto that Teodor Kasap first placed in the banner of his newspaper, *Istikbâl* (Future), in 1876: “The children of the homeland are a unified body and will not accept political division.”⁶

Nor was the movement to salvage Ottoman statehood restricted to those it recognized as subjects. The Young Ottomans were aided in their quest by a large and eclectic group of non-Ottomans who publicly championed their cause. This international web of pro-Ottoman actors would furnish an important source of moral and material support for the work of Ottoman rejuvenation. Their numbers included not only the European Orientalists and Turcophiles whose careers were given over to writing about Ottoman subjects—men like David Urquhart, Arminius Vámbéry, and Andreas David Mordtmann, and women like Mary Stanley—but also a broad community of political dissidents and erstwhile revolutionaries from Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Iran, India, Russia, and beyond. Some of these supporters took up residence in the Ottoman capital,

⁶ “Ebnâ-yı vatan ki cism-i vâhiddir siyâseten taksîm kabûl etmez.” These words first appeared below the title banner of *Istikbâl*, a daily newspaper published in Istanbul, on June 18, 1876, following the deposition of Abdülaziz, and remained there until January 6, 1877, when they reverted to the text that had previously appeared in that space: “Ottoman journal published every day except Friday.”

where they became intimates of the reform-minded dissidents (Mary Stanley married one), while others cheered on Ottomanism from a distance. They were joined by members of the centuries-old community of Levantine merchants and bankers, and a newer community of European tradespeople, writers, and artists, who made their home in the empire while remaining legally outside it, thanks to a century-old tradition of exemptions for Europeans and their commercial agents.

Saving the State from Itself

As we know all too well, their cause was in vain. In the succinct words of the economic historian Murat Birdal, “The Ottoman Empire presents a unique case of an empire gradually dissolving and peripheralizing within the capitalist world economy.”⁷ It presents an equally unique case of the demise of a modern polity unrivaled in its diversity. The dissolution was gradual rather than abrupt: throughout the 1860s and 1870s, even as the Young Ottoman movement gathered steam, the empire literally lost ground, raising the question of how Ottomanism stood in relation to those of separatist movements whose ideological resemblances were obscured by their conflicting political aims. With the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, the empire lost regions in the Balkans it had once counted as the Ottoman heartland. The political and cultural pluralism of the Young Ottoman movement was suppressed on the pretext of wartime exigencies, and in the decades that followed, the state pursued a progressively narrower vision of itself, both territorially and imaginatively, as it

⁷ Birdal, *The Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt*, 1.

lost Christian subjects and enacted newly aggressive policies against those who remained within its borders.

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 would offer a brief respite from this retreat. It represented an intense moment of optimism and a return to a rhetoric of both political openness and cultural inclusivity, before a further series of sharp diplomatic and military blows prompted an authoritarian backlash culminating in war and genocide. The Ottoman entry into World War I pitted it against both Russia, its historic enemy, and France and Britain, its historic allies, in a failed bid to regain lost territory and status. That war, and the Balkan wars of succession that preceded it, would entail the loss of some four million Ottoman lives, including those killed in the genocide of Armenians begun in 1915—a total loss of close to twenty percent of the empire’s population.⁸ The loss of the war would mean the loss of the empire at large, and the near-loss of a self-governing state altogether, as the entirety of the Ottoman territories were threatened by European encroachment. The single sovereign state to emerge directly from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire achieved its independent status only at the cost of a violent demographic and ideological self-reconfiguration.

Historians have found it hard to see past the fulfilment of this eventuality and look with anything other than condescension, or at least a heavy dose of historical irony, on the Ottomanist cause. Whether understood as a nostalgic longing for a lost golden age or a utopian project for a society built on democratic and pluralist grounds, its aspirations have

⁸ Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908-1923* (London: Penguin, 2016), 483.

been dismissed as fantastically out of step with the modern political realities. As early as 1904, Yusuf Akçura would describe the ideology of Ottomanism as a lost cause.⁹ This may well be one reason why the Young Ottoman movement has received so little attention from scholars, and why the breadth of support for Ottomanism in the nineteenth century was overlooked by historians for so long. Until fairly recently, the story of the modern Middle East was told as the rise of nationalisms rooted in ethnic and religious homogeneity. By these lights, the Young Ottomans and their successors were on the wrong side of history.

In the past two decades, however, a corner has been turned, and a growing body of scholarship now documents the breadth of Ottomanist ideals and practices from the mid-nineteenth century until the empire's bitter end. Ottomanism of one sort or another has been documented as a phenomenon among Arab Muslims and Christians, Greeks, Armenians, Balkan Christians, and Jews. In 1997, Hasan Kayalı helped initiate a wave of historical revisionism by challenging the assumptions of decades of nationalist scholarship concerning the identitarian commitments of the empire's subjects. Among the empire's Arabs, he wrote, "the glimmerings of a cultural nationalist consciousness...failed to supersede the parochial allegiances on the one hand and the imperial-universalist ones on the other," at least until World War I turned Arab nationalism into a viable political force.¹⁰ Likewise, the past two decades have yielded the rediscovery of a deep-seated sense of

⁹ "Osmanlı milleti teşkili hayalinin Fransa İmparatorluğu ile beraber ve onun gibi tekrar diril[me]mek üzere, öldüğüne hüküm olursa, hata edlimemiş olur sanırım. (I believe it would not be mistaken to judge that the dream of forming an Ottoman nation has died alongside the French Empire, and like it will never rise again.) The French Empire of Napoleon III was replaced by the French Republic in September 1870. Akçura's essay was written in 1904. Yusuf Akçura, *Üç tarz-ı siyaset*, ed. Enver Ziya Karal (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976), 21.

¹⁰ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 13.

Ottoman political belonging among the empire's diverse Greek Orthodox communities, ranging from the Turkish-speaking Karamanli population of the central Anatolian hinterland to the elite Greek families of the Ottoman capital. Many reacted with indifference or hostility to the founding of the Hellenic Kingdom, and others cheered it on while remaining loyal and even enthusiastic Ottoman subjects.¹¹ The loyalty of the empire's Armenian population has been fiercely disputed in historiographical battles over the genocide, but the record of Armenians' active and enthusiastic participation in late Ottoman state institutions and society is unequivocal.¹²

In a parallel vein, Julia Phillips Cohen's book *Becoming Ottomans* describes how the cultivation of "imperial citizenship" among Ottoman Jews in the Hamidian era inspired many to volunteer for military service; in Orit Bashkin's research on Iraqi Jews, this robust feeling of patriotism is traced back to the 1860s, when a "new horizon of expectation" concerning the state's treatment of non-Muslims inspired Jews to identify more closely with

¹¹ Richard Clogg, "A Millet within a Millet: The Karamanlides," in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Philip Issawi (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1999); Evangelia Balta, "'Gerçi Rum İsek de Rumca Bilmez Türkçe Söyleriz': The Adventure of an Identity in the Triptych: Vatan, Religion and Language," *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi* 8 (2003): 25–44; Vangelis Kechriotis, "Greek-Orthodox, Ottoman-Greeks or Just Greeks? Theories of Coexistence in the Aftermath of the Young Turks Revolution," *Études Balkaniques* 1 (2005): 51–72; Stefo Benlisoy and Foti Benlisoy, "Reading the Identity of 'Karamanli' Through the Pages of Anatoli," in *Cries and Whispers in Karamanlidika Books: Proceedings of the First International Conference on Karamanlidika Studies (Nicosia, 11th-13th September 2008)*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Matthias Kappler (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 93–108; Christine Philliou, "The Paradox of Perceptions: Interpreting the Ottoman Past through the National Present," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 5 (2008): 661–75.

¹² Kalusd Sürmenyan, *Harbiyeli Bir Osmanlı Ermenisi : Mülâzım-ı Sâni Sürmenyan'ın Savaş ve Tehcir Anıları [Memoirs of Lieutenant Kalusd Sürmenyan during World War I and the Armenian Deportations]*, trans. Yaşar Tolga Cora (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015); Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian, and Ali Sipahi, eds., *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities and Politics* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016); Hans-Lukas Kieser, *A Quest for Belonging: Anatolia beyond Empire and Nation (19th-21st Centuries)* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2007).

their state.¹³ Michelle Campos and Abigail Jacobson have written about the intricate intercommunal bonds that characterized late Ottoman and post-Ottoman Palestine, crediting the strength of these bonds to a sense of political membership in the large and multi-confessional Ottoman nation.¹⁴ The Bulgarian scholar Alexander Vezenkov, while more skeptical toward the authenticity of Ottomanist sentiments among non-Muslims in the Balkans, points out, “The peoples of the Ottoman Empire were probably not living ‘like brothers,’ as the official propaganda claimed, but at that time they were really living ‘together.’”¹⁵ Furthermore, he points out some striking resemblances between the rhetoric of the Balkan separatist movements and that of the state whose yoke they famously wished to cast off: both embraced a rhetoric of brotherhood that underscored inter-confessional unity to a degree unusual among European nationalist movements, suggesting that Ottomanism’s influence ran deeper than has traditionally been supposed.¹⁶

This substantial and growing body of scholarship on Ottomanism is shifting our understanding of what it meant to be an Ottoman subject in the last century of the empire’s existence. Yet most of these works reflect a persistent tendency to emphasize the role of the state in cultivating the loyalty of its subjects.¹⁷ This tendency reflects a broader pattern

¹³ Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁴ Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011); Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

¹⁵ Alexander Vezenkov, “Reconciliation of the Spirits and Fusion of the Interests: ‘Ottomanism’ as an Identity Politics,” in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, by Mishkova Diana, Hors Collection (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 47–77.

¹⁶ Alexander Vezenkov, “Formulating and Reformulating Ottomanism,” in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans – Volume One: National Ideologies and Language Policies*, ed. Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 250.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey* (BRILL, 2000), 6.

within Ottomanist scholarship of treating the state as a leading protagonist in its own right, often giving it priority as the organizing force that lends coherence to an overwhelmingly diverse and otherwise incoherent set of lands, peoples, and cultural forms. By these lights, Ottoman society itself can be understood as an epiphenomenon of the state. A compelling instance of this mode of historical thought can be found in Kemal Karpat's monumental history of the late Ottoman Empire, which attributes the empire's "political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions" to the actions of the state itself and even credits the state as the chief agent of its own transformation.¹⁸ By his account, it was the state's effort to "create a common Ottoman political identity for all its citizens" that led to the emergence and spread of Ottomanism throughout the empire during the era of the *Tanzimat*, or Reforms.¹⁹

Many scholars have followed Karpat's lead in attributing this growing sense of national belonging to state initiatives, both through grand gestures like the imperial edicts of 1839 and 1856 and through specific administrative reforms, like the opening up of educational and military institutions by Sultan Abdülhamid II.²⁰ In these accounts, the

¹⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), v.

¹⁹ Karpat, 4.

²⁰ Although the inclusion of Abdülhamid II's reign as part of the Tanzimat Era defies the conventional periodization, according to which the Tanzimat began in 1839 and ended with the proclamation of the constitution in 1876, I am doing it here with a nod to Stanford and Ezel Kural Shaw, whose survey of Ottoman history identifies Abdülhamid's reign as the "culmination of the Tanzimat." For our purposes--which include dispelling the myth of the Tanzimat regimes as fundamentally liberal in their orientation, and replacing it with a view of their reforms as conditioned by the newly compromised status of Ottoman sovereignty, this revised periodization seems more apt. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume 2: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge; London; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 172.

ideology of Ottomanism is classified as yet another Tanzimat-era project enacted by bureaucrats on subject populations.

The assumption that Ottomanism was a state-led project has a corollary: that its chief aim was its own self-preservation, by any means necessary. The notion of the state's survival as the supreme object of Ottomanist longing, and indeed of all efforts at reform in the long Ottoman nineteenth century, is pervasive in the works of countless other historians of the late empire.²¹ Selim Deringil typifies the common thrust of these works when he writes that from the reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839) onward, "the leading concern of the Ottoman had been 'the saving of the State.'"²² A recent essay by Howard Eissenstat on "imperial nationalism" exemplifies the persistence of this trend, identifying "the fundamental continuity that bound a wide variety of very different formulations of Ottomanism" as "that of 'saving the state.'" Accordingly, it identifies Ottomanism as less a coherent ideology than "a shifting set of themes," a grab-bag of pitches intended to secure the loyalty of Ottoman subjects.²³

With such a philosophically hollow basis, it's no wonder that Ottomanism has not received more attention from intellectual historians and political theorists. In this

²¹ A select handful include: Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), 398; Karpas, *The Politicization of Islam*, 8; Kivanç Ulusoy, *Saving the State Again: Turks Face the Challenge of European Governance*, SIGMA Papers (Paris: OECD, 2005). Ulusoy seamlessly carries this logic into the twenty-first century: "'Saving the state' was the spontaneous, sentimental reaction that Turks displayed when faced with the European challenge of political-institutional superiority."

²² Selim Deringil, "The Ottoman Origins of Kemalist Nationalism: Namik Kemal to Mustafa Kemal," *European History Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (April 1, 1993): 166.

²³ "Modernization, Imperial Nationalism, and the Ethnicization of Confessional Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire," in *Nationalizing Empires*, ed. Stefan Berger and A. I. Miller (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 459.

dissertation, I begin from a rather different set of assumptions about who and what propelled the Ottomanist project, and argue for an understanding of Ottomanism as more theoretically robust and politically interesting than it is often taken to be. Let us consider both the regularity and the growing frequency, over the course of the nineteenth century, of Ottoman subjects' own efforts to "save the state" from its governors, most notably through repeated attempts at regime change.²⁴ Such attempts became a hallmark of late Ottoman political life, and the diversity as well as the sheer numbers of their participants—the involvement not only of Christians and Jews, but of Italians and Poles, all disruptive to the conventional view of late Ottoman political dissidence—should give us pause. The self-declared patriotism of their ringleaders did not place them any less at odds with Ottoman ministers, the ostensible avatars of the Ottoman state in the Tanzimat era; to the contrary, it justified their opposition, despite accusations of sedition.

In light of this seeming contradiction, we may find ourselves forced to reexamine the prevailing view of Ottomanism as an initiative of "the state," as well as the very concept of the state itself as a coherent historical actor. What I believe these facts point to is a different understanding of Ottomanism as a set of ideologies undergirding a politically normative project *by* Ottoman subjects to realign their state and society in accordance with a particular set of ideals. This dissertation argues that Ottomanism was an enterprise of dissidents as much as of statesmen; and that its most vocal and influential voices sought not merely to save the state but to transform it. While dissidents and statesmen employed the

²⁴ For an overview of these attempts and a discussion of late Ottoman society as a "political culture of conspiracy," see Florian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011).

same broad rhetoric in describing their goal—an Ottoman state with its territorial autonomy, legal sovereignty, and dignity intact—they were animated by quite different visions of the state and society they wished to realize. The Young Ottoman project, far from aiming fundamentally at conservation, was one that seized on the multidimensional crisis faced by the empire as an opportunity for radical political transformation. It was an attempt to found the Ottoman state anew, on a radically different set of terms.

In tying the birth of Ottomanism to the Young Ottoman movement, I wish both to counter the tendency to view Ottomanism chiefly as a state-led initiative and to give more coherence to the “shifting set of themes” that animated it. A reappraisal of the Young Ottoman movement offers an opportunity to think closely and critically about late Ottoman political life as whole, and about its putative object of “saving the state” from imminent demise. Who was behind the attempt to save it, and what exactly were they trying to save?

For a glimpse of the answers to these questions, let us look again at the motto printed under the title of Teodor Kasap’s newspaper *Istikbâl*. Two of the concepts at the core of Ottomanism are captured in its motto: the notion of the homeland (*vatan*) as a political entity, and of its inhabitants as political agents empowered to preserve its integrity. A crucial premise of the movement was its demand for a dramatic shift in the distribution of power. What united the diverse thinkers of the Young Ottoman movement was their appeal to the existence of the Ottoman nation and of its claim to being the real seat of Ottoman sovereignty. They shared the view that the Ottoman nation was something that stood apart from its government, and would ensure the continuity of the Ottoman state even if its government were to be reformed.

A second feature, then, of their thought, was the belief in an urgent need for democratic reform. “Reform” was of course the rallying cry of the Tanzimat era as a whole, and the rallying cry heard most often throughout long Ottoman nineteenth century that encompassed it, for reasons that will be explored in Chapter 1. What was distinctive about the Young Ottoman vision for reform was its fundamentally populist, democratic character. While not all the Young Ottomans were champions of liberal institutions like constitutions and parliaments, they shared a lexicon centered around the phrases *efkâr-ı umumiye* (public opinion) and *menfâ’at-i umumiye* (the common good). They were interested not in reforms that would strengthen the military or improve tax collection, but in reforms that amounted to a fundamental transfer of power to a broader base. This commitment to democratic/populist reform would not have been possible without their shared belief in an Ottoman nation, and yet it stands apart as a separate piece of their common political platform. The nature of the transformation it envisioned was open-ended, as utopian political projects often are. (One of Akçura’s chief complaints against Ottomanism was its “vagueness,” in response to which he articulated a counter-ideology of racial identity, Turkism, that proved a decisive influence for Ottoman and Turkish state policy in the ensuing century, with disturbing results.²⁵) Its coherence comes not from the kind of society it prescribed but from the principles that animated it. In what follows, I suggest that those principles had less in common with those of the Tanzimat-era statesmen than it did with the ideologies propounded by Young Italy, Young Poland, and Young Germany. These

²⁵ Yusuf Akçura and Ismail Fehmi, “Yusuf Akçura’s Üç Tarz—i Siyaset (‘three Kinds of Policy’),” *Oriente Moderno* 61, no. 1/12 (1981): 1–20.

were patriotic movements inspired by an ideal of a state and society not yet in existence, which promised a vehicle for enacting their highest ideals. In this sense, it was utopian movement, oriented not toward strengthening allegiance to the status quo but toward remaking it.

It is no coincidence that the leaders of the Young Ottoman movement were all figures who were marginal to state power, having been alienated, to varying degrees, by their encounters with the Ottoman state: they were—variously, and sometimes simultaneously—members of the bureaucratic elite who had wound up on the losing side of intra-Porte political struggles, non-Muslims structurally excluded from the highest echelons of bureaucratic privilege, journalists subject to censorship and repression, and members of the precarious *esnaf* class of artisans and shopkeepers who traditionally formed the politically volatile core of urban Ottoman society.²⁶ While many other individuals in similarly marginal positions did not become instrumental in broadening Ottoman political identity, these figures did. Their marginal status helped fuel their capacity for ideological innovation.

The alienation produced by these circumstances afforded these figures the kind of intellectual latitude that made possible a radical rethinking of the Ottoman state and society. In his study of Jewish intellectuals in modern Germany, Paul Mendes-Flohr argues for a definition of the intellectual as a certain kind of thinker: one who is not only educated

²⁶ For a treatment of the complexities of the category of *esnaf*, see Donald Quataert, “Labor History and the Ottoman Empire, C. 1700-1922,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 60 (2001): 93–109, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27672740>.

and worldly, but also “preponderantly given to ideas of axionormative dissent.”²⁷ The Young Ottomans, for all their differences, had this tendency in common. Relatedly, all of them traveled widely and maintained contacts abroad, and a good number of them were Freemasons. As I will show, international actors and movements furnished a source of both inspiration and material aid to the Young Ottoman movement.

Ottomanism and the International Turn

This dissertation argues that Young Ottoman thought was precipitated by a transformation in the shape of Ottoman sovereignty that can be dated to the Treaty of Paris in 1856. As I show in Chapter 1, the increasingly dire military, financial, and diplomatic crises faced by the Ottoman state in the wake of the Crimean War served as more than just the “background” for the emergence of Young Ottoman thought; they were in some sense constitutive of it, as the conditions without which Young Ottoman thought would be unthinkable.

To help direct our attention of the international framework within which the Young Ottomans thought and wrote, I have found it useful to think of this framework as a “problem-space” for understanding Young Ottoman thought. I borrow this term from the anthropologist David Scott, whose 2004 book *Conscripts of Modernity* aims to help his reader appreciate the shifting political necessities of different historical moments. For Scott, a “problem-space” is a term to describe a “historically constituted discursive space,” or, alternatively, “an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of

²⁷ Paul R Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 30.

identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs.”²⁸ The questions that occasion a particular discourse are, he notes, “largely implicit,” but they are its organizing principle, and without the ability to discern the questions, the answer is largely unintelligible and liable to be misconstrued. The premise of this dissertation is that the full import of Young Ottoman political demands require an international canvas to be fully appreciated.

My project is in keeping with a broad turn toward the international in the field of intellectual history. Recent examples of this new approach in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies include Ilham Khuri-Makdisi’s *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914*, which explores the emergence of “a multiplicity of Lefts” in the port cities of the late Ottoman Empire; and Seema Alavi’s *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, which follows five Indian Muslim intellectuals on their flight from British imperial repression in the wake of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.²⁹ These works have underscored both the diversity of ideological currents active in the broader Islamicate world of the nineteenth century and the internationalist outlook they embraced, one that engaged with the realities of a new global order. My project follows this approach by underscoring the global scope of both the intellectual horizons and practical concerns that shaped Young Ottoman political thought. Just as important to my project is an analogous trend in internationalizing the

²⁸ “David Scott by Stuart Hall,” *BOMB*, Winter 2005, <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2711/>; David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.

²⁹ Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (University of California Press, 2010); Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). See also the essays in Derryl N. MacLean and Sikeena Karmali Ahmed, eds., *Cosmopolitanisms in Muslim Contexts: Perspectives from the Past* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); James L. Gelvin and Nile Green, eds., *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2013).

historiography of the liberal movements of nineteenth-century Europe, particularly those on its southern and eastern peripheries, from the 1820 Revolution in Spain to the Polish and Hungarian nationalist uprisings in 1848 and the campaign for Italian unification of the 1850s. Recent work on these movements has stressed their creation of a “liberal international,” facilitated by the exile or flight of liberal dissidents to the metropolises of London, Paris, Vienna, and Istanbul.³⁰ As one historian describes it, the “revolutionary Mediterranean” coincided broadly with the age of revolutions in Western Europe, and yet it “differs substantially” in its causes and contours:

Extending from the French Revolution's shock waves to the Italian peninsula, the Ionian Islands and Egypt, to the Turkish Revolution of 1908, it displays a peculiar intensity, variety and frequency of events, since it includes anti-imperial and anticolonial uprisings, military *pronunciamentos*, peasants' rebellions and civil wars, all events in which external pressures and foreign interventions interacted internal social and political dynamics.³¹

The Young Ottoman movement framed itself as part of this liberal international, and drew on both the organizing models and their rhetoric in fashioning an Ottoman counterpart to these movements. Yet among these movements, they alone laid claim to a state that rivaled those of Britain and France in its size, grandeur, and aspirations. The version of Ottomanism they expounded can be understood as both a variant of the

³⁰ C. A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini, eds., *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism 1830-1920* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2008); Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile: Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Richard Bonfiglio, “Liberal Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of the Heart(h): Mazzini, Gladstone, and Barrett Browning’s Domestication of the Italian Risorgimento,” *Modern Philology* 111, no. 2 (November 1, 2013): 281–307, <https://doi.org/10.1086/673317>; Joseph Pugliese, ed., *Transmediterranean: Diasporas, Histories, Geopolitical Spaces* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2010); Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou, eds., *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

³¹ Isabella and Zanou, *Mediterranean Diasporas*, 7.

liberalism that gained global currency in the nineteenth century and an outgrowth of older ideological configurations developed to justify and legitimize the Ottoman state in its universalist ambitions. Collectively, the writings of the Young Ottomans articulate an Ottomanist project to rehabilitate the founding principles of an ancient political enterprise within a new geopolitical order, and to assert the place of Islamic civilization and its leading political torch-bearer among nations, with what Namık Kemal referred to as “the assembly-hall of the world.”

Who Were The Young Ottomans?

One popular myth about the Young Ottomans casts them as founders of the empire’s first dissident movement. In fact, the history of the Ottoman Empire teems with rebels, reformers, conspirators, and other subversives who waged campaigns to alter the terms of their governance.³² The decade-long Young Ottoman movement is but another chapter in the annals of Ottoman political dissidence. What set it apart from more easily forgotten predecessors is that it was a rebellion waged chiefly in print, across national borders, and at a moment when the empire’s ostensibly internal struggles were matters of international public concern. As the first Ottoman revolt of what has been called “the age of steam and print,” the first time in which news and arguments could be received (and received

³² For a small sampling of scholarship on these movements, see Rifa’at Ali Abou-El-Haj and ACLS Humanities E-Book (Organization), *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics* (New York: ACLS History E-Book Project, 2008); Madeline C Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema of the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988); Jane Hathaway, *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2004); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire*; Aysel Danacı Yıldız, *Crisis and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire: The Downfall of a Sultan in the Age of Revolution*, 2017.

differently) in multiple locations with near-simultaneity, its rhetoric was both amplified and distorted by the technologies that carried its message. Young Ottoman newspapers published in London could make their entrance into Ottoman territory by steamer, and prompt telegrams and anger along the telegraph lines connecting the Ottoman and British capital the same day.

Despite the excited attention it received internationally in newspapers and diplomatic correspondence, and in the contemporary accounts produced by dozens of European journalists, diplomats, and Orientalists (often serving in some combination of the three roles), the Young Ottoman movement has received remarkably little sustained attention in the nearly 150 years since it ended. In the literature on late Ottoman intellectual and political history, it is overshadowed by studies of individual figures, particularly Namık Kemal, the most widely cited Young Ottoman, who is frequently called on to stand in for the movement as a whole. It is likewise overshadowed by the literature on the Young Turk movement of a later generation (from roughly 1889 to 1908), with which it is often confused. Both movements referred to themselves in French as *la Jeune Turquie*, and the Young Turks saw themselves as the direct heirs to this earlier generation of dissidents. To add to the confusion, the phrase “young Turk” was coined by European journalists and diplomats as early as the 1840s to distinguish the new class of Europeanized statesmen who dominated in the era of the Tanzimat, or reforms. (It was frequently opposed to the class of “vieux Turcs fanatiques” who resisted such reforms.³³)

³³ For a full account of the term, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, “Young Turks,” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering et al. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 601; (For an early example of “vieux Turcs fanatiques,” see “Bulletin,” *Revue de Paris*, December 1839, 145.

The most famous of these statesmen were the triumvirate of Mustafa Reşid Pasha and his protégés, Âli and Fuad, who collectively held the top ministerial positions in the Sublime Porte from the 1840s up until Âli Pasha's death in 1871. The confusion of the Young Ottomans with this class of "young Turk" is the more troubling kind, as it reflects a longstanding pattern in European historiography of conflating the political identities of the so-called "reformers" and their opponents on the basis of their shared cosmopolitanism and ostensibly pro-European outlook. In the eyes of many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians, all such figures were "men of the Tanzimat," whose exposure to Europe was the source of the new ideas they wished to see implemented, and whose essential similarities thus outweighed their differences.³⁴ Besides its groundless Eurocentrism, this approach serves to elide a crucial distinction between the two groups: only one of them held the reins of state power. There are a handful of ambiguous figures who arguably belong to both groups, such as Mustafa Fazıl Pasha, the Egyptian prince whose dual status as a "reform-minded" elite and a dissident gave him a pivotal role in the Young Ottoman movement that will be explored in the following chapter; and Midhat Pasha, the equally "reform-minded" minister who led the effort to draft the constitution, only to be exiled under its provisions. And certainly, as contemporaries locked in a battle of wills, the two groups were well acquainted with each other's activities. Yet by and large, the Young

³⁴ See, for instance, Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 232–33, where Davison suggests the impact of the Young Ottomans should not be overstated, given that their views were fundamentally aligned with those of their opponents: "With much of what they said, Âli and Fuad certainly agreed, though often not with the manner in which it was said."

Ottomans were defined by their outsider status and their vulnerability to state power: to censorship, exile, and imprisonment.

Young Ottoman Legacies

The ambiguous status of the Young Ottomans as powerholders in the empire is one major reason they have been so little written about, unlike the Tanzimat statesmen and the Young Turks. Another reason is the ambiguity of their political identity and legacy. Ottomanism was an ideology with a short historical lifespan, emerging in the mid-nineteenth century with the rise of geopolitics and fading with the demise of the political entity it sought to justify and reform. It left behind a range of successor states whose very survival depended on their ability to articulate their differences from the Ottoman state. The first wave of twentieth-century Turkish scholarship on the Young Ottomans was eager to establish continuities between the Tanzimat-era Ottoman state and that of the twentieth-century Turkish Republic.³⁵ Namık Kemal was reincarnated as a Turkish nationalist, along with Ali Suavi, and the figures whose writings lent themselves less easily to this recasting fell by the wayside. Scholars in the North American academy, meanwhile, were captivated by the framework of modernization theory, and produced accounts of the Tanzimat era that were concerned with showing a gradually and ongoing process of national development or “emergence.”³⁶ In their telling, a republic emerged from a sultanate, a secular state emerged

³⁵ Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, “Namık Kemal’in Hukuki Fikirleri,” *Türk Hukuk Tarihi Dergisi* I (1944): 51–58; İhsan Sungu, “Tanzimat ve Yeni Osmanlılar,” in *Tanzimat* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940), 835–40; İsmail Habib Sevük, *Tanzimattanberi I: Edebiyat Tarihi*, Yeni ve kat’î Tabı (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1942); Kâmiran Birand, *Aydınlanma devri devlet felsefesinin Tanzimatta tesirleri [The Influences of Enlightenment-era philosophy of state on the Tanzimat]* (Ankara: Son Havadis Matbaası, 1955).

³⁶ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1998); Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*; Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London; New

from an Islamic one, and an ethnically coherent nation-state emerged from a multi-ethnic empire.

Of this substantial body of mid-century scholarship on the Tanzimat era, only one work was given over to a study of the Young Ottoman movement on its own. Şerif Mardin's *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, published in 1962 and born out of a dissertation in sociology at Stanford University, takes a refreshingly original approach to its subject, combining deep historical context with a serious consideration of the substance of Young Ottoman thought. He describes his subjects as "the first thinkers to try to work out a synthesis" between the ideas of the Enlightenment and those of Islam, and his book offers an unusually broad, deep, and conceptually nuanced investigation of these efforts.³⁷ This project owes a tremendous debt to Mardin's close and insightful readings of leading Young Ottoman thinkers, and particularly Namık Kemal. Yet even Mardin, writing in the heyday of modernization theory, insists that the Young Ottomans' commitment to Islam as a defining aspect of Ottoman cultural identity and political legitimacy was fundamentally at odds with their country's trajectory towards secular nationhood.

The Ottoman constitution of 1876, which is often taken as the apotheosis of the movement, was an ambiguous achievement: it failed to secure meaningful limits on the sultan's power, granting him the constitutional right to prorogue the General Assembly, which he did in early 1878. It is little wonder that the Young Turks have received far more

York: Oxford University Press, 1961); Albert Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

³⁷ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 4.

attention from scholars interested in those who actually led the Ottoman state. They succeeded where the Young Ottomans had failed, transforming the Ottoman state, however briefly, into a constitutional monarchy with a free press and a functioning, democratically elected parliament.

Yet despite their lack of direct and lasting political consequence, the intellectual shadow cast by the Young Ottomans is long. They contributed to the erasure of the imaginary border that demarcated Ottoman territory and the reach of Ottoman state power. Ironically for a movement committed to restoring Ottoman political autonomy and cultivating popular sovereignty, they contributed to the imbrication of Europe, particularly France and Britain, in Ottoman affairs. They turned European cities—Paris, London, Geneva, Naples—into theaters of political action in Ottoman domestic struggles while raising the profile of these struggles on the international stage. By publishing newspapers in multiple languages—Ottoman Turkish and either English or French—and circulating these newspapers in the major cities of both Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the Young Ottomans achieved several things that no previous dissident movement could have imagined. In the most immediate sense, they capitalized on relatively liberal press laws in Europe to organize intellectual and practical opposition to the Ottoman government, escaping censorship at home while gaining support for their cause abroad. In a less obvious and more lasting way, their publications fueled a cosmopolitan turn in the consciousness of both their European and Ottoman readers, by addressing them both as part of the same readership. The publishing of these multilingual, transcontinental newspapers helped conjure into existence the beginnings of a global public.

Outline of Chapters

Over the course of four chapters and a conclusion, this dissertation seeks to articulate what was novel about Young Ottoman political thought, and to trace this novelty to the newly global dimensions of the political world they occupied. Within the movement, I focus on three figures who collectively embody its sociological and ideological breadth: the elite scion Namık Kemal (1840-1888), the Greek satirical journalist Teodor Kasap (1835-1897), and the Islamic cleric Ali Suavi (1839-1878). Each of these thinkers represents a different set of identitarian, spiritual, and ideological commitments, reflecting their different location in the rapidly expanding transnational web of ideas. In the chapters that follow, I explore the circumstances that shaped their worldviews and led at times to profound disagreements, while highlighting one feature that the three held in common—early, sustained contact with thinkers and movements beyond Ottoman borders, which yielded an intimate awareness of the global context of Ottoman political struggles. It was this biographical similarity that yielded the common ideological core of their worldviews, and united them in a shared project that would prove to be the most lasting legacy of the Young Ottoman movement: the imagining of an Ottoman nation that existed independently of the state.

In Chapter 1, “A Nation in Search of Sovereignty,” I sketch the contours of their political world by presenting two of its most salient features. The first, and better understood, of the two is what we call the new global order of the nineteenth century, characterized by the rise of modern mechanisms of international diplomacy, which bound states within a global structure that served to define and delimit their sovereignty, fixing it

through imbrication in an increasingly elaborate web of institutions and an attendant ideology of respect for these institutions. The second, far less studied and more ideologically heterogeneous but no less discernible in its effects, is the loose network of social movements that opposed themselves to this emergent global order. Drawing on diplomatic correspondence and contemporary press accounts, I describe the progressive dispersal of Ottoman sovereignty through the web of obligations it incurred by means of diplomatic bargaining in exchange for the security of its continued recognition by the Great Powers as a sovereign state. I then examine how the rise of the second network facilitated the emergence of an organized resistance movement to this dispersal of sovereignty. Inevitably, the structure of this movement was as international as the new power structure it sought to resist: using new tools and networks of international communication, the group of dissident journalists known as the Young Ottomans set out to transform their compatriots from subjects into citizens, and to persuade a newly created international public that the Ottoman nation had a rightful place within the new world order. I trace the rise and fall of this movement in broad strokes, in order to help orient the reader amid the more detailed explorations of ideas and events in the chapters that follow.

Chapters 2 through 4 are dedicated to exploring the political ideas and activities of Namık Kemal, Teodor Kasap, and Ali Suavi in depth, with a particular focus on the origins of their respective notions of Ottoman nationhood, political legitimacy, and justice within the new global order. The focus of chapter 2 is Namık Kemal, the elite bureaucrat turned dissident who is most closely associated with the constitutional movement. My chapter uses a close reading of his political and historical writings to offer a new interpretation of

his political thought as an attempt to recast the foundations of Ottoman Islamic rule in universal terms. Chapter 3 turns to Namık Kemal's friend and collaborator Teodor Kasap (1835-1897), a journalist from the central Anatolia Karamanli community who has been overlooked by past scholars of the Young Ottoman movement. I argue that his social position as a Turcophone non-Muslim aided his efficacy as a popularizer of Young Ottoman ideas and gave him a crucial role in the movement. Just as importantly, his diverse and long-lived publishing enterprises lent credibility to the conceit of a multi-confessional Ottoman nation united by its loyalty not to the state but to its fellow citizens and a common Ottoman culture, and his strongly pluralistic vision of Ottoman identity helped shape the Ottomanist political vision of the Young Ottoman movement.

Chapter 4 takes up an important counterweight to the liberalism of both Kasap and Namık Kemal in the example of Ali Suavi (1839-1878), the Islamic preacher and polemicist who gained fame as the "turbaned radical" of the Young Ottoman movement. While Suavi's political views are often dismissed as "confused" and contradictory, I offer a contextualization of his writings and actions that aims to draw out their coherence. Suavi spent nearly a decade in Europe, where he formed close connections with British and French conservative thinkers before returning to Istanbul and dying in a failed coup against the sultan, Abdülhamid II. I argue that Suavi's Islamism, far from reflecting an anti-European strain of Ottoman thought, was an expression of a broader reaction to liberal imperialism shared with European conservatives and an important precursor to the Islamist movements of the twentieth century. My conclusion traces the legacy of Young Ottoman thought in the decades that followed the demise of their movement. I show that

Young Ottoman ideas of nationhood and legitimacy were influential in shaping the ideology of Abdülhamid II as well as that of his opponents, the Young Turks. I further situate Young Ottoman thought among the major intellectual currents of the nineteenth century, arguing that the movement provides a crucial historical link between the liberal patriotic movements that remade southern Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century and the pan-Islamic movement that emerged as an important vector of anti-imperialist militancy at that century's end.

The concerns of the Young Ottomans are still with us, even if their empire is not. Our horizons have shifted, but the questions confronted in the 1860s and 1870s by a now-defunct state have migrated from their problem-space to our own. Following a century defined by the paradoxes of sovereignty, the opacities of international legal regimes, and the tension between social cohesion and emancipation, we find ourselves puzzling over many of the same problems that captured the nineteenth-century Ottoman political imagination and compelled its urgent attention. By turning our gaze to the shape of these problems as they appeared on remote horizons, perhaps we can learn to better recognize the contours they assume today.

Chapter 1: A Nation in Search of Sovereignty

The lingering adhesion of the parts of Turkey to each other, is far more surprising and less easily accounted for, than the dismemberment of the empire.

— David Urquhart, *Turkey and Its Resources* (1833)¹

Sovereignty was the *sine qua non* of the Ottomanist project. The Young Ottoman movement, exemplified by the writers examined in later chapters, put sovereignty at the center of its political vision, viewing it as the essential prerequisite for the pursuit of liberty, justice, unity, and enlightenment that were at the very center of their aspirations. Ottoman sovereignty was even considered a benefit for those who were not themselves Ottoman: it was a condition that would allow Ottoman society to contribute to the progress of civilizations on a global scale, and so it was the point at which the national self-interest and the high-minded universalism of Young Ottoman aspirations converged. Ostensibly, it was also a goal shared by the Young Ottomans and the Tanzimat statesmen they opposed. Was the disagreement between these two groups purely strategic—a question of how best to strengthen the Ottoman state and its ability to defend its sovereignty? Or was it rather a difference in their respective visions of sovereignty itself?

This chapter explores that question by examining the crisis of sovereignty faced by the Ottoman state in the nineteenth century and the responses it drew. This crisis of sovereignty, and the inadequacy of the state response, was foundational for the Young Ottoman movement in two ways: it created the political opening for the first public

¹ *Turkey and Its Resources* (London: Sanders and Otley, 1833), v.

dissident movement of the modern era as well as posing the central problem to which it sought to respond. I begin by charting the transformation of Ottoman sovereignty over the course of the nineteenth century, showing how state leaders adapted to their comparatively reduced military and economic strength by seeking support through new diplomatic practices and institutions. These efforts yielded a new configuration of sovereignty that I describe as porous or dispersed. I argue that while this new configuration represented an undeniable diminution in comparison to the universal aspirations of the early modern Ottoman state, it retained the most crucial hallmarks of state power. Yet in the process of accommodating itself to its straitened geopolitical circumstances, the Ottoman state crafted a model of sovereignty that progressively alienated its subjects, leading to a series of organized efforts to reclaim the state from its governing elites and strike a better deal for Ottoman statehood. In effect, popular rejection of the compromises struck by the Tanzimat state cleared the way for a radical redefinition of political legitimacy premised on the novel concept of an Ottoman nation rather than the able governance of elites deputized by their sovereign.

Accordingly, the second half of the chapter examines the rise of public opinion as a politically active force in Ottoman politics. I look at the Kuleli incident of 1859 as an important precursor to the Young Ottoman movement before turning to the origins of the Young Ottoman movement itself, which I argue was just as much a product of the new global order as the Tanzimat-era policies it opposed. While Âli, Fuad, and their fellow ministers were firmly embedded within a global network of diplomats and other ruling elites, their opponents were embedded in a global network of their own: a far less

structured web of liberals, democrats, socialists, and others whose political activities placed them in opposition to their home regimes. Ultimately, I argue, these dissidents made use of the new tools available to them in the “age of steam and print” to build an alternative locus of power to compete with that of the Sublime Porte—both in addressing fellow Ottoman subjects, and in speaking for the Ottoman Empire on an international stage. By undermining the claims of the Ottoman government to speak for its subjects, the Young Ottoman press paved the way for the formulation of an alternative theory of political legitimacy founded in the concept of Ottoman nationhood. Their efforts to do so are best understood against the backdrop of a transformation in the nature of Ottoman sovereignty.

States in Formation

Two themes dominate the historiography of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire: on the one hand, it was a period in which the size and reach of the state bureaucracy ballooned, reflecting a concerted effort to concentrate the state’s power over the lives of its subjects. Yet paradoxically, this expansion of state power coincided with a steep decline in Ottoman international prestige. The specter of a once-great empire lurching about the nineteenth-century global stage, showing up at international conferences and expositions and continuing to call itself “exalted” and “sublime” as though it were still a dynastic empire in its prime (although the Ottoman state did not use the language of empire in reference to itself, as Einar Wigen points out), was troubling to many European observers, as it continues to be to scholars of international law today.² How did

² Einar Wigen, “Ottoman Concepts of Empire,” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 8, no. 1 (June 1, 2013): 45.

an obviously ailing entity remain standing for so long? Gentlemanly hypocrisy was the explanation preferred by nineteenth-century British polemicists, while colonialism is the preferred one among scholars today. According to one such scholar's account, the long charade of "simulating imperialism" in an attempt to mask a "semi-colonial reality" was one that took its toll on Ottoman leaders, and the resulting "heavy psychological pressure" is largely to blame for the acts of state violence they perpetrated in the twentieth century.³ Another scholar blames the European powers for "forcing Turkey to live out its agony under their guardianship" by recognizing the formality of its sovereignty only to "empty this sovereignty from the inside" through the "unscrupulous" application of international law, laying the groundwork not only for the dissolution of the empire but for the colonization of Africa with the sanction of public law.⁴ In the view of these observers, the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire was not truly sovereign; it was a "phantom State," a "corpse" propped up by the legal fiction of statehood.⁵

In this chapter, I want to explore an alternative conception of Ottoman sovereignty in the nineteenth century, one that credits the reality of its continued existence as a state while attempting to reckon with the evident limitations of its power to pursue its own interests in the international sphere. I suggest a model for thinking about the transformation undergone by Ottoman sovereignty not as a death or hollowing-out in

³ Maurus Reinkowski, "Hapless Imperialists and Resentful Nationalists: Trajectories of Radicalization in the Late Ottoman Empire," in *Helpless Imperialists: Imperial Failure, Fear and Radicalization*, ed. Maurus Reinkowski and Gregor Thum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 64.

⁴ Eliana Augusti, "The Ottoman Empire at the Congress of Paris, between New Declensions and Old Prejudices," in *Crossing Legal Cultures* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2009), 516–17.

⁵ James Lorimer, *Of the Denationalisation of Constantinople, and Its Devotion to International Purposes. Lecture, Etc* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876), 7.

absolute terms, but rather as a dispersal along new networks of legitimacy created by international institutions. I focus on the Treaty of Paris in 1856 as the moment in which the dispersal of Ottoman sovereignty comes closest to being legible in the historical record. My goal is to account for the expanding powers of the Ottoman state against the backdrop of its mounting fiscal crisis and alienation from its own subjects. Rather than being simply undermined by the international order, I counter that the Ottoman state drew new life from its imbrication in these structures.

As the past two decades of scholarship on the history of international law have made clear, the origins of so-called Westphalian sovereignty are deeply bound up with the European colonial enterprise.⁶ The emergence of a Westphalian standard of sovereignty—that of “exclusive control over a well-defined territory”—coincided with the expansion of European overseas empires, a process which set in motion the economic and geopolitical shifts that were responsible for a gradual decline in Ottoman international prestige.⁷ By any measure, the Ottoman state in the nineteenth century fell far short of satisfying Westphalian standards of control over the demarcation of its borders, the flow of goods and people across those borders, or the lives of those within its territory. The degree to which those standards have been met by any state in history is a question for another day. However we might answer it, there is little doubt that the late Ottoman state was further off than most of the European states it had dealings with. This imbalance made it distinctly

⁶ Antony. Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law*, vol. 37, Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law ; (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁷ Stephen D. Krasner, “Westphalia and All That,” in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*, ed. Judith. Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 235.

vulnerable to the loss of peripheral territories, to unfavorable treaties, and to a host of petty indignities that come with reduced prestige, including the open scheming of rival powers over how to divide up the spoils of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of its anticipated demise. (Of the “one hundred plans for the dividing of Turkey” compiled by a Romanian diplomat at the outbreak of World War I, a third were drafted in the nineteenth century.⁸)

However, despite that manifest vulnerability—signaled by its increasing indebtedness to foreign investors, its dependence on foreign powers to rescue it from invasion, and the very frequency of those invasions, as well as its progressive loss of territory over the course of the century—the fact remains that no successful assault on the central territories of the Ottoman state took place until the outbreak of the Balkan Wars in 1912. Instead, the Ottoman state continued to enact ambitious new state-building projects through the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Despite the heavy losses it sustained in the Balkan Wars, it entered the First World War as a major power, mustering substantial wealth and troops toward the Axis cause.⁹ Furthermore, in the last half-century of its existence the Ottoman state enacted colonial projects of its own in the modern imperial style in Yemen and elsewhere, projecting state power at a geographically distant remove from the imperial center.¹⁰ To describe the late Ottoman state as semi-colonized is to efface these facts and obscure our understanding of the state’s place in the

⁸ Trandafir G. Djuvara, *Cent projets de partage de la Turquie, 1281-1913* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1914).

⁹ Some scholars view the loss of the Balkans in 1913 as the effective end of the empire; see especially Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (I.B. Tauris, 2007).

¹⁰ Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768–796; Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (July 2003): 311–42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3879318>; Thomas Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849-1919* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011).

world as well as its “horizon of expectation.”¹¹ In short, it seems to me to be a profound misconstrual of the “problem-space” faced by Ottoman politicians and thinkers in the nineteenth century.

The metaphor of sovereignty’s “erosion” suggests the erasure of a once-thick imaginary border demarcating Ottoman territory and the reach of Ottoman state power. Yet the reality of sovereignty, for the Ottoman state and for other states as well, was always quite different. As we explore the shifts in Ottoman sovereignty that took place in the nineteenth century, it is useful to bear in mind that the same forces that ultimately undermined Ottoman imperial sovereignty are those that helped to constitute it in the first place. This point is driven home by the historian Lauren Benton, who notes that the conception of sovereignty as uniform territorial control is a myth:

Empires did not cover space evenly but composed a fabric that was full of holes, stitched together out of pieces, a tangle of strings. Even in the most paradigmatic cases, an empire's spaces were politically fragmented; legally differentiated; and encased in irregular, porous, and sometimes undefined borders. Although empires did lay claim to vast stretches of territory, the nature of such claims was tempered by control that was exercised mainly over narrow bands, or corridors, and over enclaves and irregular zones around them.... Together these patterns and practices produced political geographies that were uneven, disaggregated, and oddly shaped—and not at all consistent with the image produced by monochrome shading of imperial maps.¹²

This is certainly true of the Ottoman Empire, which always presented an administratively and legally variegated terrain.¹³ In fact, this flexibility—what the

¹¹ Here I borrow another phrase from David Scott, which he has borrowed from Reinhard Koselleck. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 45.

¹² Lauren A. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

¹³ Karen Barkey, “Aspects of Legal Pluralism in the Ottoman Empire,” in *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850*, ed. Richard J. Ross and Lauren A. Benton (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 83–108.

sociologist Karen Barkey calls “a complex layering of direct and indirect rule”—has been credited as key to the empire’s ability to endure from the thirteenth century to the twentieth: in effect, it was not a single regime, but a patchwork of regimes under the continuous rule of a single dynasty.¹⁴ The House of Osman’s claim to nominal sovereignty reigned supreme, while the degree of its authority over the governance of daily life was widely variable and never unchallenged. Most important, the nature of that governance was variable—from the means by which taxes were collected to the rhetoric of legitimacy on display by the state. This was true not only in the earliest centuries of the empire, but in the eighteenth and nineteenth, as Ali Yaycıoğlu argues: between 1760 and 1820, he writes, “the Ottoman polity experienced a turn from a vertical empire, in which the imperial elite sustained claims to power through a hierarchical system, to a horizontal and participatory empire, in which central and provincial actors combined to rule the empire together.”¹⁵

The patchwork nature of Ottoman sovereignty throughout its history is helpful to bear in mind when surveying the terrain of the nineteenth-century state and its supposed crisis of sovereignty. If we recognize this flexibility as a feature of Ottoman governance from its very beginnings, we are better positioned to recognize the “exceptional” administrative autonomy granted as concessions to troublesome provinces like Egypt, Serbia, Crete, and the Danubian Principalities (Moldovia and Wallachia) as continuous with earlier practices of flexible dominion. Only in the light of nineteenth-century diplomacy and public opinion,

¹⁴ Karen Barkey, “The Ottoman Empire (1299-1923): The Bureaucratization of Patrimonial Authority,” in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 102; David Urquhart makes a similar observation in *Turkey and Its Resources*, vii.

¹⁵ Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016), 10.

as well as of subsequent historiography, would the shifting administrative status of these provinces be regarded as “losses.” In a recent article, Aimee Genell argues that it was only in the wake of the First World War that such provinces came to be regarded as “incipient states,” whose exceptional legal status derogated the sovereignty of the imperial state to which they belonged.¹⁶

The sixteenth-century Sultan Süleyman I, by all accounts the apotheosis of an Ottoman sovereign, was himself quite at ease with the notion of suzerainty and the delegation of governance, or so it would seem from his self-assigned epithet: “sultan of sultans, touchstone of *hakims* [rulers], distributor of crowns to the rulers of the surface of the earth.”¹⁷ Likewise, an inscription testifying to his conquest of the fortress at Bender, in present-day Moldova, in 1538, reads in part:

I am God’s slave and sultan of the land of this world [*bu cihân mülkünde sultanım*].... In Baghdad I am the Shah, in Byzantine realms the Caesar [*kayser*], and in Egypt the Sultan, who sends his fleets to the seas of Europe [*Firenk*], Maghrib and India. I am the sultan who took the crown and throne of Hungary and granted them to my humble slave.¹⁸

By adopting the titles of the rulers he has supplanted, Süleyman shows us that he rules each land according to the standards of legitimate dominion that prevail there: thus he is at once *shah*, *kayser*, and sultan, but only where appropriate. It is significant that he describes himself as sultan rather than *malik*—in accordance with classical Islamic political

¹⁶ Aimee M. Genell, “Autonomous Provinces and the Problem of ‘Semi-Sovereignty’ in European International Law,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 6 (November 1, 2016): 545–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2016.1196041>.

¹⁷ Alan Fisher, “The Life and Family of Süleymân I,” in *Süleymân the Second and His Time*, ed. Halil İnalçık and Cemal Kafadar (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993), 4.

¹⁸ Fisher, 5; translation modified.

doctrine, he does not own the world, but merely rules it as God's deputy.¹⁹ The divine ruler's delegation of the Hungarian throne to his "humble slave" sits comfortably with his dominion. Also noteworthy in this self-description, as Einar Wigen points out, is that it make no reference to a state as such.²⁰ The Ottoman administrative apparatus was sizeable by the sixteenth century, but it wasn't considered something to brag about on the borderlands, where, as Barkey notes, it was unlikely to make itself felt to any degree beyond the symbolic register.²¹ Süleyman may have been "the Lawgiver" to the empire's core regions, but on the borderland he was content to be known simply as the sovereign whose name was spoken in Friday prayers.

In the course of the ensuing centuries, as Ottoman contacts with rival powers multiplied and grew in complexity, the language of succeeding sultans to describe their dominions would become more bounded and precise; the dominions once claimed by the sultan became known collectively as the "Ottoman lands" (*Memâlik-i Osmaniye*).²² A parallel development, occasioned by diplomatic necessity, was the emergence of a terminology for the Ottoman governing apparatus itself: what started out as the state (or dynasty) of the House of Osman (*Devlet-i Âl-i Osman*) came to be known as "the Exalted State" (*Devlet-i Aliye*), which appeared in diplomatic documents as "the Exalted Ottoman State" (*Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye*), a name that "implicitly recognized the possibility that other states could also be exalted."²³ As one scholar has noted, "It is significant that the Sublime Porte began

¹⁹ Fritz Steppat, "God's Deputy: Materials on Islam's Image of Man," *Arabica* 36, no. 2 (July 1, 1989): 164–65.

²⁰ Wigen, "Ottoman Concepts of Empire," 50.

²¹ Barkey, "The Ottoman Empire (1299-1923): The Bureaucratization of Patrimonial Authority," 116–19.

²² Hakan T Karateke, *Padişahım çok yaşa!: Osmanlı devletinin son yüz yılında merasimler* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), 16.

²³ Wigen, "Ottoman Concepts of Empire," 53.

to keep a record of its international commitments to Europe with the Treaty of Carlowitz” in 1699—its first decisive loss to a European state.²⁴ It was through the growing need for formal mechanisms of diplomacy that the Ottoman enterprise encountered its first moment of diminution, when it was forced to recognize itself as one state among others.

From a Global Power to a “Phantom State”?

The process described above broadly mirrors in the evolving self-conception of other states that passed intact from the pre-modern into the early modern period. During the centuries that stretched between the so-called Crusade of Varna—a failed attempt to check the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans in 1444—and the age of high European imperialism in the late nineteenth century, the Muslim and Christian worlds were not constituted as such; religious difference was an important theme in Ottoman encounters with Christian powers, but it was by no means an obstacle to diplomatic and military alliances.²⁵ The commercial treaties it negotiated with Genoese merchants served as one basis for its future diplomatic relationships with European powers, but those relations extended well beyond the negotiation of customs duties and passports. The Ottoman Empire was famous in early modern Europe as a formidable military power, “the present terrour of the World,” in Richard Knolles’s 1603 assessment; but it was much more

²⁴ J. C. Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System,” *Middle East Journal* 15, no. 2 (April 1, 1961): 145.

²⁵ For a compelling discussion of the emergence of these two “geopolitical illusions,” see Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); For an overview of the Ottoman impact on early modern European political and cultural life, see Christine Woodhead, “‘The Present Terrour of the World’? Contemporary Views of the Ottoman Empire c1600,” *History* 72, no. 234 (February 1, 1987): 20–37, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-229X.1987.tb01456.x>.

besides.²⁶ Its rivalry with the Habsburg Empire in Central Europe was responsible for several of its oldest and longest-lived partnerships, including the Franco-Ottoman alliance, founded in 1526, and its primarily commercial relationship with Britain was recognized through the establishment of a British embassy in Istanbul in 1583.²⁷ (These were friendly partnerships, but far from symmetrical in the Westphalian sense: Süleyman's reply to Francis I's request for an alliance famously opened by declaring himself the "sultan of sultans" and "the shadow of God on Earth," while addressing his interlocutor as the "king of the French province."²⁸) Other evidence of Ottoman centrality to early modern European diplomacy can be found in its backing of a Protestant prince of Transylvania in his rebellion against Habsburg rule at the outset of the Thirty Years' War.²⁹

Yet at the conclusion of that war, the Ottoman state found itself outside the regional web of diplomacy that was formed among contiguous states in Western Europe through the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, out of which the so-called Westphalian system of state sovereignty is said to have emerged.³⁰ In the 1720s, Sultan Ahmed III experimented with

²⁶ Richard Knolles, *The Lives of the Othoman Kings and Emperors: Faithfully Gathered out of the Best Histories, Both Antient and Moderne, and Digested into One Continuat Historie* (London: Adam Islip, 1603).

²⁷ Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (I.B.Tauris, 2006); G. R. Berridge, *British Diplomacy in Turkey: 1583 to the Present ; a Study in the Evolution of the Resident Embassy* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2009).

²⁸ "Ben ki Sultanü's-salâtin ve bürhânü'l-havâkîn tâc-bahş-ı hüsvân-ı rû-yı zemîn zıllullahi fi'l-arazîn.....Sen ki, Françe vilayetinin Kralı Françesko'sun" "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın Kral Fransuva'ya Fermanı - Vikikaynak," accessed August 15, 2017, https://tr.wikisource.org/wiki/Kanuni_Sultan_S%C3%BCleyman%E2%80%99%C4%B1n_Kral_Fransuva%E2%80%99ya_ferman%C4%B1.

²⁹ Halil İncalcık and Donald Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 424–26.

³⁰ The notion of the Peace of Westphalia as a turning point in the history of international relations has been effectively dispelled in recent decades: see, for instance, Krasner, "Westphalia and All That." Yet it seems equally clear that the Wars of Religion and their resolution by European powers were formative in crafting the standards of sovereignty and mutual recognition by which European powers interacted with each other, even if these standards were not applied in any consistent way to states outside the European penumbra of mutual recognition.

formal diplomatic missions to European states, but between the frequency of travel by European merchants and diplomats to the Ottoman capital and the availability of Greek Ottoman experts in European languages and protocols, these missions must have seemed superfluous, and they were discontinued until the 1830s. By then, however, the Westphalian system was firmly in place, and the Ottoman state was firmly outside it. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, where the Concert of Europe was formed, the Ottoman state was excluded from except as a topic of discussion: it was here that the phrase “the Eastern Question” was coined, in reference to threats of an uprising of peasants the Ottoman Peloponnese.³¹ The spread of this revolt, and the role of European powers in providing tacit or explicit support for a separate Greek state, caused a considerable chilling in relations for the better part of the decade.

In the 1830s, when, in the words of one diplomatic historian, “the survival of the state hung by a hair,” the Ottomans sought to revive relations with the French and British in order to help contain the rebellious governor of Egypt.³² Despite the Ottoman state’s exclusion from Europe’s emerging network of international institutions and treaty-making conferences, it was still a formidable power with major shipping routes and a great deal of agricultural wealth at its command. Britain, in particular, was eager to do more business

³¹ Kahraman Şakul, “The Eastern Question,” ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Alan Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Facts on File, January 1, 2009), 191. The common interest in suppressing revolutionaries had led the Ottoman state to coordinate with its Habsburg counterpart in arresting the Greek revolutionary Rhigas Velestinlis, for instance. Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 29.

³² Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System,” 148–50.

there, having taken to heart the case made by David Urquhart in *Turkey and Its Resources*.³³ (Similar noises were made in France, to less effect.) This interest coincided with a growing sense that the empire's political weakness made it more thoroughly exploitable than ever before: its French champion opens his article by conceding that Turkey is no longer "counted among the nations whose political action is capable of shaping the destiny of Europe," before imploring readers to consider its value as a material and strategic resource.³⁴

Britain promptly set about making itself indispensable to the Ottoman state. For instance, when the British ambassador in Istanbul heard that the sultan and his ministers were looking to reach out to the rogue Egyptian governor and negotiate peace directly, he promptly relayed the news to the British foreign minister, who wrote back urging the ambassador to tell the Turkish government to "abstain from taking any such step," and instead "to place full confidence in the friendly intentions and promised support of the Powers of Europe."³⁵ Internal British correspondence also gives the impression that the ambassador was convinced of his own responsibility for the Edict of Gülhane, which famously promised to defend the "life, honor, and property" of all Ottoman subjects,

³³ *Turkey and Its Resources*. The young Urquhart, who wrote the book between stints in His Majesty's diplomatic service, painted a cheerful picture of a robust, richly endowed and willing partner with British commercial interests.

³⁴ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Mémoires et Documents (Turquie) 50MD/56/3, "La question Turque et les empêtements de la Russie, par Breuvery. (Sémaphore)," June 12, 1834.

³⁵ National Archives of Britain, Foreign Office 195/158, No. 155: Palmerston to Ponsonby, October 23, 1839.

regardless of their religion.³⁶ The ambassador's official missive described it as "a victorious answer to those who say that this Empire cannot be saved of its ancient Government."³⁷

The British ambassador had been deliberately encouraged in this impression by the edict's author, Mustafa Resid Pasha, who had kept him apprised of his desire for reforms to "give security to life and property," and actively sought his counsel in this endeavor.³⁸ He is also quoted as having told a French diplomat, "It is always to France that we address ourselves; it is she who dictated our reforms and it is to her that we should like to credit their completion and success."³⁹ So artful was the Ottoman minister's diplomacy that historians would spend the next century quibbling over which European state deserved credit for the Tanzimat reforms.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the original Turkish text of the edict was crafted to reassure the state-appointed hierarchy of Islamic scholars, or *ulema*, that the traditional Ottoman ideology of governance remained intact, with its characterization of

³⁶ A letter sent by the British ambassador to the Foreign Minister in London ten days before the edict's announcement reports on "a plan for securing the subject" against arbitrary execution and seizure of property, adding, "I do not know how they [acted] to proceed to establish such a vast good work... I think it prudent not to enquire much into the matter lest I thereby incur responsibility. I have already reported to H.M.'s Government my having cautioned Rechid Pasha against precipitation." Lord Ponsonby to Lord Palmerston, "Separate and Confidential," October 22nd, 1839; FO 195/60.

³⁷ "FO 195/60, No. 301: Ponsonby's Report on Gülhane Edict."

³⁸ The British ambassador, Lord Ponsonby, reports such a conversation in his letter to Lord Palmerston of September 30, 1839 marked "Separate and Secret"; FO 195/60.

³⁹ Edouard Engelhardt, *La Turquie et le Tanzimat, ou Histoire des Réformes dans l'Empire Ottoman Depuis 1826 Jusqu'à Nos Jours* (Paris: Cotillon et Compagnie, 1882), Vol. I, 4, footnote 1.

⁴⁰ Engelhardt's two-volume history of the Tanzimat provides the leading Francophilic interpretation of the Edict of Gülhane, while the prevailing British understanding sees it as having been "launched on its course with Reschid as captain and [British special ambassador] Stratford as pilot"; see H.W.V. Temperley, *England and the Near East: The Crimea*, Vol. I (London, 1936), 320; quoted in Cunningham, "Stratford Canning and the Tanzimat," 246; Meanwhile, Metternich and the Austrians have their partisans among some historians; see Šedivý, "Metternich and Mustafa Reshid Pasha's Fall in 1841"; Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 177ff.

respect for the rights of all subjects as both a dictate of Islamic law and a time-honored tradition of Ottoman governance that had only recently fallen into neglect.⁴¹

Despite this language, the notion of the edict as a British imposition was uniformly shared by the London press, where it was alternately celebrated or regretted. The liberal *Morning Post* cheerfully suggested that “the relations of friendship which the Porte has established with the European Powers have... served to open their eyes to their comparative barbarisms.”⁴² The conservative *Standard*, meanwhile, decried the edict as revolution from without, writing, “The real question is this, 'are the doctrines which are triumphing those of the Turkish nation, and are they hailed with satisfaction by the Musselmen?’” It asserted that those who celebrate the edict as a boon to the Ottoman nation do so “based on the vulgar error, that there ‘is’ an Ottoman nation, and that there are national institutions, feelings, prejudices. But there is nothing of the sort. Turkey has long since ceased to exist in a united and forceful form. The charter of 1839 is another illusion.”⁴³ As we will see below, the theme of Ottoman sovereignty as a sham would emerge gradually in British political opinion over the course of the ensuing four decades, eventually becoming a centerpiece of the debate over the Ottoman state’s capacity to participate in the structures of international law.

The 1840s brought a further humbling of Ottoman international prestige, as reflected in the nomenclature assigned to the Ottoman sultan in official documents: he was

⁴¹ Butrus Abu-Manneh, “The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript,” *Die Welt Des Islams*, New Series, 34, no. 2 (November 1, 1994): 173–203.

⁴² “[untitled],” *Morning Post*, November 27, 1839; “Turkey. (From Our Correspondent).”

⁴³ *Standard*, “Foreign Intelligence Received This Morning.”

now referred to as “His Highness,” while the other sovereigns were known as “His/Her Majesty”—a lack of symmetry that would not be rectified until the Treaty of Paris.⁴⁴ This treaty, negotiated in February and March of 1856 after the Crimean War, was a crucial episode in the remaking of Ottoman sovereignty. Article VII of the treaty has been heralded by European scholars of international law as marking the entry of the Ottoman state into the international legal community (despite evidence that the article’s intended scope was much narrower, and that Turkey was already considered a part of this community).⁴⁵ In the words of one contemporary English jurist,

The Ottoman Empire was admitted solemnly into the European Concert of Public Law by the Treaty of Paris in 1856. In virtue of that compact, the Christian Powers of Europe have tacitly undertaken certain duties toward the Ottoman Empire, and in return the Porte has tacitly contracted certain obligations of public faith towards the Christian Powers. The day of the Crusades has long since passed away, never to return...⁴⁶

In the words of another contemporary source, the treaty “testified to the progress of religious tolerance in the West.”⁴⁷ The implication is that religious animosity was no longer a factor in relations between Islamic and Christian states. Ironically, the Ottoman Empire’s formal admission to European public law came at the cost of a concession which confirmed its state of exception with regard to the other member states, and its increasing marginalization within the realm of international law. As a (tacit) condition of membership, the Ottoman state was required to issue an imperial rescript, which came to be known as

⁴⁴ Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System,” 151.

⁴⁵ Wood, “The Treaty of Paris and Turkey’s Status in International Law,” 270; see also Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System.”

⁴⁶ Travers Twiss, “Leibniz’s Memoir Upon Egypt,” *The Law Magazine and Review: A Quarterly Review of Jurisprudence* 8, no. 248 (May 1883): 257.

⁴⁷ *Annuaire Historique Universelle ou Histoire Politique pour 1856*, quoted in Wood, “The Treaty of Paris and Turkey’s Status in International Law,” 271.

the Reform Edict of 1856, reaffirming in plainer language the statement of religious equality made in the 1839 Edict of Gülhane. The issuing of the rescript was delicately acknowledged in the Treaty's ninth article, which recognizes it as "having emanated spontaneously from [His Imperial Majesty the Sultan's] sovereign will." (Âli Pasha successfully fought to keep the edict from being "formally noted" by the Powers in the final document.⁴⁸)

The entirety of the alliance and the Treaty that formalized it was marked by rhetorical inconsistencies on both sides. On the Ottoman side, the *seyhülislam* had championed the state's entrance into the war in 1853 by expressly condoning the requisite alliance with Christian states under the pretext that they would be merely "vassals rendering their due service to their overlord, the Ottoman sultan."⁴⁹ The treaty that concluded the war demonstrated that the balance of power was just the opposite: Ottoman diplomats were excluded from the pre-congress negotiations through which the core of the treaty was drafted, and in other ways were let to know that the Ottoman state owed its sovereignty to the indulgence of the "international community," and particularly to British advocacy on its behalf. Among the subtle but pointed textual traces of this fact is the article's reference to the need to preserve Ottoman independence and territorial integrity "as a question of general interest." (Meanwhile, the chief British negotiator let slip a private remark to the Austrian ambassador to the effect "that he hated the Turks and disbelieved in

⁴⁸ Harold Temperley, "The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and Its Execution," *The Journal of Modern History* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 1932): 410.

⁴⁹ Florian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 19.

any possibility of their progress.”⁵⁰) Within a few years, the treaty would be broken in the name of humanitarian intervention, when France sent troops to Mount Lebanon in the wake of the massacre there in 1860. France’s act was in clear violation of the Ottoman sovereignty assiduously specified twice within the document: first, in Article VII, via a mutual pledge to “respect the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire”; and second, in Article IX, with the assertion that the sultan’s promise of equality for Christians did not grant the Powers any right “to interfere, either collectively or separately, in the relations between His Majesty and his subjects.” The repetition of this point served only to underscore its futility. As David Rodogno notes in his study of the incident, although all parties were at pains to avoid interpreting the intervention as an act of war, “Ottoman sovereignty was meaningless to [the European powers] when it came to impose a solution to avoid the repetition of massacre.”⁵¹

Before the Crimean War and the treaty resolving it, incursions by foreign states on Ottoman territory—including all but its most remote and autonomous provinces, notably Algeria—were rare and serious occasions recognized as violations of Ottoman sovereignty. Additionally, the Ottoman Empire before the war appears to have been recognized, by British lawmakers, at the very least, as a state under the penumbra of international law.⁵² The Treaty of Paris formalized, through its silences and inconsistencies, a new state of affairs whereby Ottoman inclusion in the European community also sanctioned greater

⁵⁰ Temperley, “The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and Its Execution,” 398.

⁵¹ Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914: The Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice*, Human Rights and Crimes against Humanity (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2012), 116, <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/8847131>.

⁵² Wood, “The Treaty of Paris and Turkey’s Status in International Law.”

liberties on the part of other European states. Not only did France send troops into Lebanon; France and Britain also conducted increasingly autonomous relations with Egypt despite its continued tributary status to the Ottoman state, and advised the leading Ottoman state ministers on domestic policies, including those concerning the legal and administrative reorganization of the state as well as the selection of ambassadors and other key personnel, with a new openness in the wake of the treaty's signing. The special role of Britain and France in sustaining the Ottoman state financially and militarily was understood to allow them special privileges in this regard. In effect, the act of inclusion in the "European family" granted a new license to certain family members to trespass the borders of Ottoman territory, provided they could justify their actions to their own public and each other.

The traditional way to describe the Franco-British support of the Ottoman state is in light of their shared aim of preserving "the balance of power" on the Continent.⁵³ The Ottoman Empire was still useful as a bulwark against Russia; hence the European Powers' particular concern, articulated in both private diplomatic correspondence and in the language of official documents, with preserving Ottoman "territorial integrity."⁵⁴ Despite its relative political weakness on the international stage and its regrettably incomplete domination of its nominal dominions, the Ottoman Empire possessed a well-developed military, diplomatic and tax-collecting apparatus of its own that made it capable of staving

⁵³ Wood, 264.

⁵⁴ For instance, in 50MD/56/5, Nous avons raisonné dans l'hypothèse de la nécessité, pour la France et l'Angleterre, de se faire de la Turquie une barrière contre la Russie, et nous croyons qu'à l'état actuel des esprits et des choses, on n'est pas libre d'envisager la question d'Orient d'un point de vue plus élevé.

off assault by Russia. It was certainly preferable to the smaller states that would conceivably replace it, as evidenced by the vulnerability of Poland and other central European countries. To Britain, a strong and public alliance with the Ottoman sultan had the added benefit of dissuading Indian Muslims from waging jihad against the British presence in India, since the alliance could be seen as rendering all of British territories as extensions of the Abode of Islam.⁵⁵

At the same time, these empires were not eager to shore up Ottoman sovereignty in the shape of a solid, autonomous and impenetrable mass like that presupposed by the Westphalian model. They vastly preferred a porous and sponge-like polity that would occupy volume on the political map while serving as a cornucopia of exploitable resources, a market for manufactured goods, and a well-greased set of tracks for trade between India and Europe. By 1860, with only two percent of the world's population, Britain produced 40 percent of its manufactured goods; it was also responsible for roughly a quarter of the world's trade.⁵⁶ French and British diplomats and merchants had worked hard over the course of centuries to open Ottoman territory to their interests, first in the guise of supplicants before a universal empire, and more recently as trade partners operating on a level plane. Now, in a more crowded landscape where territorial lines were drawn more sharply and sovereignty was a zero-sum game, Britain, France, and the Ottoman state had to tread carefully in crafting an arrangement that would meet the demands of international sovereignty while ensuring the continued porousness of Ottoman borders and economies.

⁵⁵ Karpal, *The Politicization of Islam*, 74.

⁵⁶ Ellis Wasson, *A History of Modern Britain: 1714 to the Present* (John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 220.

The late Ottoman model of sovereignty was thus particularly accommodating to the interests of its closest allies, who formed a central pillar in the latticework of its sovereignty for the better part of the century. Because it continued to meet the needs of the world's most powerful states, Ottoman sovereignty would continue to be recognized, in a compromised but still substantive sense, throughout the nineteenth century.⁵⁷

For one set of retrospective observers, the compromise struck at the Treaty of Paris was a steep price for the Ottoman state to pay: in the words of one contemporary scholar of international law, "the ability to invoke 'external' sovereignty came at the price of emasculated 'internal' sovereignty that was required to fulfil the indeterminate notion of European civilization."⁵⁸ Another writes that the treaty created "a real system of surveillance that froze the *status quo* and exploited the old lexis of international law for the realization of new projects of absorption and reorganization in the Balkans."⁵⁹

Yet it is worth considering how the Treaty of Paris, by "emasculating" Ottoman sovereignty, managed to substantially extend the life of a state that would have lacked the resources to fend off challenges to its core territories on its own. In one example, the Ottoman recognition of Montenegro's independence in 1858 allowed the Ottoman state to parlay its formal cessation of a small and troublesome territory into a diplomatic currency. As Âli Pasha, the grand vizier, made clear in a letter to the French ambassador,

the Porte has resigned itself to this painful operation, only to prove to the [French] Emperor the immense price that it attaches to the preservation of his friendship.

⁵⁷ The model of sovereignty I am outlining here can be compared to the model of "negative sovereignty" attributed to post-colonial states in Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵⁸ Sally N. Cummings, *Sovereignty After Empire* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 108.

⁵⁹ Augusti, "The Ottoman Empire at the Congress of Paris, between New Declensions and Old Prejudices."

The natural and legitimate repugnance of the sovereign, our deeply wounded military and national honor, all that has ceded before the sincere desire to reestablish our relations with France on a footing from which they should never have slipped. We hope that all these sacrifices will not go without fruit...⁶⁰

The strengthening of ties between the Ottoman state and those of Britain and France also created a vastly expanded set of tools for the empire to reach beyond its own borders to exert control over its subjects overseas. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, the Ottoman foreign minister was able to reach out to foreign governments and ask them to curtail dissident activity, censor dissident publications, and even arrest Ottoman subjects on their behalf. The strengthening of these ties is also what allowed the empire to continue to enter into debt with British and French investors, floating securities on their stock markets with the close aid and supervision of the British and French states. The growing indebtedness of the Ottoman state is unquestionably associated with its decline and collapse, but we might do better to read it as a symptom than a cause. After all, as economic historians of the Ottoman state are quick to point out, earlier approaches to generating revenue involved routine debasements of the currency, measures that inevitably triggered popular protests, political instability, and a loss of legitimacy in their own right.⁶¹ In the difficult decades leading up to the Crimean War, the state had entered into debt to local lenders. The ability to raise funds through overseas financial markets meant a dramatically lower interest rate.⁶² In effect, these international loans—which inaugurated the Ottoman public debt in name only—allowed the Ottoman state to strengthen its internal sovereignty by reducing

⁶⁰ Âli Pasha to Thouvenel, November 25, 1858, reprinted in L. Thouvenel, *Trois Années de La Question d'Orient, 1856-1859, D'après Les Papiers Inédits de M. Thouvenel* (Paris: C. Lévy, 1897), 315, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/005908121>.

⁶¹ Sevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶² Birdal, *The Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt*, 23–29.

its indebtedness to Galata bankers, whose proximity to government officials had compromised the state's impartiality.

By the end of the 1870s, this mutually agreeable arrangement would come to an end. The Ottoman default on its loans was only one cause for the renegotiation of the relationship. A fresh series of shifts in the geopolitical landscape—the French loss to Prussia in 1871 and its eclipse as a global power; Egypt's growing autonomy as a rich, populous, and well-situated trading partner; the eruption of separatist movements in the Balkans; and, not least, the emergence of the Young Ottoman movement, which sought to weaken the authority of British, French, and Ottoman ruling elites over Ottoman state policy, and won a staggering victory with the dethronement of Sultan Abdülaziz in 1876 and the declaration of a constitution—would combine to make the Ottoman state a less useful partner and give Britain other ideas about how to pursue its interests in the Middle East.

Alongside the economic and strategic factors behind the shift, we should take note of an analogous shift taking place in European perceptions of Ottoman political legitimacy at this critical juncture in the development of frameworks of political legitimacy and mutual recognition. To understand the exclusion of the Ottoman state from the “international community” as it was being recast in the late nineteenth century, we can track an important shift in scholarly consensus among scholars of international law. As Jennifer Pitts has observed, by the late Victorian era, the long and intricate history of diplomatic relations between the Ottoman state and European powers had receded from view, opening up the foundational question of whether the Ottoman state, or indeed any “Muhammadan” power,

was theoretically and morally equipped to take part in the “law of nations.” A range of international jurists duly weighed in. Pitts describes a growing negative consensus, which rested on a conviction of “the distinctiveness of the European law of nations as uniquely civilized.”⁶³ Within this new framework, the Ottoman state was increasingly vulnerable: its putative “capacity for reciprocity” was now in doubt.⁶⁴ In 1881, the English jurist Sir Travers Twiss asked whether “Oriental peoples” were not prevented, on the basis of their ostensible obligations under Islamic doctrine, from “admitting a moral basis of reciprocity with other peoples who do not accept the same religious sanctions.”⁶⁵ In essence, Twiss argued that Islamic states already had a system of international law, premised on the distinction between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of War, which could not be reconciled with the “law of nations” observed by Europe. (Ironically, it was precisely this distinction which had served as the basis for the first commercial tax exemptions offered to Europeans, which served as the basis for the system of capitulations that would become a symbol of the European exploitation of Ottoman political weakness.⁶⁶) A related concern was expressed by an Italian jurist, who described the sultan as a “theocratic dictator”

⁶³ Jennifer Pitts, “Boundaries of Victorian International Law,” in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 68.

⁶⁴ Pitts, 67–68.

⁶⁵ Twiss, quoted in Pitts, 72. The same question continues to be asked in American legal journals today; see, e.g., Meghan E. Tepas, “A Look at Traditional Islam’s General Discord with a Permanent System of Global Cooperation,” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 16, no. 2 (July 1, 2009): 681–701.

⁶⁶ After being recognized by the Genoese colony at Galata following the conquest (or “opening”) of Istanbul in 1453, Mehmed the Conqueror divided its population into residents (*zimmi*, or “protected” subjects subject to the *cizye*, or head-tax on non-Muslims) and non-residents (*harbi*, meaning literally “of the Abode of War,” and functionally tax-exempt). See Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 46–47.

whose absolute authority over the entire “Abode of Islam” preceded any subsequent claims to sovereignty over the specific territories under his control.⁶⁷

Twiss’s fellow jurist, the University of Edinburgh professor James Lorimer, offered an argument for excluding Turkey on secular grounds: it was, in his view, a “phantom State,” for which “the conditions of recognition, of which the first is autonomous existence,” no longer applied.⁶⁸ Among Italian jurists, similar conclusions were being reached: in the words of one, the Ottoman state “had little or no notion of sovereignty”; instead, it rested on a notion of *suzeraineté*, defined by him as “semi-sovereignty,” that no longer carried water in the West.⁶⁹

Two putative features of the Ottoman state, then, were isolated as grounds for holding it at arm’s length, or indeed for dissolving its claim to existence altogether. The first of these was its character as an Islamic state, a feature which had been a notable and sometimes contentious aspect of Ottoman-European relations from the beginning, but had not arisen as an obstacle to diplomatic engagement for several centuries.⁷⁰ The second feature which was now seen as an obstacle for Ottoman inclusion as a participant in the law of nations was the very administrative flexibility that had been characteristic of the

⁶⁷ Francesco Paolo Contuzzi, *La Question d’Orienté dinanzi al diritto internazionale ed alla diplomazia europea* (1882), p. 21; quoted in Augusti, “The Ottoman Empire at the Congress of Paris, between New Declensions and Old Prejudices,” 506.

⁶⁸ Lorimer, *Of the Denationalisation of Constantinople, and Its Devotion to International Purposes. Lecture, Etc.*, 7–8. As an alternative means of ensuring the balance of powers and the peace of Europe, Lorimer proposed that “Constantinople should become the common property of civilised mankind, and be devoted to their common purposes” (13).

⁶⁹ Francesco Paolo Contuzzi, *Diritto internazionale pubblico* (1889), quoted in Augusti, “The Ottoman Empire at the Congress of Paris, between New Declensions and Old Prejudices,” 505.

⁷⁰ Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century* (I.B.Tauris, 2013).

Ottoman polity from the fourteenth century to the nineteenth. These two features would come to serve as the basis for two different and seemingly contradictory sets of claims about the Ottoman state's unfitness to rule: on the one hand, its Islamic character was construed as intolerant and overbearing in lack of formal indifference to the religious identities of its subjects; on the other hand, its failure to enforce a single legal standard throughout its diverse territories made it a poor fit with the model of uniform territorial control associated with the Westphalian model, and rendered its implicit claim to statehood a "sham."⁷¹

The Tanzimat as a Response to the Crisis of Sovereignty

Ottoman statesmen and their critics alike were acutely aware of these perceptions and the existential threat they posed. Indeed, the entire project of the Tanzimat, beginning with the Edict of Gülhane in 1839 and culminating in the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II from 1876 to 1908, can be understood as an effort to respond to them by shoring up the Ottoman claim to sovereignty on the Westphalian model. The Tanzimat reforms that are the hallmark of this period were intended to cultivate the kind of uniform and more deeply penetrating internal and external sovereignty that was commanded by more globally powerful states, extending control over the territories it laid claim to while projecting state power beyond its boundaries. (As Âli Pasha remarked to the French ambassador, Thouvenel, "You recognize, my dear ambassador, that without prestige, there is no possibility of good government. To maintain good order in the country, to introduce the necessary reforms,

⁷¹ Lorimer, *Of the Denationalisation of Constantinople, and Its Devotion to International Purposes. Lecture, Etc.*, 12.

and to assure the subjects' prosperity, it is necessary above all for the government to be feared at the same time as it is respected and loved."⁷²) They were encouraged in these efforts by the British, who for the various reasons outlined above vastly preferred a unified and sovereign Ottoman state as a partner. The irritation and disdain felt by Britain for smaller polities is captured in a letter from the British diplomat Lord Salisbury to his wife during negotiations for the Treaty of Berlin in July of 1878: "At Potsdam there are mosquitoes—here there are minor powers," he wrote. "I don't know which is worse."⁷³

As we will explore in Chapter 3, the Constantinople Conference in 1876 would mark a phase when Ottoman public politics sought and failed to recruit European influence to join it in supporting the constitutional movement and delaying another Russian invasion. Likewise, at the Congress of Berlin marking the conclusion of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1878, Ottoman statesmen and dissidents alike lobbied for European support on their behalf and were largely disappointed. The Ottoman-British alliance was severely hurt by this failure, and Sultan Abdülhamid turned then to pursue an alliance of dependence with the new German state, while doubling down on Tanzimat-era efforts to build a state of its own in Ottoman territory that would satisfy the demands of Westphalian sovereignty.

The Ottoman state's dependence on Britain and, to a lesser extent, France to sustain it throughout the second half of the nineteenth century certainly reflects a diminished global standing in comparison to earlier dispensations. It was a vast empire rivaled by only a handful of others, and yet it was not fully in control of its territories, its population, or its

⁷² Thouvenel, *Trois Années de La Question d'Orient, 1856-1859, D'après Les Papiers Inédits de M. Thouvenel*, 316.

⁷³ M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 210–11.

wealth. Only in the nineteenth century did this permanent feature of the empire become an obstacle to growth and a threat to its standing. Rather than interpreting its close alliances with Britain and other European powers as harbingers of its imminent demise, we should recognize these alliances as a successful strategy for a state that did not have either an effectively exploitable overseas colonial empire or an industrial boom to help it remain competitive. In lieu of those things, its brokerage of a subordinate diplomatic role under France and Britain allowed the Ottoman state to command respect for its sovereignty from nearly every other state, and thereby preserve its viability into the twentieth century. No modern state is autonomous; as one of Abdülhamid II's advisors would observe, "Even if our material and diplomatic resources were unlimited, we would still be obliged to seek the aid of some of the Great Powers."⁷⁴ The porous or dispersed configuration of late Ottoman sovereignty should then perhaps be seen as reflecting a shift in norms of sovereignty rather than a perilous exception to the norm.

The configuration of sovereignty that the Ottoman state crafted alongside its more powerful partners helped solve the problem of the state's survival for a number of decades. Yet it also created several problems of its own. In particular, through the establishment of a public debt and its attendant institutions, this arrangement fostered an array of interests aligned against democratic self-governance: not only foreign states themselves, which were concerned to ensure that the growing powers of the Tanzimat-era state did not impinge on their material interests, but a distinct class of investors (also often cast as "foreign" in the

⁷⁴ Said Pasha, memorandum for Abdülhamid II, quoted as an epigraph in Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London; New York; New York: I.B. Tauris ; In the U.S.A. and in Canada distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1998).

historiographical literature concerning this period, but in fact far more ambiguously so) that was explicitly invested in the extraction of wealth from Ottoman lands, industries, and populations—all newly recast as “resources.” The Tanzimat reforms have been charged with increasing the susceptibility of Ottoman subjects to taxation and other forms of economic exploitation, while limiting their recourse to formal mechanisms of justice. As we will see in the next section, the paradoxes and perplexities of this newly porous sovereignty strained Ottoman state ideology to its breaking point, paving the way for the Young Ottoman movement while making it harder for its project to succeed.

A Nation against Its State

The system of brokered sovereignty described above was at its height in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, from the 1840s through the 1870s. So harmonious was the arrangement negotiated between Ottoman, British and French diplomats that for some time, the Ottoman state appeared to have recovered from the crisis of legitimacy precipitated in the 1830s by the war with Egypt. The Ottoman government during these years was presided over by a rotating cast of statesmen cast in the same reliably technocratic mold, and nominally headed by a sultan who kept his distance from affairs of state. Mustafa Reşid Pasha and his anointed successors, Âli and Fuad, were in regular contact with British and French ambassadors and their staffs, and the scope of Ottoman state affairs subject to the involvement of these embassies was steadily expanding.

After the defeat of Russia, there was just one obstacle in the way of harmonious joint governance of the Ottoman state: its subjects. The dispersal of sovereignty encouraged open dissension. Even military victory failed to consolidate subjects’ loyalty to their state.

The chief outcome of the Crimean War for the Ottoman state was an ambiguous diplomatic victory: the preservation of territorial integrity and admission to the European system of public law were hardly triumphs that could be celebrated in the streets. Such a concern was unlikely to have been on Âli Pasha's radar as he sat at the negotiating table in Paris; as Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski point out, for most of the empire's history, "the Ottoman production of legitimacy bore a distinctly elitist character," aimed at a fairly narrow audience of Ottoman and foreign diplomatic elites, with little regard for Ottoman subjects at large.⁷⁵ The irony of this outcome was that the war itself had been driven by popular enthusiasm among the Ottoman populace. This display of broadly based national fervor arose not because of the state, but in spite of it: as Candan Badem's account of the lead-up to the war suggests, Ottoman state leaders delayed a declaration of war as long as possible and would likely have avoided entering the war at all if not for the mounting calls for war in street protests and petitions. Indeed, the incipient national pride that manifested itself in the run-up to the Crimean War was of the sort on which other states—the Italian and the German, for example—would go on to establish themselves, lay claim to sovereign territory, and assert their presence as legitimate nation-states with an internationally recognized claim to both "internal" and "external" sovereignty. It was out of the gap between this growing popular enthusiasm for Ottoman nationhood and a governing elite ill-prepared to channel it that the Young Ottoman political project would emerge.

⁷⁵ Hakan T Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski, eds., *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 5.

In July of 1853, Russian forces entered the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. The response in the British press was swift and outraged: in the words of the *Morning Advertiser*, “the Autocrat of all the Russias has thrown down the glove to public opinion and to Europe. The opinion he despises, the Europe he defies can never hesitate to take it up.”⁷⁶ There are no analogous quotes to be drawn from the Ottoman press, which in 1853 had yet to open up beyond a handful of newspapers in French and English and two official Turkish-language journals. The reluctance of Sultan Abdülmeçid and his ministers was premised on an acute awareness of the inadequacy of Ottoman forces against those of the considerably larger Russian empire. Despite the reforms pursued by Mahmud II in the 1820s and 1830s, the “new” Ottoman army was in poor shape: its officers were poorly trained, troop payments were often months in arrears, and its coffers were nearly empty.⁷⁷ As the war itself would reveal, supply lines were inadequate and rife with corruption, which too often went unpunished for fear of alienating powerful allies.⁷⁸ And significantly, the Ottoman army made poor use of the vast human resources at its disposal: from a population of 35 million, soldiers were recruited exclusively from the empire’s Muslim population, approximately half of the total, and conscripted to serve six years in active service.⁷⁹ Russia, with twice the population, had no such compunctions about enlisting

⁷⁶ The *Morning Advertiser*, July 7, 1853; quoted in Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War, 1853-1856* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 90.

⁷⁷ Badem, 48–49.

⁷⁸ An illustrative example is the reinstatement of Mehmed Ali Pasha as Kapudan Pasha (Lord High Admiral) in 1855 despite having been exiled to Kastamonu on charges of embezzlement. His restoration, which was undertaken at the urging of the French ambassador in Istanbul, Edouard Thouvenel, prompted Mustafa Reşid Pasha to resign from his grand vizier post in disgust. Badem, 48.

⁷⁹ Badem, 50.

Muslim subjects in its war effort. Without material support from a better positioned power, it appeared that the Ottoman state was incapable of defending its own sovereignty by force.

This was not an impression shared by the many Ottoman subjects of all millets, and the non-Ottoman sympathizers besides, who volunteered themselves for an Ottoman war against the Russian aggressor. Several attempts by groups of Izmir Greeks and Armenians to enlist were politely declined, as was the attempt of some 3,000 Bulgarian Orthodox men from notable families who sought to enlist.⁸⁰ The cause of fighting back against Russian territorial aggression had even inspired several hundred Polish exiles in France to form a *légion polonaise*, as they had during the Napoleonic wars and throughout the wars of Italian unification; the Tatars of Crimea formed a special unit as well.⁸¹ This swell of enthusiasm presented itself as an irritant to the sultan and his ministers. In late August, nearly two months after the Russian incursion on Ottoman territory, a message to the sultan appeared on the wall of an Istanbul mosque:

Oh mighty Padishah! All your subjects are ready to sacrifice their lives, their property, and their children in your cause. Like unto your ancestors, it is incumbent on you to draw from the scabbard the [Sword of Muhammad] with which you are girt. The hesitation shown by your Ministers on this subject arises out of the complaint which they have been for some time past suffering under of "selfish carefulness," and it is likely that we shall be thus plunged into danger and difficulty, from which God defend us.

Your victorious Armies, therefore, and your faithful subjects call for war in defence of their Rights and Sovereign!⁸²

⁸⁰ Badem, 50.

⁸¹ Badem, 85, 147.

⁸² FO 78/938, No. 255, Stratford de Redcliffe to Clarendon, September 1, 1853.

The statement was brought to the sultan, who read it with dismay. According to the contemporary chronicler Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, Abdülmecid “did not like shedding blood,” while his prime minister “was trying to solve the matter with his pen.”⁸³ A few weeks later, a group of *ulema* drafted a petition to the High Council of Ministers presenting the argument that circumstances demanded jihad against the foreign aggressor on Muslim soil. The tone of the petition was described in the *Times* of London as “exceedingly bold, and bordering on the insolent”; in a meeting with the ministers, the petition authors claimed that the anti-war ministers were under the sway of “foreign and infidel ambassadors who are enemies of the Faith” and insisted that Islamic law was unequivocal about the need to respond militarily in this instance. The newspaper reported, “It is said that on each attempt to reason with these fanatics, the Ministers were met by the answer “These are the words of the Koran.””⁸⁴

The reporting of this episode in the British press is noteworthy: it highlights the degree to which the figure of the Muslim “fanatic” was being foregrounded in British impressions of Ottoman political life, which further raises the question of which party to this encounter would have found it useful to share the proceedings, framed in this way, with the *Times*. The image of the Ottoman state minister as the front line of reason against a popular tide of Muslim fanaticism appears in diplomatic correspondence as well during this period, and it is one that Ottoman diplomats themselves would deploy with growing

⁸³ Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War, 1853-1856*, 86.

⁸⁴ Badem, 91–92.

frequency in the coming decades in attempts to persuade Britain to help suppress Young Ottoman journals, as we will see in chapter 4.

Ironically, the same Tanzimat statesmen who found the “Muslim fanatic” a convenient foil in their diplomatic negotiations were simultaneously engaged in a public relations campaign to restore the good name of Islam in the European press. In 1853, there appeared in Brussels a pamphlet by a pair of authors, Rustem Efendi and Seid Bey, both Ottoman military attaches stationed in Liege. The pamphlet, which appears to be the first foray of an Ottoman author in the European press, starts from the premise that “there are few countries in the world as poorly known and unfairly judged in Europe as our own homeland.”⁸⁵ To counter these calumnies, the two authors review the history of their country and insist that it is one of tolerance for Christianity, and particularly Catholicism. The pamphlet was dated February 1853; it was followed a few months later by an anonymous pamphlet attributed to Fuad Pasha, which made many of the same arguments. The pamphlets were broadly noted and well received in the European and American press, where many authors cited its arguments at length.⁸⁶ Together, their existence suggest a concerted effort by the Ottoman Foreign Ministry to engage with the European press as a tool for shaping diplomacy.

⁸⁵ Rustem-Effendi and Seid-Bey, *Réponse à quelques journaux relativement aux affaires de Turquie* (Brussels: F. Michel, 1853), 3.

⁸⁶ S Bloch, “Une manifestation musulmane,” *L’Univers israelite* 8, no. 7 (March 1853): 332–36; “[untitled],” *Journal de Constantinople*, Avril 1853, 1–2, Dokumentasyon Servisi, ISAM.

Meanwhile, the British ambassador, Stratford Canning, provided detailed reports of the growing clamor for war in his missives home. In one such letter, he added a circumspect note of enthusiasm regarding the mounting prospect of war:

The national will would thus, as in former times, be brought to bear in a flood tide on the hesitations of the Palace, and prejudices, which have hitherto obstructed the introduction of useful measures, particularly in respect of foreign capital, and industry, would, they imagine, yield to the pressure of war and its accompanying necessities.⁸⁷

The “prejudices” referred to here are left somewhat vague: while at first the word might appear as a reference to Muslim conservatism, in context it seems to refer to the obstacle of Ottoman pride in clinging to an outdated and untenable mode of sovereignty. In a follow-up letter a few days later, Canning reports on a conversation he had with Mustafa Reşid Pasha, in which Canning urged “the importance of turning the present circumstances to account for the permanent advantage and regeneration of the Empire,” including “those remedial measures which we had so long recognised as indispensable for the tranquility and improvement of the Ottoman Empire, with respect both to its foreign and to its administrative relations.”⁸⁸ (A similar approach was deployed by the French ambassador toward the end of the war, as when he wrote the Porte to insist that the imperative to “satisfy public opinion in Europe” requires another edict on Muslim-Christian equality.⁸⁹) In effect, Canning viewed the crisis provoked by the war as an optimal moment to restructure the Ottoman government. His prediction came true: the war party won, war was declared,

⁸⁷ FO 78/938, No. 255, Stratford de Redcliffe to Clarendon, September 1, 1853.

⁸⁸ FO 78/938, No. 258, Stratford de Redcliffe to Clarendon, September 5, 1853.

⁸⁹ Kuntay Gücüm, *İmparatorluğun “liberal” yılları (1856-1870) [The Empire’s “liberal” years]* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015), 1–3.

and Ottoman sovereignty was indeed transformed as a result, rendering the old “prejudices” of the ruling elite with regard to foreign capital a thing of the past.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman declaration of war in October of 1853 failed to quell the popular enthusiasm. The Russian attack on the Ottoman fleet stationed at Sinope on November 30th led to the deaths of 3,000 Ottoman troops and the capture of their commander; in the following days, the streets of Istanbul were filled with demonstrations by the city’s large population of *medrese* students, whose strike was met with solidarity actions from the soldiers still in their barracks—all calling for a greater mobilization in response to Russian aggression. The state dealt decisively with these protesters, arresting 160 students and exiling most of them Crete.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the “Massacre at Sinope” became a precipitating cause of the British and French entry into the war.

The celebratory mood that followed the end of hostilities in early 1856 quickly gave way to popular dismay with the promulgation of the Reform Edict in February. In a widely quoted passage from the memoirs of the Tanzimat statesman and historian Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, we are told that the sticking point was “the issue of non-Muslim subjects’ privileges.”⁹¹ According to the memoir, the reform edict asserting the equality of all subjects was widely understood to be the work of foreign ministers, and “it struck the Muslim community as a bit much,” particularly since the edict made no step toward revoking the

⁹⁰ Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire*, 20.

⁹¹ Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir 1-12* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1953), 67.

commercial and other legal privileges accorded to Christians through the Capitulations. As Cevdet Pasha explained it,

Throughout the Muslim community it began to be said: “Today we have lost the sacred rights of our nation won by the blood of our ancestors. When the Muslim nation was the sovereign nation, it was protected by such a sacred right. Today is a day of sorrow and mourning for the Muslim community.”⁹²

The phrase “sovereign nation” (*millet-i hakime*) was a novel coinage, as Doğan Gürpınar observes: it gained currency in the nineteenth century, possibly inspired by the Habsburg term *Herrenvolk*, used to describe ethnic German pre-eminence in the multi-ethnic state.⁹³

Cevdet Pasha also noted that Muslims were not the only Ottoman subjects who disliked the edict; some Greeks, too, regretted the loss of their community’s historical privileges as second only to the Muslims. The obvious fact that the edict had been issued as a concession to European Powers was an added source of discontent. (The discontent was exacerbated by the fact that British missionary organizations gleefully circulated prints of the edict among the communities of Ottoman Christians they were ministering to.⁹⁴) As a measure to save face, the Ottoman grand vizier lobbied for Stratford Canning’s recall as British ambassador to the Porte, alleging that his governing role was “so paramount and notorious that they [the Ottoman sultan and ministers] were lowered in the eyes of the people,” and, as the foreign minister explained to Canning, “you would not allow the Sultan to *corégner* with you (that was Aali’s expression).”⁹⁵ Yet the discontent that had arisen in

⁹² Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, 67–68. “Ehl-i İslamdan bir çoğu ‘Âbâ ve ecdadımızın kanıyla kazanılmış olan hukuk-ı mukaddese-i milliyemizi bugün ga’ib ettik. Millet-i islâmiyye millet-i hâkime iken böyle bir mukaddes haktan mahrum kaldı. Ehl-i islâma bu bir ağlayacak ve matem edecek gündür’ deyu söylenmeğe başladılar.”

⁹³ Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (I.B.Tauris, 2013), 276.

⁹⁴ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 101.

⁹⁵ Clarendon to Stratford, January 1856, quoted in Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War, 1853-1856*, 344.

the wake of the edict was not easily dispelled. Instead, it went underground, erupting in September 1859 with an attempted coup known as “the Kuleli Incident.”

The Kuleli Incident, a thwarted conspiracy to unseat Sultan Abdülmecid, provides us with a valuable window into the ideological underpinnings of the incipient resistance to Tanzimat-era policies. Because the group that undertook this plot was called the Society of Martyrs (*Fedailer Cemiyeti*), and one of its leaders was a Sufi sheikh of the conservative Naqshbandi order, the incident has often been characterized as a reactionary effort to restore Islamic rule in the wake of the Reform Edict and its injury to Muslim preeminence.⁹⁶ Yet Florian Riedler’s analysis of the interrogation records from this incident suggests a more complicated story. As he observes, “the plotters were embedded in a common political culture of opposition that could bring together men from different backgrounds.”⁹⁷

The leading conspirators, Sheikh Ahmed Kürei and Hüseyin Daim Pasha, were both from the periphery of the empire, and had met on the eastern front during the Crimean War, where the latter commanded a division that helped defend Kars from Russian attack. The pasha was a career military officer of Circassian origin who was a division general at the time of the plot, while his co-leader was a native of a prominent Kurdish emirate based in the empire’s Mosul province who had followed the family tradition in becoming a sheikh of the Naqshbandi-Khalidi sub-order, taught at the Bayezid mosque, and at the outbreak of war had sought and been granted permission to lead a battalion of his own followers into

⁹⁶ Şerif Mardin calls it a “plot of zealots,” while *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 18; ; likewise, in Roderic Davison’s estimate, “the basic motif of the conspirators was opposition to Westernization.” *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 101.

⁹⁷ Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire*, 12.

battle. Thanks to the memoirs of the Hungarian Orientalist Ármin Vámbéry, who was a resident of Hüseyin Daim Pasha's household and tutor to his son during the year that the conspiracy was hatched, we have vivid descriptions of both men: the pasha, though brought up in palace schools during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, had retained from "his mountain home...a strong dose of love of liberty." Vámbéry speculates, "His close intimacy with the refugees, who were living at that time in Turkey, may have considerably contributed towards making a political enthusiast of him." His co-conspirator, Sheikh Ahmed, was "a man of rare mental gifts, immense reading, ascetic life, and boundless fanaticism... His sword never left his lean loins, nor his lance the firm grasp of his clenched fist, either by day or by night, except when he prayed, five times a day."⁹⁸ To Vámbéry, he was the model of a *gazi*, or holy warrior, an impression reinforced in the testimony he gave to his interrogator after his arrest, when he said that he would not have volunteered if he had known that "the war was not for religion, but for the state."⁹⁹ He also said, "I became cold inside the minute the *ferman* about the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims was issued," and explained that the aim of the conspiracy had been to "to carry out the statutes of the sharia [*icra-yı şeriat*]," which he felt were being neglected.

Yet beneath this layering of *gazi* ideology, the conspirators had a list of more prosaic concerns: they were distressed by wasteful palace spending, endemic corruption throughout the civil and military apparatus, and the army's arrears on troop payments. One of the leaders, "Didon" Arif Bey (whose sobriquet reflected his habit of punctuating his

⁹⁸ Ármin Vámbéry, *Arminius Vambéry, His Life and Adventures* (Cassell, 1884), 23–24.

⁹⁹ Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire*, 22.

speech with the French expression *Dis donc!*), had written a treatise on administrative reform.¹⁰⁰ The particular shape of their revolt may have been inspired by the Hungarian revolt in 1848, given Hüseyin Daim Pasha's close acquaintance with the community of Hungarian political exiles to whom the Ottoman state had granted refuge.¹⁰¹

The conspiracy, once revealed, was of course disturbing to the Porte, but the public response was even more so: once again, anonymous posters appeared in the capital, as they had in the lead-up to the Crimean War, calling for the conspirators' release from the Kuleli barracks. Soon after the plotters' arrest, the palace received an anonymous petition calling for the removal of Âli Pasha as grand vizier. These displays of popular support can be understood as the real "Kuleli incident." To obscure the broad support for the plotters' aims, the Porte omitted the substance of their specific complaints in its report on the incident, and reported to the British embassy that the conspirators had sought to replace Âli and Fuad Pashas with "men of the fanatical party and belonging to the old school."¹⁰² Yet the sultan also felt compelled to reduce palace spending, and to replace Âli Pasha in the position of grand vizier with a more broadly acceptable candidate.¹⁰³ After Sultan Abdülmecid's death from natural causes in 1861, the five leaders of the revolt had their death sentences commuted, and several returned to public life. While Riedler interprets this leniency as "an expression of the elite's traditional thinking on order," in which the "perpetual circle" of order and disorder "made such acts of contestation less grave," I

¹⁰⁰ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 210–11.

¹⁰¹ Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 203.

¹⁰² Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire*, 15.

¹⁰³ Riedler, 25.

suggest that a more plausible account of the mild response was due to a fear of further alienating public opinion and triggering another attempt at regime change.

The Young Ottomans and the Liberal International

The next iteration of popular resistance to the Tanzimat state would take a very different outward form: its leader, instead of a Sufi sheikh, would be a wealthy cosmopolitan, and its call for reform would be couched in the idiom of European constitutionalism rather than that of Islamic justice. Yet the differences between the two are less stark than they appear: both were composed of a cohort of disaffected bureaucrats and clerics demanding fiscal responsibility, an end to corruption, and the restoration of the dignity of both Islam and the state. Both got their start as secret plots for regime change. And significantly, both movements were shaped by their contacts with European subversives of a broadly similar bent.

The ideological antecedents of Ottomanism can be found both within and beyond Ottoman borders. The Society of Martyrs provides one important precedent, but another source of inspiration is the wave of liberal insurgencies that swept the Mediterranean region from 1820 onwards. These insurgencies, and the web of connections that formed among their participants, gave rise to what Maurizio Isabella has convincingly called a “liberal international.” The spirit of this new network is best captured by one of its patron saints, Giuseppe Mazzini, who sketched it in a short vignette he wrote at the start of his career, which describes a fictional hero of nineteenth-century European insurgencies: “As a veteran of liberty, he had followed her for many a long years as she wandered from country to country, and wherever the banner of the peoples had been raised he had brought his

sword and paid with his blood.”¹⁰⁴ This is the sweeping transnational movement of cosmopolitan patriotic revolt with which Young Ottoman movement saw itself aligned, and hoped to establish its continuity in the eyes of Europe at large.

While it is difficult to identify the first location in this sequence where the “banner of the peoples” was raised, Spain has a reasonable claim on the title. According to the historian Juan Luis Simal, its campaign to restore constitutional rule in 1820 was what set the template for liberal uprisings across Europe. The Spanish constitutional revolution lasted only three years before France intervened to put an end to the “Cadiz constitution,” as it was known. During that brief time, however, Spain and Portugal, which borrowed the Cadiz constitution for its own government, were “the only constitutional powers on the continent,” and became the locus of an emerging network of liberal dissidents from Naples, and Piedmont, and further afield. In his 1823 *Anecdotes of the Spanish and Portuguese Revolutions*, the Piedmontese rebel Giuseppe Pecchio wrote that the forces militating in favor of revolution included “the spirit of the age, which has an inevitable tendency toward freedom.”¹⁰⁵ As Simal observes, “This optimism and confidence in the triumph of liberalism through solidarity across nations was part of the creation of an international liberal imaginary.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Mazzini, “Une nuit de Rimini en 1831,” quoted in Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile*.

¹⁰⁵ Joseph Count Pecchio, *Anecdotes of the Spanish and Portuguese Revolutions. With an Introduction and Notes by Edward Blaquiére* (Whittaker, 1823), 68; quoted in Juan Luis Simal, “Letters from Spain: The 1820 Revolution and the Liberal International,” in *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century*, ed. Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 25–41.

¹⁰⁶ Simal, “Letters from Spain: The 1820 Revolution and the Liberal International,” 32.

The books and newspaper articles generated by excited witnesses to Spanish constitutional rule, writes Simal, “provide unequivocal evidence of the discourse and practice of international liberal solidarity.”¹⁰⁷ This solidarity was sometimes expressed in the form of legions of foreign fighters marching to help liberal armies against the alliances of absolutist regimes that successfully suppressed most of these early constitutional revolts: Austria put down the Neapolitan and Piedmontese insurrections in 1821, while in 1823 France intervened and put an end to Spain’s constitution as well. But by far the largest part of the “practice of international liberal solidarity” was the discourse of solidarity it generated in print. The cornerstone of this solidarity was the rhetoric of liberty as embodied in national sovereignty, and the connections drawn between national liberty and the destiny of humanity as a whole. In his introduction to Pecchio’s account of the Spanish and Portuguese revolutions, the British liberal agitator Edward Blaquiere wrote to his British audience that the events it described ought “to excite the attention of every man who feels the smallest interest in the independence of nations” and “the imprescriptible right of a whole people to legislate for itself.”¹⁰⁸ Blaquiere particularly condemned those who preferred “*remaining neutral*, while they break down all the barriers between modern civilization and the barbarism of gothic times.”¹⁰⁹

The act of cultivating international public opinion emerged as a particularly useful expression of solidarity in the next conflict that would capture European liberals’

¹⁰⁷ Simal, 26.

¹⁰⁸ Pecchio, *Anecdotes of the Spanish and Portuguese Revolutions. With an Introduction and Notes by Edward Blaquiere*, vii–viii.

¹⁰⁹ Pecchio, ix.

imaginings, that of the Greek revolt against Ottoman rule. Blaquiere, having led the effort in Britain on behalf of Spain and Portugal, was at the forefront of this movement as well: in 1823, having recently he set off to Greece, bearing a copy of Jeremy Bentham's commentary on the first Greek constitution; he returned a short while later and promptly set out on a national tour to convince politicians and journalists to support the Greek cause.¹¹⁰ His efforts were enormously successful, first in generating private financial support for the Greek war, and second in moving public opinion to support the cause, which is thought to have tipped the British government in favor of military and diplomatic intervention on behalf of Greek independence.

The Greeks managed to win their state, then, through a confluence of support from two international networks: the liberal international of subversives that emerged in the wake of Napoleon's wars, and the Concert of European powers that had been formed to contain them. While these powers had banded together to suppress the revolts in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, they had resolved in the case of Greece to allow a people's aspirations to self-governance to reach fruition—at least long enough to win their independence from the Ottoman state. This independence was brokered through a series of conventions in London from 1828 through 1832, and it culminated in the new state's being placed under the rule of a Bavarian prince, who ruled for thirty years before being replaced by a Danish

¹¹⁰ Blaquiere, described in one recent account as "a naïve and superficial busybody," also sought to raise subscriptions for a loan to the nascent Greek government. He did this through wildly exaggerated claims about Greek natural resources, assuring readers that Greece was sure to become "one of the most opulent nations of Europe," and asserting that any doubts on this front must have been sown by Jews. William St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (Open Book Publishers, 2008), 207–8; F. Rosen, "Blaquiere, Edward (1779–1832), Author and Philhellene," in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/57497>.

prince. The lesson of Greece to the liberal international was a cautionary one: too intimate an involvement with state powers could jeopardize the project of establishing national sovereignty. The lesson of Greece to the Ottomans in particular, was that a state ideology of enlightened absolutism and unrestrained power, which had once been the quintessence of political legitimacy, was no longer regarded as legitimate outside the empire. The rising tide of liberal discourse was at odds with the rhetoric of Ottoman state power, and no longer recognized the legitimacy of Ottoman sovereignty over its territory and subjects. Ottoman statesmen in the 1820s were poorly equipped to respond to this ideological challenge, but their successors would take note.¹¹¹

Of all the Mediterranean liberal uprisings of the nineteenth century, however, it was the campaign for Italian unification that was to have the greatest impact on the international liberal imagination, and particularly that of the Young Ottomans. Its leading thinker and writer, Giuseppe Mazzini, is credited with popularizing the democratic nationalism that became the animating ideology of countless independence movements. As the English radical W.E. Adams explained it, “We had found a program, but we wanted a religion. We found it in Italy.”¹¹² In addition to acting as the chief intellectual force behind the decades-long campaign for Italian unification, Mazzini’s writings helped inspire the Chartist movement in England as well as the “spring of nations” that stirred popular revolts throughout Europe in 1848.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Hüseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, “A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence (1821-1826)” (Harvard University, 2011).

¹¹² Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, *Victorian Radicals and Italian Democrats* (Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2014), 25.

¹¹³ We are blessed with a cascade of recent studies on the international influence of Mazzini and the Risorgimento: Bayly and Biagini, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism 1830-1920*; Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile*; Goldie Osuri, “Transmediterranean Dispersals: Mazzini, Hindu

The influence of the Risorgimento on the Young Ottoman movement is vast. As we will see in chapter 3, Teodor Kasap was initiated into liberalism through his direct participation in the Risorgimento as a soldier under Garibaldi's command in 1860. The model of secret cells, known as Carbonari, through which the Italian patriots initially organized themselves, served as an early model for the disgruntled Ottoman bureaucrats who would form their own Patriotic Alliance (*Ittihak-i Hamiyet*) at a picnic in a forest outside Istanbul in the summer of 1865.¹¹⁴ Istanbul had become a haven for Italian political exiles in from the late 1850s onward, and the organizations they formed—mutual aid societies and Masonic lodges in particular—are likely to have served as an additional inspiration.¹¹⁵ And the influence of Mazzini on the rhetoric of the Young Ottomans is strong, even if indirect, as we explore in the chapters that follow. Perhaps the most salient aspect of the Risorgimento, for the purposes of understanding the Young Ottoman movement, was its combination of secret cells and press campaigns as a double-barreled strategy for fomenting revolt. The Young Ottoman movement would follow suit. The pattern of self-exile from the beloved homeland as a means of drumming up international support for one's cause in more politically central cosmopolis—Paris and London in particular—was not original to the Young Ottomans, but one modeled for them by Italian and Polish emigres, as well as exiles from the Hapsburg Empire. Several of these figures would become friends and collaborators of the Young Ottomans during their time abroad.

Nationalism and Sonia Gandhi," in *Transmediterranean: Diasporas, Histories, Geopolitical Spaces*, ed. Joseph Pugliese (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2010), 173–87; Bonfiglio, "Liberal Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of the Heart(h)"; Sutcliffe, *Victorian Radicals and Italian Democrats*.

¹¹⁴ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 21.

¹¹⁵ Veronica Musardo, *Secret Connections in Constantinople* (Istanbul: Libra Kitapçılık, 2015).

Raising “the Banner of the Peoples” in Istanbul

In November of 1865, not long after the issuance of its largest loan to date, the Sublime Porte was looking to get its financial house in order.¹¹⁶ For help, it turned to Mustafa Fazıl Pasha, a thirty-five-year-old career bureaucrat with a strong record of reforms in other areas of government.¹¹⁷ Mustafa Fazıl appeared to be a sound choice to lead the newly created High Council of the Treasury: he had already served as finance minister for three years, and he knew his way around the modern global finance system, thanks to his own enormous wealth and the connections he had cultivated in Europe.¹¹⁸ Perhaps most salient of all, Mustafa Fazıl Pasha was the presumptive heir to the governorship of Egypt, the empire’s wealthiest province, which had only recently been brought to heel after a decade of conflict with Mustafa Fazıl’s grandfather and father. Egypt’s annual tribute accounted for a substantial portion of the empire’s revenues and had served as the collateral for its first international loans.¹¹⁹ Mustafa Fazıl’s appointment to this mission-critical post as head of the Treasury Council was a symbol of the ongoing if frayed relationship between the Ottoman state and its most troublesome province.

As it turned out, Mustafa Fazıl’s tenure in the post lasted barely three months. According to contemporary espionage accounts, his palatial home by the Bosphorus was known to have become a gathering-place for malcontents who discussed Ottoman affairs

¹¹⁶ Of the two loans procured by the Ottoman state in 1865, the second one raised a whopping 18 million pounds from French and British investors, at an effective interest rate of 10 percent. The funds were earmarked for the repayment of the state’s 1854 loan. Birdal, *The Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt*, 28.

¹¹⁷ Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, “Mustafa Fazıl Paşa,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 2006, 300.

¹¹⁸ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 198.

¹¹⁹ Birdal, *The Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt*, 27.

“in a tone of invective that encourages discussion and commentary hostile to the government.”¹²⁰ The last straw came on the Night of Power, one of the last nights of Ramadan, when Mustafa Fazıl was a guest at Sultan Abdülaziz’s *iftar* gathering at Dolmabahçe. Asked by the sultan about the condition of the Exalted State’s finances, Mustafa Fazıl reportedly replied that the situation was dire indeed. Within a few weeks, the Egyptian minister’s replacement as head of the Treasury Council had been announced, and in April of 1866 he was invited to leave the capital altogether.¹²¹

His ouster would turn out to be a grievous tactical error. Cut loose, Mustafa Fazıl failed to behave in the manner of previous generations of banished courtiers. Rather than take refuge in his home city of Cairo or one of the empire’s quieter provinces, he went to Europe instead.¹²² After liquefying the massive land wealth he possessed in Egypt, he took up residence in Paris, where he lived under the protection of the French emperor and other well-placed friends.¹²³ And though the reins of state power had been stripped from his hands, he blazed through the political world in a burst of activity quite unusual for a fallen

¹²⁰ Marcel Colombe, “Une Lettre D’un Prince Égyptien Du XIXe Siècle Au Sultan Ottoman Abd Al-Aziz,” *Orient* 5 (1958): 24. Colombe cites a trove of “secret correspondence” exchanged between French diplomats in Istanbul and Alexandria, now held at the Archive of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹²¹ More precisely, an imperial edict was issued giving Mustafa Fazıl twenty-four hours to leave Istanbul. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 198–99; Ebüzziya Tevfik, *Yeni osmanlılar tarihi*, ed. Ziyad Ebüziyya, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Kervan, 1973), 15–16.

¹²² Ebüzziya Tevfik mentions the surprising nature of this choice at the start of his history of the Young Ottoman movement; see his *Yeni osmanlılar tarihi*, 1973, 1:11. It appears that Mustafa Fazıl initially sought to return to Cairo and was prevented by his older brother, İsmâil Pasha, the governor of Egypt, and so his trip to Europe was made at the suggestion of Sultan Abdülaziz. See Georges Douin, *Histoire du règne du Khédivé Ismaïl*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Société Royale de Géographie d’Égypte, 1933), 214.

¹²³ Mustafa Fazıl was the presumptive heir to the governorship of Egypt until a change in the rules of succession abruptly disinherited him. For a description of his closeness to the French government, including an audience with Napoleon III while the emperor was taking his water cure at Vichy, see Douin, *Histoire du règne du Khédivé Ismaïl*, 1:211; Frederick Millingen, *La Turquie sous le règne d’Abdul-Aziz (1862-1867)*. (Paris: Lacroix, 1868), 340.

statesman, cultivating his contacts with European diplomats and editors, who began dropping his name in correspondence and in newspapers, where it was linked to the idea of constitutional reform.¹²⁴ At the same time, he cultivated a second circle of contacts made up of European subversives of all stripes, particularly émigrés and exiles from the Revolutions of 1848. And in February of 1867, he wrote a widely cited letter to the editor of the Brussels journal *Nord*, in which he claimed to speak for “the great party of *la Jeune Turquie*,” made up of “all the men of progress, or all the good patriots, which are the same thing.”¹²⁵ Then Mustafa Fazıl Pasha went further. He sent his secretary to Istanbul to gather a handful of these “men of progress” and invite them to join him in Paris, offering handsome salaries and the means to publish a newspaper of their own. Deploying his connections, he arranged for their secret escape on board a French steamer bound for Marseilles. In that moment of international departure, the Young Ottoman movement was launched, and as Mustafa Fazıl himself would soon discover, it could not be called back to shore.

Mustafa Fazıl Pasha owes his starring role in the first chapter of the Young Ottoman movement to his location at the intersection of the two rival global networks outlined above: of governing elites, on the one hand, and dissidents, on the other. In an earlier age, his circumstances as a figure possessed of wealth, lineage, and connections who lost his position in government through the machinations of Ottoman court politics would have been unusual, but not incendiary. He owed his ability to foment change to the web of

¹²⁴ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 32–35.

¹²⁵ “Un Impartial” [Mehmed Emin Âli], *Réponse à Son Altesse Moustapha Fazil-Pacha au sujet de sa lettre au Sultan* [Response to His Highness Mustafa Fazıl Pasha on the Subject of His Letter to the Sultan] (Paris: Imp. de Jouaust, 1867), 5.

commerce and finance that had most likely caused a surge in the value of his land-holdings in Egypt amid the global dip in the cotton supply of the 1860s, and rendered them liquefiable.¹²⁶ By inviting a handful of disgruntled Ottoman journalists to Europe and bankrolling the crucial first months of their stay, he turned his wealth and connections into instruments of the burgeoning opposition to the Tanzimat administration. Within a few years, Mustafa Fazıl Pasha would return to Istanbul and rejoin that administration, regaining his old post as finance minister and ending his career in good standing as a member of both the imperial court and the global governing elite. In the meantime, the movement he helped launch would aim to disrupt the hegemony of both institutions, courting a global public to help its campaign for a radical redistribution of political power within Ottoman society. By insisting on recognition of the Ottoman nation as the seat of Ottoman sovereignty, the Young Ottomans were trying to rewrite the rules of both Ottoman politics and the geopolitical order.

¹²⁶ Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 5 (2004): 1405–38.

Chapter 2: Namık Kemal and the Dream of a Liberal Ottoman Imperium

It is natural for everyone to ask for a place of honor no lower than one's peers in the assembly hall of the world.

– Namık Kemal

When the sixteen-year-old Namık Kemal arrived in Istanbul in 1857, he seemed prepared to assume his hereditary destiny as the scion of a long line of distinguished servants of the Ottoman state. Both of his parents were descended from the cream of the military (*askeriye*) and bureaucratic (*kalemiye*) class: his maternal grandfather was a lifelong administrator, while his father was finance official who would later have the distinction of serving as the last Ottoman court astrologer (*müneccimbaşı*), and was himself a descendant of several generations of high-ranking courtiers, grand viziers, and military heroes.¹ As the scion of one of the “big houses of Istanbul,” Namık Kemal had been educated to assume his role in this long line by taking his place within the administrative and literary elite.²

Yet the transformative decade that followed his arrival in Istanbul would make Namık Kemal into a different kind of Ottoman patriot than his forebears had been. Rather than a loyal member of the state bureaucracy, he would become one of its most prominent public critics, and as such was repeatedly subjected to censorship, exile, imprisonment, and other forms of state discipline. In May of 1867, after an escalating series of subversive acts

¹ For Namık Kemal's genealogy, see Ali Ekrem Bolayır, *Namık Kemal* (İstanbul: Devlet matbaası, 1930), 2–9; Nermin Menemenciğlu, “Namık Kemal Abroad: A Centenary,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 4, no. 1 (1967): 29–49.

² Menemenciğlu, “Namık Kemal Abroad,” 30.

aimed at promoting reform, the 26-year-old Kemal would crown his insubordination by refusing to accept a government post in the distant Anatolian province of Erzurum. Instead, he and his fellow insubordinates, members of a secret society they had named the Patriotic Alliance (*İttifak-i Hamiyet*), chose to flee Ottoman territory aboard a steamer bound for Marseilles. And although Kemal was eventually pardoned and allowed to return to Ottoman territory, where he faithfully carried out further bureaucratic assignments in the provinces, he remained under permanent suspicion by the state. His untimely death from pneumonia on the island of Chios in December of 1888 took place during one of his long periods of exile. It came on the heels of a ruling that his latest book was unfit to be published.³

Although this trajectory would seem to suggest a radical break with his family's past, Namık Kemal himself saw it differently: as a tribute to their loyalty and heroism rather than a departure from it. We know from his son's memoir that he lived with an acute awareness of his heroic lineage, and carefully taught it to his children, along with a deep-seated reverence for the Ottoman state and nation. Indeed, the subject of his final, unfinished book project was a history of the Ottoman Empire from its earliest origins to the present day.) But while Kemal consciously drew inspiration from the heroism of his forebears, he also recognized the challenges they faced as fundamentally different from those of his own generation. As he would write in 1872, "A person may take pride in their ancestors' greatness and sublimity, but those who do not seek to surpass their forebears will appear,

³ Mücahit Demirel, "Giriş," in *Osmanlı tarihi 1*, by Namık Kemal, ed. Mücahit Demirel (İstanbul: Bilgi Kültür Sanat, 2005), 22.

in the eyes of succeeding generations, unworthy of the fruits of what their ancestors were able to achieve.”⁴

What loomed between Namık Kemal and his ancestors was a newfound sense of the precarity of the Ottoman enterprise. The events described in the previous chapter—the Ottoman state’s pyrrhic victory in the Crimean War, its mounting debt and dependence on European allies to preserve its territorial integrity and respect its increasingly tenuous sovereignty—had occasioned an ideological crisis within the governing class, and had accordingly transformed Kemal’s understanding of his duty as an Ottoman patriot. Among other things, events had conspired to create a new and overwhelming sense of futurity, inspiring Kemal to reflect in the following terms: “A person’s life,” he wrote, “consists only of the future, does it not?” The past being but an “eternal death,” and the present a mere “passing sigh,” he continued, “How can the pendulum of time be stopped and held still on the path of the life of humanity?” It was an observation that reflected a blend of the Sufi sensibility inherited from his grandfather and the progressivist ideology that dominated public discourse in his own age.

In this chapter, I explore Namık Kemal’s response to this crisis and his attempt to establish continuity between the Ottoman past and its present, while securing for it a future that would be recognizable to him. In its broadest outlines, the chapter traces the story of a scion of the governing elite expelled from his place in that elite because of a growing rift occasioned by the fracturing of the ideological foundations on which Ottoman legitimacy rested. The other story this chapter tells is that of a profound shift in elite thinking about

⁴ Namık Kemal, “İstikbal [The Future],” *İbret*, June 6, 1289.

the Ottoman state in relation to the world. Namık Kemal was merely the most eloquent and prolific representative of an entire generation of bureaucratic elites—including Ziya, Mehmet, Nuri, Rif'at, and others—who shared a sense that the traditional foundations of Ottoman legitimacy no longer held. To secure a future for the Ottoman state, new principles of legitimacy as well as new tools of statecraft were needed. While a previous generation of Ottoman statesmen, exemplified by Mustafa Reşid Pasha, had readily grasped the need for new tools of governance and had set about overhauling the bureaucratic apparatus at a devastating pace, they had failed to grasp the urgency of a corresponding reform of the ideological foundations of the Ottoman state: instead, they had sought to assert the continued legitimacy of Ottoman rule through recourse to a neo-traditionalist rhetoric of sultanic sovereignty and Islamic justice.

Namık Kemal and his peers were some of the first to recognize the inadequacy of these foundations in the eyes of the European states that increasingly held sway in Ottoman affairs. To justify Ottoman governance over its vast territories, the traditional bedrock of Ottoman state legitimacy would have to be deconstructed and made legible to a broadly transnational public, including the expanding public of Ottoman subjects/citizens themselves. They would have to be expressed in terms of popular sovereignty, formal avenues of political representation, and to the preservation of Ottoman civilizational distinctiveness within the context of a universal standard of political legitimacy.

This project lay at the heart of Namık Kemal's decades-long efforts to create and educate an Ottoman public. As he put it in a letter to readers on the occasion of the inaugural issue of his journal *İbret*, "It is our belief that the greatest duty of the journals

here is to provide our people [*halkımız*] with knowledge concerning political principles and civilizational advances.”⁵ The relationship between these two concepts ran deeper than might be supposed, as Kemal saw the very future of the Ottoman state hinging on the success of these efforts to educate the Ottoman public in the principles and methods of governance. The education of the public was a crucial prerequisite for the proper functioning of public opinion, and hence for the strengthening of popular sovereignty, the foundation on which all legitimate government rested.

This chapter proceeds by tracing the development of Namık Kemal’s political thought along the trajectory of his life and work, using a few central concepts as milestones. First is the concept of *hamiyet*, or zeal, the meaning of which I argue was transformed by Kemal and his compatriots into a conceptual tool that helped them articulate a fittingly irreverent attitude toward outmoded practices and dogmas of the Ottoman state. Next, we explore Kemal’s conception of *hürriyet*, or liberty, and particularly his attempt to craft a rhetoric of Islamic liberalism suited to the needs of the Ottoman state and nation. Finally, we turn to the concept of *hakimiyet*, or sovereignty, and the search for a new foundation for Ottoman legitimacy on the universal ground of natural law (*hukuk-ı umûmiye*). Through each of these turns in the plot, I aim to trace the stages in the development of a new conception of Ottoman legitimacy – one that was not *sui generis*, but contingent on a new kind of political recognition and self-recognition that was only available to political thinkers and actors in the age of the steam and print.

⁵ Namık Kemal, “[Untitled letter to readers],” *İbret*, June 6, 1289.

Hamiyet

The man who would be remembered as the leading patriot of his age experienced an itinerant but privileged upbringing within a household whose fortunes were closely bound with those of the Ottoman state. As one of Namık Kemal's descendants has written, "The tangible advantages of such a heredity were those that go with office, even when shorn of financial reward: a sense of tradition, of participation in events of importance, opportunities for the best available education, for travel to the farthest outposts of empire, and easy social access to all the people one might wish to know."⁶ Above all, Namık Kemal's birth into the upper reaches of the Ottoman bureaucratic elite cemented his loyalty to the Ottoman state and acted as a double-edged sword on his political imagination, helping him envision a transgenerational continuity that was essential to conceiving a coherent Ottoman nation while foreclosing the possibility of revolt against the state he regarded as inseparable from this nation.

The man who would become Namık Kemal entered the world as Mehmed Kemal on December 21, 1840. His place of birth was not the Ottoman center but one of its provincial outposts, the Thracian town of Tekirdağ, where his maternal grandfather, Abdüllatif Pasha, was serving an appointment as *mutassarif* (tax collector). Through the vicissitudes of his grandfather's career, the household moved many times, so that the young Kemal grew up in a series of towns and cities scattered throughout Anatolia and the Balkans. While his education was interrupted by these frequent moves, it was also enriched by the opportunity to study widely, under a variety of masters; the subjects in which he was

⁶ Menemencioglu, "Namık Kemal Abroad," 30.

tutored extended beyond the classics of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish literature to encompass the Sufi arts of *sema*⁷ (whirling), music, and mystical poetry, as well as hunting and horseback riding.⁷ (Kemal's grandfather apparently ensured that he also received at least a few years of conventional education at newly established state institutions in Istanbul to render him fit for state service.⁸) It was in Sofia, where his grandfather was serving as district governor (*kaymakam*), that the adolescent Kemal made his first foray into poetry circles, producing a collection of his own and earning himself a nickname, Namık, from the Arabic for "writer."

A new phase of Kemal's life began in 1857, when Abdülatif Pasha's career came to an end and the family settled in Istanbul. The young Kemal brought with him an even younger wife, Nesime, chosen for him by his grandparents. Although a judge's daughter, she appears to have been illiterate, and, in her great-granddaughter's words, "remained to the end outside her husband's expanding world of ideas."⁹ This world was being expanded largely through his family's connections, which granted him entrée into the twin circles of elite poetry and bureaucratic state service. The figure who initially served as Kemal's guide in both circles was his father's friend, Leskofçalı Galib, who introduced him to the Society of Poets (*Encümen-i Şuara*) and secured him a clerkship in the Customs Office where he worked. Although only eleven years Kemal's senior, Galib was a bureaucrat and intellectual of the old style: he too had been born into a distinguished *kalemiye* family, had received a

⁷ Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, "Kemāl, Meḥmed, Nāmīk," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, n.d.

⁸ Ömer Faruk Akün, "Nâmik Kemal," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2006), 362.

⁹ Menemenciöğlü, "Namık Kemal Abroad," 29. In decades to come, Kemal's letters to his family while in exile were mostly addressed to his father, and later to his daughter, Feride, sending only occasional salutations to his wife.

broad education in the classical mold, focused on Arabic and Persian literature, and had traveled widely, albeit exclusively within Ottoman lands. Like Kemal's grandfather, he was affiliated with the Mevlevî order, and his Sufism was reflected in his poetry, which was celebrated for its bridging of classical and newer forms.¹⁰ For two years, Galib served as Kemal's chief mentor in bureaucracy as well as poetry, until in 1861, he was transferred to the distant imperial outpost of Tripoli, in modern-day Libya, leaving behind his young protégé. The two remained in close correspondence for several more years, even as the younger man underwent intellectual and political transformations that would add to the distance between them. Galib, for his part, remained politically quiescent; he died young, reportedly of alcoholism, in 1867, the same year that Kemal fled to Paris.¹¹

With Galib's departure, Kemal was freed to enter an even more plumb position on the cutting edge of the Ottoman bureaucratic machine, in the Translation Bureau attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Translation Bureau had been founded some decades earlier, during the Greek War of Independence, to replace the large number of Greeks who were then being purged from diplomatic service. The purge, though far from complete, was drastic enough to require a new office dedicated to the formation of an ostensibly more loyal diplomatic corps drawn from the Muslim bureaucratic elite. The new circle of men that Kemal encountered here were of a different sort than Galib: many had traveled abroad, immersed themselves in foreign newspapers rather than classical literature, valued French above Persian, and regarded membership in a Sufi order as a less potent signifier than the

¹⁰ İskender Pala, "Leskofçalı Galib," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2003).

¹¹ Pala.

fact of Muslim identity in an increasingly Christian-dominated world. These were the men who would join Kemal in the 1865 founding of a secret society they branded the *İttifak-i Hamiyet*.

An 1835 Turkish-French dictionary offers a simple definition of the word *hamiyet*: the word meant simply “zeal, ardor, courage.” The French Orientalists who prepared it offered two compound usages of the word: *hamiyet-i islamiye* and *hamiyet-i cahiliye*, meaning “zeal of the true faith” and “blind, imprudent, or misplaced zeal” respectively.¹² Twenty years later, the very first edition of the English linguist James Redhouse’s Turkish-English dictionary offered a similar rendering of the word: it was simply “zeal” or a “jealous feeling of honour.”¹³ By the end of the century, however, the word had taken on a new sense, as captured by the Ottoman philologist Şamsettin Sami in his *Kamus-i Türkî*, where *hamiyet* was rendered as “a person’s eagerness to defend and protect their country, family, or connections [*ta’allukât*] from violation or insult.”¹⁴ In less than half a century, *hamiyet* had developed from a word signifying religious zealotry (of both the good and bad sorts) into a word with explicit political overtones.

Namık Kemal and his friends would lead the political movement that helped to politicize Islamic faith and produce this lexical shift. Their understanding of Islamic belonging was not an exclusive one; the *eshab-ı hamiyet* (patriots) who populated their

¹² Jean Daniel Kieffer and Thomas Xavier Bianchi, *Dictionnaire turc-français: a l’usage des agents diplomatiques et ...*, vol. 1 (Impr. royale, 1835), 438, <http://archive.org/details/dictionnairetur00biangoog>.

¹³ Sir James William Redhouse, *An English and Turkish Dictionary: In Two Parts, English and Turkish, and Turkish and English* (B. Quarich, 1856).

¹⁴ Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kamus-i Türkî: kâffe-yi lûgat-i Türkiye ile lisan-i Türkîde müstamil kelimat ve ıstılahât-i Arabiye ve Farisiye ve ecnebiyeyi cami olarak lisanımızın mükemmel lûgat kitabıdır* (Dersaadet [İstanbul: İkdâm Matbaası, 1899), 559.

movement were not all Muslim. What they did all have in common, notwithstanding their differences in confessional identity, was a shared love of their homeland (*vatanperverlik*) that extended to the Islamic foundations of its government. By the 1860s, the zeal expressed in the word *hamiyet* was no longer for Islam *per se*, but for *Islamiyet* (Islamdom).

During his early years at the Translation Bureau, Kemal's political thought was likely shaped by his encounter with the man who served as his French teacher, an official named Mehmed Mansur Efendi.¹⁵ Born a Macedonian Christian, Mansur had converted to Islam and emigrated to Istanbul, and had studied French and English from Redhouse. Mansur had a long career in Tanzimat-era government, serving the state as an expert in both education and minority affairs. In 1869, he would help draft the regulation that sought to unify and centralize schooling throughout Ottoman lands.¹⁶ In 1871, he would publish a study of the activities of the Greek revolutionary group *Philikí Etaireía* (Society of Friends) and their role in fomenting the Greek War of Independence.¹⁷ Some twenty years later, he would write a memo warning of similarly subversive content in Armenian school curricula.¹⁸ At around the time that Kemal encountered him, he was on the verge of collaborating with his nephew on a newspaper named *Vatan*, the first of many Ottoman and Turkish journals to bear that name. Several scholars have raised the possibility that Mansur's staunchly Islamist historical outlook may have influenced Kemal's, which certainly echo his

¹⁵ What little we know of Mehmed Mansur Efendi comes largely from Ebüzziya Tevfik's memoir: see *Yeni osmanlılar tarihi*, 1973, 1:121–23; ; see also Mehmet Zeki Pakalın and Mustafa Keskin, eds., "Mansur Efendi (Mehmed Mansur Efendi)," *Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları* vii. dizi ; (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2008).

¹⁶ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Brill, 2001), 86.

¹⁷ Mehmed Mansur, *Rum fetretine dair tarih* (Istanbul: Camlı Han, 1871).

¹⁸ Mehmed Hocaoğlu, *Arşiv vesikalarıyla tarihte Ermeni mezâlimi ve Ermeniler* (ANDA Dağıtım, 1976), 31–32.

enthusiasm for the concept of *vatan*, and for the the historic role of Islam in world history.¹⁹ Yet it's important to note that Kemal's own writings steer clear of the suspicion of minorities found in Mansur's essays. Instead, his Islamist outlook would blend seamlessly with his personal embrace of non-Muslims as friends and collaborators and his abstract commitment to a pluralist vision of Ottoman nationhood.

Another important influence in shaping Kemal's understanding of *hamiyet* was that of the eighteenth-century French classics through which he honed his new language skills. One of Kemal's first contributions to the Ottoman press was a Turkish translation of the opening chapter of Montesquieu's 1734 treatise *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur decadence*, which appeared in the second and third issues of his friend Mustafa Refik's short-lived journal *Mir'at* (Mirror).

The chief purpose of the translation seems to be a lesson in *hamiyet*. At the same time, we encounter in this translation several of the fundamental concepts that will inform Kemal's political vocabulary throughout his career. Montesquieu begins his reflection on early Rome with the observation that the city itself "did not even have streets... The houses were located without any particular order, and were very small, for the men were always at work or in the public square [*umûm-a mahsûs cemiyetgâhlarda*], and hardly ever remained home." Instead, he writes, "the greatness of Rome soon appeared in its public edifices [*i'mâlât-i umûmiye*]."²⁰ The concept of the public arena, and of the need to populate it with

¹⁹ Johann Strauss, "The Greek Connection in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Intellectual History," in *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters Since the Enlightenment*, ed. Dēmētrēs Tziouvas (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 55.

²⁰ Namik Kemal, "Romalıların esbâb-ı ikbâl ve zevâl hakkında mülâhazât 1: Roma'nın bidayeti ve muhârebâtı [Reflections on the causes of the prosperity and decline of the Romans 1: The beginnings of Rome and its battles]," *Mir'at*, no. 2 (March 1863): 33–35; English translation drawn from *Considerations on the Causes of*

men of courage and zeal as well as education, would prove central to Kemal's concept of nationhood. A related principle, also articulated in the opening lines of Montesquieu's book and rendered in Turkish by the 22-year-old clerk, was this: "At the birth of societies, the leaders of republics create the institutions [*terbiye-i umûmiyeyi ittihâd*]; thereafter, it is the institutions that form the leaders of republics." The concept of *terbiye-i umûmiye* is one that would recur nearly a decade later in Kemal's writings on the subject of public opinion (*efkâr-ı umûmiye*). A final concept that stands out in the excerpt of Montesquieu that Kemal saw fit to translate is the following: "[T]he main reason for the Romans becoming masters of the world was that, having fought successively against all peoples [*milletler*], they always gave up their own practices [*adetler*] as soon as they found better ones." The almost glib simplicity of this assertion belies the presence of the vexatious paradox at its heart, as the tension between continuity and progress was destined to become one of the chief themes in Kemal's later writings on Ottoman civilization and its relationship to Europe.

Montesquieu's relevance for Namık Kemal was evidently profound, as he would return to his later work in his own writings on law. In the meantime, however, we see the young bureaucrat drawing inspiration from the French author's depiction of Rome as a virile, outwardly directed society with no domestic life to speak of, little in the way of arts, and animated by a ferocious will to conquer and absorb other peoples. This zealous spirit, coupled with the excellence of its early leaders and the strength of its founding institutions, prove to be the making of a great world empire. The relevance of these lessons for the

the Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline, trans. David Lowenthal (Hackett Publishing Company, Incorporated, 1999).

Ottoman state would be obvious to any reader familiar with the notion of the Ottoman state as “the Third Rome.”²¹ Unfortunately, *Mir’at* was discontinued before Kemal could get to the part where the causes of decline were discussed. Yet the sample he provides for his readers is enough to establish a radically expanded historical framework for the consideration of the Ottomans’ political predicament.

By proposing this new framework, the young Namık Kemal was engaging in a risky act of insubordination against his elders, communicating a lack of confidence in their ability to meet the challenges of state. In another article published just a few years later in his journal *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, Kemal would make this charge more explicit: at a moment when Europe regards the Ottomans as “retrograde and stagnant,” the best hope for the country lies with “those in the Ottoman nation possessed of new ideas [*efkâr-ı cedîde eshâbî*],” for whom “public concerns [*mesâlih-i umûmiye*] take priority over personal ones.” Here Kemal is citing the language of Mustafa Fazıl Pasha’s letter to the journal *Nord*, but he coins a phrase of his own in branding such people “the youth of Turkmenistan [*Türkmenistan’ın erbâb-ı şebâbî*]” – a gesture that asserts the parallels between these new thinkers and the Young Italy movement that had recently won a major victory in the form of a new state. He concludes optimistically, “Let the Europeans believe that the Ottoman Empire is on the way to the grave. We know it is not in the midst of a cemetery but in its mother’s womb.”²²

²¹ For a discussion of Mehmed II’s appropriation of the label “kayser,” see Hasan Çolak, “Tekfur, Fasiliyus and Kayser: Disdain, Negligence and Appropriation of Byzantine Imperial Titulature in the Ottoman World,” in *Frontiers of the Ottoman Imagination: Studies in Honour of Rhoads Murphey*, ed. Marios Hadjianastasis (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 19–20.

²² *Tasvir-i Efkâr* No.461 (18 Şevval 1278 [23 February 1867]); translation modified from Mardin, *Genesis*, 37–38.

In Namık Kemal's formulation, love of country is a young man's game. Youthful ardor is essential to rescue the state from doom, and yet it is not enough: new ideas are also needed, and particularly a heightened sensitivity to the *umûmi*—the public or general. The zeal of *hamiyet* entails an ability to look beyond one's own interest toward the greater good. The centrality of the category of the public for Kemal corresponds with his rejection of the secret plotting for regime change that was the parallel route pursued by his comrades in the *Ittihak-i Hamiyet*.²³ Zeal was disobedience, certainly, but in Kemal's view it required a public platform for legitimacy. It was rebellion in the service of a higher purpose, and must take place in the open, or else its value as an educative device was lost. An essential accessory to this attitude was the still-novel tool of the press, which creates the very conditions for a modern public to emerge. As Kemal would later argue, channeling Rousseau, the existence of a public is a *sine qua non* for a legitimate government, whose legitimacy stems directly from its success in expressing and fulfilling the aims of that public.²⁴ A second requirement is a program of public education. We can bear witness to Kemal's burgeoning enthusiasm for this project in the growing frequency of his references to the public education project he helped to found in 1865, the Society for Islamic Education (*Cemiyet-i Tedris-i Islamiye*). Here Kemal helped to provide free lessons in orthography and composition for two years before his departure for Paris, while providing regular updates on the project to the readers of *Tasvir-i Efkâr*.²⁵ The concept of public

²³ Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire*.

²⁴ Ibret, "Efkâr-ı Umumiye." [complete citation]

²⁵ Tansel, "Kemâl, Mehmed, Nâmîk."

opinion on which Ottoman state legitimacy rests in turn depends on *terbiye-i umûmiye*, the education or uplift of that very public through the mechanism of institutions.

Hürriyet

Much has been made of Namık Kemal's embrace of the word *hürriyet*—liberty—and its impact on Ottoman, and eventually modern Turkish, political thought.²⁶ Among the conceptual innovations attributed to him, the notion of personal freedom is often described as the innovation most alien to Islamic political tradition, and many accounts of his thought place it at the crux of his broader effort to, in Şerif Mardin's words, "synthesize" the Enlightenment and Islamic traditions. Yet Mardin, like many of his peers, regards the attempt as unsuccessful, having failed to satisfy the intellectual demands of either system: "At certain times the contradiction between the system of Namık Kemal and that of Islam became quite obvious."²⁷ (Berkes similarly speaks of the "confusion" sown by his attempt, and his language is echoed most recently in Howard Eissenstat's dismissal of Young Ottoman ideology as a "confused mixture of constitutionalist optimism and Islamic modernism."²⁸)

According to these scholars, the chief deficiency to be found in Namık Kemal's conception of *hürriyet*, and the heart of his failure to adequately reconcile Islam with European liberalism, is his failure to develop an adequate theory of revolt—that is, to

²⁶ See especially Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 284–308; ; see also Hilmi Ozan Özacvi, "Liberalism in the Turkish Context and Its Historiography: Past and Present," *Anatolian Studies* 62 (2012): 141–51.

²⁷ *Genesis*, 289.

²⁸ Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 209; Eissenstat, "Modernization, Imperial Nationalism, and the Ethnicization of Confessional Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire," 448.

articulate the conditions whereby the subjects of an Islamic state are justified in overthrowing the state and replacing it with a new one, or even with none at all.²⁹ These critics compare Kemal's lack of a robust theory of revolt with those of Locke, Rousseau, and Jefferson, while neglecting the theories of just revolt developed by Kemal's Ottoman contemporaries—including Mehmed, the founder of the Ottoman dissident journals *İttihâd* (Union) and *Inkılâb* (Revolution); and Ali Suavi, whose political thought forms the subject of Chapter 4. But the larger neglect here is of the historical contingencies that circumscribed the prospect of revolt against the late nineteenth-century Ottoman state. When Namık Kemal and his comrades left Istanbul for Paris in 1867, it was in part to protest the state's mishandling of the insurrection in Crete. Despite its lack of broad support from Christian and Muslim residents of the island alike, the insurrection initially enjoyed the support of popular opinion in both France and Britain, and Ottoman state leaders appeared hamstrung in their desire to appease these increasingly powerful forces while preserving Ottoman sovereignty over the island. Under such circumstances, revolt against the state was a delicate matter. For Kemal, the abandonment of the Ottoman state was an ethical impossibility, as it would have entailed an expression of freedom at odds with a higher good: the preservation of the Ottoman nation and the state on which it depended.

The core problem with the diagnosis of Kemal's simultaneous embrace of liberalism and Islamism as a species of "confusion" is that it takes for granted the fixity of both Islamic

²⁹ The sharpest condemnation of these perceived inadequacies can be found in Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 205–14.

and European liberal thought, in disregard of the ways that both intellectual traditions have proven themselves profoundly susceptible to change over time. If we discard the notion of these traditions as fixed systems, and with it questions of accuracy, authenticity, and fidelity, we can then leave aside the imperative to judge Kemal's competence as a thinker within these traditions. It is clear enough that Kemal was, at the minimum, acquainted with classic works in both traditions: he was at least passingly familiar with the Qur'an and the hadith corpus available to Ottoman Muslims of the Sunni Hanafi sect, if not with their deployment by Hanafi legal scholars. (In this realm, Namık Kemal was easily outshone by Ali Suavi, who spent years in *medreses* as both a student and a teacher of traditional Islamic scholarship.) More extensive than his command of Islamic legal reasoning was his intimacy with Sufi modes of thought about the universe, the divine, and human experience, traces of which would surface in his essays, particularly in his later work. Kemal paired these modes of expertise with his readings of classical European political theorists to generate a new strain within Ottoman political thought: one that was pro-monarchical but anti-absolutist and grounded in a fundamentally liberal belief in limited government.

That Kemal viewed his belief in limited government as fully compatible with his belief in the totality of divine justice and "the greatness of Islamic law [*şer'iat-i kübra*], which is necessarily without beginning and without end," is less a mark of his supposed "confusion" than of the capaciousness of these concepts for nineteenth-century Ottoman thinkers.³⁰ If we take Kemal at his word and treat him as a thinker within both the European liberal and Ottoman Islamic political traditions, we can better appreciate his

³⁰ Kemal, "Istikbal [The Future]."

strategic use of the conceptual and rhetorical tools they made available to him in service of his political aims.

In this light, we can develop a more nuanced appreciation of the name—*Hürriyet*—that Namık Kemal chose for his second newspaper. This newspaper, founded in London in June of 1868, was in fact the successor to the first organ of the Young Ottoman Society, *Muhbir*, which had born the imprimatur of the Society from August 1867 until May of 1868, when the society’s members formally broke with the journal and its editor, Ali Suavi. (The details of this rift and its ideological and logistical consequences can be found in Chapter 4.) The choice of name was highly resonant, albeit differently so, in the different contexts in which it appeared. For the readers who received it in Ottoman territory, it was a reminder of the journal’s status as a dissident publication, condemned by state authorities and distributed clandestinely (through the aid of both Ottoman dissident networks and sympathetic diplomatic postal channels), and of the act of reading it as a subversive act. For the journal’s European readers, the resonance would have been slightly different: it would have recalled, first, the Paris-based daily *La Liberté*, then owned by the prominent French publisher Émile de Girardin, which led the liberal opposition to Napoleon III. (*La Liberté* was also a journal that had lent its voice to the Young Ottoman cause by reprinting Mustafa Fazıl Pasha’s open letter to the sultan in March of 1867.) More broadly, the name conveyed the Young Ottomans’ allegiance to the liberal principles—particularly those of press freedom and representative government—embraced by self-proclaimed liberal parties and movements throughout Europe.

From its very first issue, *Hürriyet* made clear its interest in preserving the Islamic aspect of the Young Ottoman program. The lead article to appear in the first issue bore the title of a Prophetic hadith, “*Hubb al-watan min al-îmân*,” meaning “Love of homeland springs from faith.”³¹ While the use of the hadith was a clear signifier of the journal’s identification with Islam, seeking support within Islamic tradition for the patriotic values it championed, the gesture of linkage itself was a far more ecumenical gesture, one that bore strong echoes of the rhetoric of European liberalism. In fact, it closely echoed the language of Giuseppe Mazzini, the leading thinker of the Italian Risorgimento, who had often expounded on the connection between love of country and love of God in similar terms: some twenty years earlier, he had delivered a speech in honor of a group of martyrs to Italian unification that exhorted listeners to recall that “God has given you your country as cradle,” and that “by striving to perfect yourselves therein, you may prepare to ascend to him.”³² Thus even the Islamic religious overtones found within *Hürriyet* can be read not as a self-conscious effort to distinguish it from European liberalism writ large, but as a gesture of affiliation with one particularly potent and influential strain of that liberalism.

The journal as a whole, or at least the 63 issues that would be produced under Kemal’s editorship before his break with Ziya and the journal in September of 1869, was dedicated to exploring the correspondence between Islamic and liberal political principles,

³¹ The hadith in question is generally classified as “weak” or baseless, yet it was widely cited by Muslim nationalist thinkers from the turn of the century onward. See “*Waṭan*,” ed. P. Bearman et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, April 24, 2012, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7891.

³² Giuseppe Mazzini, “To the Memory of the Martyrs of Cosenza, Executed on the 25th of July 1844.,” in *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini: Autobiographical and Political*, vol. 5 (London: Smith, Elder, & Company, 1908), 163–64; For a detailed treatment of this theme in Italian politics, see Maurizio Viroli, *As If God Existed: Religion and Liberty in the History of Italy*, trans. Alberto Nones (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

particularly notions of representation, sovereignty, and consent. The most famous example of Namık Kemal’s writings in this vein is an essay that appeared in the fourth issue, whose title, “*Wa shâwirhum fi’l-amr*,” derives from the Qur’anic injunction to “consult them [your brothers] in the matter.”³³ The appearance of a Qur’anic citation in the title might suggest to some readers that its use is meant to offer decisive proof of the necessity of consultation in Islamic law. But the text of the article does not pursue this line of argument. Instead, it uses the Qur’anic citation as a kind of rhetorical cue to establish the Islamic context for its treatment of the question of representative institutions.

In Namık Kemal’s signature style, the article begins with a statement about human nature framed in the most universal of terms: human beings, he writes, were endowed by their creator with liberty, and are naturally obligated to make use of this “divine dispensation.”³⁴ Echoing the language of the English theorist John Locke, he adds that “all individuals have the natural right to exercise their own power,” yet like Locke, he views the exercise of these natural and divinely ordained rights as posing a risk to our collectively safety. From the need to mitigate this risk and secure our safety from one another, Kemal (following Locke) derives the need for government, and hence the concept of sovereignty. Since the sole purpose of supra-individual sovereignty is the protection of all individuals within a society, it follows that “within each community [*ümmet*] the right of sovereignty [*haqq-ı hakimiyet*] belongs to the public [*umûm*].”

³³ Qur’an 3:159; Sahih International translation used here.

³⁴ *Hürriyet* No. 4, p. 1. “İnsân ki Kudret’ten hürriyetle maftûrdur bi’t-tab’ o ‘ita-yı ilahiden istifâdeye mecbûrdur.”

So far, the premises laid out by Namik Kemal closely track those of both Locke and other classic contract theorists, including Hobbes and Rousseau. In the next stage, however, Kemal leaves Hobbes aside and follows the restrictive sense of representative authority assigned to the sovereign figure by Locke and Rousseau. He also resorts to explicitly Islamic language to describe how the collective sovereignty he has just derived can be legitimately vested in a single individual: “the appointment of an imam and the formation of a government are necessities,” which he further specifies are “nothing other than the deputizing of certain individuals for the execution of duties which the public [*umûm*] is unable to perform on its own.” Thus does Namik Kemal efficiently arrive at this rather arresting conclusion: “Thus, *pâdishâhs* [and their ministers] have no license granting them the right to govern other than the authorization they receive from the community known as *bey’at*.”³⁵ In other words, sultanic authority is not absolute, but contingent on the consent of the governed.

As a capstone to this line of reasoning, Kemal offers further evidence from the Islamic legal corpus in the form a (weak) hadith that declares, “The leader of a people is their servant.”³⁶ Yet the mustering of this Islamic proof and the use of Islamic and Ottoman terms (*ümme*, *pâdishâhs*, *bey’at*, etc.) cannot disguise the fact that the premises of Kemal’s argument more closely resemble those of European contract theorists than of any writer in the Islamic legal canon. That said, Kemal’s argument *is* Islamic insofar as it draws on Islamic

³⁵ *Bey’at* or *bay’a* is the oath of allegiance pledged to the Prophet by his followers, and used in later allegiance pledges throughout Islamic history. See Andrew Marsham, “*Bay’a*,” October 1, 2014, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/baya-COM_24878?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-3&s.q=allegiance+.

³⁶ “*Seyyid’ül-kavmi hadimühüm.*”

principles and speaks to Islamic political concepts and concerns. He is a Muslim writing political theory for an at least partially Muslim audience; and henceforth, the concepts he has introduced have become part of the Ottoman Islamic repertoire of political concepts.

Hakimiyet

The third phase of Namik Kemal's political thought begins with his pardon by the sultan and his return to Istanbul in November of 1870. Unlike several of his former comrades in the Young Ottoman society, he was eager to return to Ottoman territory and to begin the work of enacting the reforms he viewed as essential to the survival of his state. Yet over the course of the next six years leading up to the overthrow of Sultan Abdulaziz, Kemal would find himself severely restricted in the sorts of involvement available to him. For the time being, then, rather than undertaking governmental reform projects, he dedicated himself to what he called "the vocation of writing" (*meslek-i kitâbet*). For a year and a half, unable to get permission to start a journal of his own, Namik Kemal collaborated on the journals of his friends Teodor Kasap (*Diyojen*) and Ebüzziya Tevfik (*Hadika*), before he was finally able to enter a publishing arrangement with the Armenian newspaper publisher Aleksander Sarrafyan to use the license he held for his newspaper *İbret* (Admonition). The first issue of *İbret* under Kemal's editorship appeared in June of 1872. In their opening letter to readers, Kemal and his fellow editors explained that their decision to start yet another newspaper was driven by "the desire to render a service to the nation, to the extent we are able, and also to earn our living this way."

Although their opening letter carried a promise not to neglect news of current events alongside their treatment of "political principles and civilizational advances," the

journal's contents from its first issue onward were heavily weighted toward the ponderous reflections of its chief editor, leaving lighter fare to its many competitors in the Istanbul press scene. And yet, if the anecdotal reports compiled by historians in the twentieth century are any indication, the journal appears to have been widely read among the expanding class of disaffected bureaucrats from which its writers hailed, as well as the similarly disaffected population of theological students in Istanbul.³⁷ For his own part, Namik Kemal was convinced that their audience was far broader: "even shopkeepers and servants in Istanbul read newspapers or at least listen to them," he wrote, "They acquire, thus, knowledge of their public rights toward the state, love of the fatherland, military glory, and war events."³⁸ Kemal could thus be confident that his writings were being read by a broad swathe of Istanbul.

The breadth of his audience was essential for the kind of work that Kemal wanted to achieve with his journal, which was to equip Ottoman readers with the training (*terbiye*) they would need to become an informed public and a fitting repository of Ottoman sovereignty. As part of this effort, Kemal saw fit to publish an unusually long series of essays on the theme of law. Titled "Law" and "Universal Law" (*Hukuk* and *Hukuk-u Umûmiye*), these articles examine the European and Islamic legal traditions. Without making explicit reference to the legal transformations taking place in the Ottoman state, his articles undoubtedly represent an intervention of sorts on current events. Read together, their

³⁷ Şerif Arif Mardin, "Libertarian Movements in the Ottoman Empire 1878-1895," *Middle East Journal* 16, no. 2 (April 1, 1962): 181; Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 296.

³⁸ Namik Kemal, introduction to Celaleddin Harzemşah, cited and translated in Karpas, *The Politicization of Islam*, 133.

conclusion is somewhat ambiguous: Namık Kemal uses his first article to stress the diversity of moral and legal codes among different peoples throughout time and space, and ends the article with a rousing defense of Islamic law as the true “yardstick of justice” in Ottoman lands, but stops short of asserting its universality; yet in the second article, on “universal law,” he stresses the unity and coherence of law, writing that “Justice is a divine attribute such that, like the divine essence itself, belief in its multiplicity is tantamount to denial of its existence.” Although the philosophical arguments advanced in this pair of articles are divergent and at times contradictory, they advance a single coherent political argument, however indirectly: opposition to the Porte’s reforms and the resulting division of the law into discrete and ostensibly unrelated categories under the Tanzimat regime, a development which served not only the secularization but the centralization of legal power.

Namık Kemal's first article on law (*hukuk*) opens by offering the reader a bird's-eye view of “the eternal mystery that we call man” as he has existed across space and time. He points out that some human beings have chosen to live as cannibals, while others have preferred vegetarianism, and that the enormous diversity of human ways of life points to the more fundamental irreconcilability of our various social and moral codes:

What counts as a crime in the East is considered a kindness in the West; acts known as admirable in the West are looked on as heresies in the East. What we knew to be right in the past, today we call mistaken; all that today we know to be wrong will tomorrow be quite correct.

This enormous, troublesome variability and the lack of consensus about what constitutes right and wrong leads Namık Kemal ask on what basis, if any, do our laws rest? Or, as Namık Kemal himself puts it, “is there nothing real and essential in the

world, and are law and its contradictions a purely human creation?”

Through the sequence of metaphysical reasoning that follows, he leads us to the conclusion that they are not. He asks us to imagine that the laws governing this world originated entirely from the whims of individual human beings: would you follow these laws? Of course not: no one would. Without some anterior cause, human laws would lack the authority to force our submission, and chaos would reign. There must be restrictions on human will. And so he argues that the laws of this world must have their source in something external to human beings, what he calls a “primary cause,” or *mebde-i evvel*. The concept of a primary cause comes directly from Aristotle, and filtered its way through both the European and Islamic philosophical traditions. Namık Kemal thus arrives at this definition of the law as “the necessary relations that derive from human nature *in accordance with the ideal of the good.*”

Here, too, Namık Kemal's choice of language has some important resonances that deserve our attention. In the opening line of his 1748 magnum opus *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu writes, “Laws, in their broadest meaning, are the necessary relations that derive from the nature of things.”³⁹ Namık Kemal's definition of law seems to be phrased as an explicit echo of the language employed by Montesquieu; namely, the language of law as “necessary relations that derive”

³⁹Montesquieu's original formulation is as follows: “Les lois, dans la signification la plus étendue, sont les rapports nécessaires qui dérivent de la nature des choses; et, dans ce sens, tous les êtres ont leurs lois, la divinité a ses lois, le monde matériel a ses lois, les intelligences supérieures a l'homme ont leurs lois, les bêtes ont leur lois, l'homme a ses lois” (*De L'esprit des lois* [Paris: Flammarion, 2008], Volume I, 61).

from something. The key difference in Namık Kemal's iteration lies in what that something is. Montesquieu derives law from “the nature of things,” while Namık Kemal derives it from the nature of people—or, more precisely, from “human nature in accordance with the ideal of the good.” In other words, the laws we create are derived from what we imagine to be the good.

Where does Namık Kemal think we get this ideal of the good? He thinks we get it from God. He writes, “It is our belief that [the restrictions on our free will] are nothing other than the good and evil [*hüsn ü kubuh*] created by the power of God [*Hakîm-i Kudret*] throughout all of nature.”⁴⁰ This is the only mention of God in Namık Kemal's essay on law, and it clarifies what he actually thinks of as the “primary cause.” In fact, Namık Kemal and Montesquieu both talk about God in their discussions of law. Montesquieu writes that divinity has its own laws, just as men and beasts have theirs, and all of these laws are part of a broader unity called natural law. God himself is subject to this law—“he acts according to these rules, because he knows them; he knows them, because he has made them; he made them, because they are related to his wisdom and power.”⁴¹ The argument is circular—God wrote the rules, and he also follows them; he follows them because he wrote them. Montesquieu's God is not just the author of all creation; he's a model law-abiding citizen of the universe he's created. This vagueness about which is primary, natural law or God, is an indication that Montesquieu's real interest lies elsewhere, and so

⁴⁰“Bizim itikadımızca Hakîm-i kudretin tabiat-ı külliyyede halkettiği hüsn ü kubuhtan ibarettir.”

⁴¹*De L'esprit des lois*, 61-2.

does Namık Kemal's. Neither one of them is a theologian interested in the metaphysics of the divine. Rather, what fascinates them is law itself, which unfolds according to its own logic. In fact, the idea of God is not strictly necessary to either of their arguments from a logical standpoint. In Montesquieu, laws arise from the nature of things, while in Namık Kemal, the derivation of laws is somewhat more circuitous: laws originate in human nature, that is, human societies base them on their interpretations of good and evil, whose presence in the world is owed to God. He takes care to emphasize the gap between God as the source of good and evil and ourselves as interpreters of these ideals. He notes that for those who write laws (*kanun*), "there can be no greater duty than the attempt to render explicit relations," or laws, based on one's view of the ideal of the good. One has to be very conscientious to do this, and have a clear and true idea of good and evil. But one does not have to believe in God.

Namık Kemal's definition of law differs in some key ways from Montesquieu's, most notably in its derivation from fallible human beings rather than from the nature of things. Yet both these definitions accomplish the same goal for their authors, which is to account for the marvelous diversity of human societies across time and space, and to find unity and necessity in plurality, and the universal in the particular. The comparative study of the laws and mores of the world that fills the pages of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* serves as an 800-page proof of his definition of laws as "necessary relations."

Namık Kemal's relatively brief treatise sets out to do something similar. After

having derived his definition of law, Namık Kemal moves to a lengthy discussion of the various schools of thought in Europe concerning justice, which, he writes, “we have considered it our duty to profit from and examine.” The ideas he discusses range from the Christian ethic of the “golden rule,” to Bentham's utilitarianism, to a Lockean liberalism that defines the goal of the law as protecting the freedom of the individual without restricting that of the collective. Namık Kemal's approach is to provide brief outlines of each theory, followed by his own objections to each. Having presented the reader with this smorgasbord of European theories of justice, and having poked holes in all of them, Kemal restates his own formula of the law—as necessary relations deriving from human nature in accord with the good—and uses it to set up his conclusion. His closing lines:

Among us, good and evil are determined by *şeriat* [sharia]. By applying it as the yardstick of justice to these cases shall we know whether the relations among our *compatriots* [ebna-yı vatan] are in accord with the ideal of the good.

This reference to *sharia* appears at the very end of the essay. Yet in retrospect, the entire article can be read as a defense of the legitimacy of *sharia*—on purely rationalist grounds. Namık Kemal proclaims *sharia* to be “the yardstick of justice,” the gold standard of the good – but *bizde*, “among us.” There are other yardsticks out there, as he has just shown us. This statement amounts to an acknowledgement that the rightful domain of the *sharia*, in moral as well as practical legal terms, is restricted. In that case, to whom should it rightfully apply? Who is “us”? It's not clear: he could mean Muslims, but it's worth noting that's not the word he uses. Instead he uses the phrase *ebna-yı vatan*—literally “sons of the homeland,” although I have rendered it here as “compatriots.” Why would he use this term?

Namık Kemal was well aware of the presence of non-Muslims in Ottoman society, and perhaps he didn't want to exclude them, even from a polis ruled by Islamic law. Or perhaps he meant to address his fellow men and women in a way that would highlight their status as Ottomans rather than as co-religionists. I take this use of the phrase “compatriots” as a further indication of the secular spirit underlying his defense of sharia, which he seems to view as a culturally authentic and appropriate Ottoman expression of the ideal of the good rather than as rules written by God for all human beings to follow. Namık Kemal presents sharia as just one law among many that govern societies in the world, all of which derive their legitimacy from their attempt to promote the good by extracting necessary relations from the primary cause.

The most innovative aspect of Namık Kemal's reasoning is his founding of the legitimacy of Islamic law on rational grounds compatible with secularism, rather than as a direct expression of God's will. In Namık Kemal's understanding, the primary cause that animates his universe may be divine, but his defense of the suitability of *sharia*, rooted in the Ottoman context and founded on an understanding of law as a fundamentally human attempt to interpret good and evil, cannot be described as religious. His arguments are, if not secular in themselves, at least compatible with Deist and secular understandings of the universe. Namık Kemal gives us a defense of *sharia* that perhaps even Aristotle could get behind.

Namık Kemal's approach to *sharia* may be related to the Sufism that formed an important part of his spiritual and intellectual outlook from an early age. His biographer Mehmet Kaplan describes Namık Kemal as having grown up in a Bektāşi family which gave

him his “Sufi inclination,” and mentions that many of the poets with whom Kemal associated in Istanbul were members of the Bektāṣi order.⁴² In this article, Kemal’s enthusiasm for *sharia* is restrained, and would appear to be premised on the fact of its being an already extant moral code in place in Ottoman lands. This fond if distant appreciation for the strictures of Islamic law may be described as a Sufi attitude, based on characterizations of the ambivalent relationship between Sufi and orthodox spiritual practices. As Marshall Hodgson explains it, Sufis “stressed the more inward and esoteric aspects” of piety “till it overshadowed, though it did not replace, concern with the Sharī’ah law itself,” and while many Sufi orders were famous for their disregard of *sharia*, others maintained their adherence to it.⁴³ Yet through what Hodgson calls the “spiritual athleticism” of Sufi practice, attempts to resolve these tensions produced a broad spectrum of Islamic thought and attitudes toward the law. This point is echoed by the Ottoman historian Niyazi Berkes in his essay on “Ethics and Social Practice in Islam,” in which he writes that “a certain amount of strain and conflict remained within the moral outlook of Islam” as expressed by its jurists, philosophers, mystics and their “metaphysical-ethical-political speculations.”⁴⁴

As his next essay demonstrates, Namık Kemal's own deepest commitment was not to sharia per se but to the unity and sanctity of law itself. Three weeks after his article on “law,” he published another meditation on the subject, this one dealing with the theme of “universal law” (*hukuk-u umûmiye*). The opening line is laced with a reference to Sufism,

⁴²Kaplan, 18.

⁴³Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 394.

⁴⁴“Ethics and Social Practice in Islam,” 61.

asserting that “if it were necessary for human beings to occupy this guest-house of existence⁴⁵ alone,” without the company of others, “each one would freely execute the right to liberty that is hers; rights are always in plain view, while duties are never visible.” But since human beings must share this planet with each other, “it is natural that their freedoms should be restricted by the presence of each other's freedoms.”

In the following paragraphs, he derives the need for individuals living in civilization to be bound by laws, and thus by governments, which necessarily restrict their freedom; for “what necessitates the coercive power of law is the natural inclination to aggression that governs man individually, and which is also to be found collectively in communities. The function of this coercive power [law] is to force people to adhere to the terms to which they themselves agreed.” He then poses the hypothetical question of what would happen if “a victor's sword or a clerk's pen” were to swoop down and alter the terms of government, bringing the world to a standstill and threatening its destruction? He assures the hypothetical questioner, “One imagines that if troubles were to reach those proportions, the difficulties, whatever they might be, could be solved through philosophy [*efkâr-ı hikmet*].” Philosophy, he explains, “is not restricted by either time or space,” but grapples with the eternal, omnipresent questions of existence, i.e., metaphysics; and the “moral map of this earthly sphere” is to be found in political principles. “Wherever they encounter time and space, they serve to show everyone the limits of the law and the extent of their duties.”

⁴⁵The term “guest-house of existence” (*mihmansaray-ı vücud*) suggests the Sufi conception of the human being's physical presence as a mere guest-house for her soul, as expressed in Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi's poem “The Guest-house” (“This being human is a guest house. / Every morning a new arrival.”)

In the foregoing section, Kemal has demonstrated how to start with a Sufi conception of the universe and arrive at a rights-based theory of government. He reminds us that human life is transitory, and the scope of the universe is vast; that just as human beings are selfish and prone to violating each other's rights, they are equally vulnerable to the excesses of tyrants, and that government is thus a precarious if necessary human invention. The only hope of managing it is through political principles derived from philosophy. In the section that follows, he argues strenuously for the idea of universal law as an indivisible concept, and musters lengthy arguments against those who would attempt to divide law into a number of parts: the laws of diplomacy, the laws of politics, the laws of governance, the laws of the person. He writes *that in* a properly governed society, “the people are sovereign,” both individually and collectively: they not only govern their society (he writes that this institution is known in Islam as *biat*, or the consent to be governed—often translated as the oath of allegiance—given by an individual to a leader), but they are possessed of personal sovereignty as well: “Everyone is the sultan of his own universe.” This personal sovereignty (*saltanat-ı hassa*) can never be robbed, relinquished, foresworn, mortgaged, ransomed, or otherwise stripped from the nature of the individual herself. All attempts to divide law into component parts amount to infringements on this fundamental personal sovereignty. He concludes that “Justice is a divine attribute such that, like the divine essence itself, belief in its multiplicity is tantamount to denial of its existence.”

In the final half of the article, Kemal turns from abstract meditation to social commentary, urging the people of his nation to look closely at the “jewels of perfection” from the storms of progress occurring in the West and are now washing up on Ottoman

shores. Some are marvelous, but some are also false. Kemal proceeds to list in a lawyerly fashion some of the most egregious manifestations of hypocrisy to take place in Europe in recent memory, from the burning of heretics to the “murder of millions” by Napoleon, to the unjust acquittal of Napoleon's grandson—also on a charge of murder. In each case, Kemal writes, the perpetrators were excused in the eyes of the people, those who were meant to hold them accountable. From this litany of well-documented European abuses of universal ideals, Kemal draws the following lesson: “No system of science in the world is true beyond doubt unless it can be traced back to ideals.”

These essays can be read as part of Islamic legal history, the history of attempts to define sharia both for itself and in comparison to other legal systems and theories. At the heart of Namık Kemal's philosophical project was the quest for recognition—recognition by European publics of the legitimacy of Ottoman sovereignty, and self-recognition by *an Ottoman* public of its own existence as a nation, and of its sovereign status. Only with both forms of recognition in place would the Ottoman state achieve its aspiration of “a place no lower than its peers in the assembly hall of the world.” Sovereignty was no longer an absolute property of the state; it was now a property contingent on recognition by the citizens of that state, on the one hand, and by other states and *their* citizens, on the other. No longer could any state, even one as storied and grand as the Ottoman state, be considered without reference to its place in the supranational power structures that governed it. The net effect of this shift was a radical decentering of the Ottoman state, and of Islam itself, in Ottoman political thought.

Chapter 3: Teodor Kasap and the Making of an Ottomanist Public

On December 23, 1876, cannons were fired in the Ottoman capital as the first constitution of the Ottoman Empire was formally entered into law. The Ottoman people were to have their first elected parliament. A few weeks later, a small item appeared in the weekly journal *Hayâl* (“Fantasy”) announcing its editor’s candidacy for parliament. “We too are gathering signatures at our press,” it noted. “Those who wish to do so are requested to come and sign. There’s no need to bring pen, paper, signets, hazelnuts, pistachios. We’ve got them here.”¹

Thus did Teodor Kasap announce his first formal entry into the Ottoman political fray. As the editor-in-chief of *Hayâl*, and of half a dozen current and former newspapers besides, Kasap was already a recognized figure on the Ottoman political scene. Unlike his fellow Young Ottomans, he had never held a post within the Ottoman bureaucracy, yet he was known by reputation to a wider swath of Istanbul’s denizens than nearly all of his comrades would have been. The petition submitted on his behalf to Istanbul’s election authorities bore no fewer than thirty signatures, nearly twice the minimum required for formal nomination to the Chamber of Deputies. It declared that “Te’odorus Kasab Efendi is well-known for his love of liberty [*hürriyet-perverlik*], and has been found to be a man of

¹ *Hayâl* No. 307, dated 1 Kanunusâni 1292 [13 January 1877], page 2.

modesty [*verâyet*] and integrity [*istikâmet*].”²

Like Kasap himself, most of the petition’s signers had Greek names. Yet the ranks of Kasap's admirers extended far beyond the Ottoman Greek *millet* (community). By 1877, Kasap's journals were being read in all corners of the Ottoman capital, where they appeared in Turkish, Greek, Armenian, and Bulgarian. Their contributors included some of the finest writers in Istanbul, among them Namık Kemal, whom Kasap had befriended in Paris, and who began publishing anonymously in Kasap's journal *Diyojen* within a few months of his return to Istanbul in 1870. His stable of younger writers featured several who were soon to become leading literary figures: Ahmet Mithat, Ebüzziya Tevfik and Direktör Ali.³ Despite the multitude of writers and cartoonists whose work he published, all of Kasap's journals bore his signature style: a sly wit that mocked the powerful while aiming to steer clear of censors. In this the journals didn't always succeed: Kasap's first, *Diyojen*, was shuttered repeatedly during its two years of publication, and his second, *Çingiraklı Tatar*, lasted only three months, but these dramatic reversals and reinventions only added to his celebrity.

Kasap's journals were commercial ventures that drew subscription and advertising revenues, but they were also integral tools in the Ottomanist project of knitting together an Ottoman public out of the empire's diverse communities. If Istanbul was the cultural capital

² Petition addressed to Şehremânet-i Âliyyesi, dated 8 Muharrem 1294/11 Kanunisanı 1292 [23 January 1877], original reprinted in Turgut Kut, “Teodor Kasap,” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2011), 474.

³ İhsan Sungu, “Diyojen Gazetesi,” *Aylık Ansiklopedisi* 1, no. 11 (March 1945): 339. Ahmet Mithat went on to become one of the most prolific and popular authors in Ottoman history, while Ebüzziya Tevfik became one of its best-known journalists. Ali, later known as Direktör Ali, became a distinguished playwright as well as the head of the Ottoman Debt Administration, one of the most important positions within the Ottoman bureaucracy under Abdülhamid II.

of the empire, then Kasap was among its ministers; for most of his career, he belonged not to the apparatus of the state, but to the parallel entity of Ottoman culture, which competed with the state in its claims to speak for the nation. Recovering his role helps us recover the lost place of non-Muslims within Ottoman culture at large. More importantly, his life's work is an illustration of the rich life led by Ottoman public culture apart from, and in opposition, to the state, and the political uses to which the culture was put. Kasap was instrumental in recognizing and fostering the organic (that is, non-state) forms of social solidarity that existed among the empire's distinct socio-religious communities, and in using these forms to develop the groundwork for a democratic Ottomanist movement. The key to Kasap's popularity stemmed not only from the wry, pugnacious, and cheerful persona he projected in these journals, where his likeness often appeared in cartoons, but from the warm familiarity with which he addressed his audience and the democratic vision of Ottoman society he reflected back to them. His journals spoke to their readers as Ottomans, no matter what neighborhood they lived in or what language they read. By turning the daily frustrations and underlying tensions of Ottoman public life into an inside joke shared by all of its inhabitants, Kasap did more than entertain his readers: he flattered and inspired them by envisioning for them an Ottoman nation as urbane, culturally polysemic, and fiercely patriotic as himself.

Among the unsolved mysteries of Ottoman historiography is how Kasap, one of the most prolific and influential writers of his generation, slipped to the margins of its historical memory. During his own lifetime, Kasap's voice dominated the Ottoman press in

five different languages: Ottoman Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, and French.⁴ He was singled out by Ebüzziya Tevfik for “the service he performed for public opinion in this nation,” and celebrated by Namık Kemal’s son as “the most important figure of the age” after his own father.⁵ It is difficult to discuss the cultural or political life of 1870s Istanbul without mentioning at least one of the journals Kasap published, the books he brought to press, or the prominent figures he tangled with during his highly active career in the public eye.

In addition to his prominence in Ottoman intellectual life, Kasap was also a figure with an international profile, thanks to his association with the novelist Alexandre Dumas and his own political flamboyance. Kasap’s trial and imprisonment in 1877 for a cartoon mocking Ottoman state censorship drew press attention in Europe, where he was cast as a martyr to European values.⁶ After being released from prison, he would flee again to Europe, where he spent several more years attempting to revive the Ottomanist political cause from abroad. Kasap’s participation in the debate over Ottoman national identity left a lasting mark on Ottoman self-understanding, and his contributions were absorbed into the prevailing ethos of Ottoman dissidents, where they were taken up not only by his fellow Young Ottomans in the 1870s but by the generation of Young Turks in the decades that followed.

Yet Kasap’s own name has fallen out of the narrative of the historical moment he

⁴ For the most complete list of Kasap’s publications to date, see Turgut Kut, “Teodor Kasap,” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2011), 475.

⁵ Ebüzziya Tevfik, *Yeni osmanlılar tarihi*, ed. Ziyad Ebüziyya, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Kervan, 1973), 176; Ali Ekrem Bolayır, *Ali Ekrem Bolayır’ın hâtıraları*, ed. Metin Kayahan Özgül (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 386.

⁶ “Lettres de Turquie,” *Le Temps*, April 11, 1877; excerpted in “Paris le jour au jour,” *Le Figaro*, April 14, 1877; Antonio Gallenga, *Two Years of the Eastern Question*, vol. 2 (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1877), 350–52.

helped to create. To an even greater extent than his Muslim compatriots, Kasap is a thinker without ideological heirs, cut off from the present by a century of demographic and ideological upheavals that effectively eliminated both the Turcophone Greek Orthodox community to which he was born and the Ottoman political identity he claimed as his own. While Kasap was as prolific and as beloved in his day as his friend and collaborator Namık Kemal, it was the latter whose writings would be taken up by a later generation of dissidents and enshrined in popular memory as canonical texts of Turkish patriotism. While Namık Kemal and Ali Suavi still speak to contemporary Muslim Turks, Kasap's intellectual legacy lies buried in the rubble of the lost Ottomanist cause.

Kasap's disappearance from the historical record began during his lifetime, through contemporary accounts like that of the German Orientalist A.D. Mordtmann, whose popular 1877 account includes only Muslim figures in his taxonomy of the “Young Turks”—chief among them Ali Suavi and Namık Kemal. Mordtmann further seals out Kasap from the narrative when he describes the “Young Turk” political movement as animated by resentment of Christians and their privileges.⁷ Even later, more sophisticated studies of Young Ottoman thought have emphasized its Islamist tendencies at the expense of acknowledging the internal diversity of the movement and its commitment to religious and ethnic pluralism. In such accounts, Kasap and other non-Muslims are either entirely absent

⁷ A. D. Mordtmann, *Stambul und das moderne Türkenthum. Politische, soziale und biographische Bilder von einem Osmanen [Istanbul and modern Turkishness: political, social, and biographical sketches of some Ottomans]* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1877), 218ff.; the author of this hastily written two-volume book, although billed on its title page as “an Ottoman,” was in fact a Hamburg-born Orientalist and German diplomat. For more on Mordtmann, see Hans Georg Majer, “Mordtmann, Andreas David,” *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1997), <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz65377.html>.

or else relegated to a footnote.⁸ Kasap is an equally poor fit in the annals of twentieth-century Greek scholarship, where his political commitment to the Ottomanist project is presented as a mark of his credulity.⁹

The one arena of scholarship that has shown a sustained interest in Kasap's legacy is that of Ottoman literary history, where scholars—most notably İhsan Sungu, Cevdet Kudret, Johann Strauss, and Turgut Kut—have drawn attention to the originality of his contributions to nineteenth-century Ottoman letters.¹⁰ In the past decade, a growing scholarly interest in satire has led to a resurgence of attention to Kasap's journals, which are now counted among the first in a long line of Turkish-language humor magazines.¹¹ Yet

⁸ Kasap's only appearance in Şerif Mardin's classic study, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962) is in a footnote, where he is identified as "Kemal's friend, an exponent of liberal ideas" (56, fn. 105); two of Kasap's journals are cited in M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008) yet no mention is made of their publisher.

⁹ See the articles collected in *Theodoros Kasapēs (1835-1897): dēmosiographos drasas en Kon-polei*. (Athens: Typ. Rossolatou, 1966), including a lengthy obituary for Kasap in the Athens daily newspaper *Imerisia Ephemēris Athenos*, 19 July, 1897; see also Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La presse dans la renaissance balkanique: étude historique* (Athènes: Messenger d'Athènes, 1931); and Stratis D. Tarinas, "Kasapoğlu (Kasapis) Teodoros," *Enkiklopaideia to Elleniko Tipo [Encyclopedia of the Greek Press], 1784-1974* (Athens: National Research Foundation of Greece, 2008).

¹⁰ Sungu, "Diyojen Gazetesi"; Cevdet Kudret, "Teodor Kasap," in *Işkilli Memo: Molière'in Sganarelle ou le Cocu imaginaire imaginaire adlı komedyansından aktaran*, by Teodor Kasap, ed. Cevdet Kudret (Istanbul: Elif Yayınları, 1965), 5–26; Johann Strauss, "Is Karamanli Literature Part of a 'Christian-Turkish (Turco-Christian) Literature'?", in *Cries and Whispers in Karamanlidika Books: Proceedings of the First International Conference on Karamanlidika Studies (Nicosia, 11th-13th September 2008)*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Matthias Kappler (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010); Johann Strauss, "The Millets and the Ottoman Language: The Contribution of Ottoman Greeks to Ottoman Letters (19th - 20th Centuries)," *Die Welt Des Islams* 35, no. 2 (November 1, 1995): 189–249; Johann Strauss, "'Kütüp ve Resail-I Mevkute': Printing and Publishing in a Multi-Ethnic Society," in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (New York: Routledge, 2005), 227–56; Kut, "Teodor Kasap."

¹¹ For studies focused on Kasap's satirical publications, see Münir Süleyman Çapanoğlu, *Basın Tarihimize Mizah Dergileri*, vol. 10 (Istanbul: Garanti Matbaası, 1970); Nora Şeni and François Georgeon, "Istanbul dans le presse satirique ottoman (1870-1876)," in *Presse Turque et Presse de Turquie* ("Istanbul dans la Presse, la Presse à Istanbul," 23-24 Mai 1985, Istanbul: Isis Press, 1992), 51–58; Cihangir Gündoğdu, "Diyogen Dergisi ve Dizini," *Müteferrika*, no. 35 (Summer 2009): 49–90; Hamdi Özdiş, *Osmanlı mizah basınında batılılaşma ve siyaset, 1870-1877: Diyojen ve Çaylak üzerinde bir araştırma* (Osmanbey, İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2010); Elif Elmas, "Teodor Kassab's Adaptation of the Ottoman Shadow Theatre Karagöz," in *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair*, ed. Hans Harder and Barbara Mittler (Heidelberg, New York: Springer, 2013), 245–70.

by and large, the plethora of languages in which Kasap published, the satirical medium in which he worked, and the disappearance of the polity whose cause he championed have conspired to make Kasap himself disappear for historians of political thought.

In this invisibility, Kasap is hardly alone. The margins of Ottoman historiography are crowded with figures whose social and political identities no longer fit into the contemporary ideological landscape. The community into which Kasap was born, the once-sizeable Karamanli (Turcophone Greek Orthodox) population of central Anatolia, effectively disappeared with the Turkish-Greek Population Exchange of 1923.¹² The multilingual literary culture of Istanbul was slower to disappear, yet it too has largely faded over the course of the past century, surviving in only a half-dozen non-Turcophone publications, a small fraction of their former number. These dramatic shifts in the demographic and linguistic landscape of the former Ottoman Empire have led us to lose sight of Kasap and countless others like him.

This chapter aims to reveal Kasap as more than a singular oddity buried in the annals of Ottoman journalism. Instead, I show how his writings speak to several major strands of Ottoman thought that once held a place in the mainstream of its political life. These include not only the tradition of the Ottoman Muslim bureaucratic elite, whose rhetoric he

¹² In the same year as the founding of the Turkish Republic, the entire population of Turcophone Greek Orthodox Christians, estimated to have been in the hundreds of thousands, was forcibly removed from Anatolia. Despite initial efforts by Turkish negotiators to keep these “Orthodox Turks” on Turkish soil, in the end they were included along with their Greek-speaking co-religionists in the internationally brokered arrangement of mutual deportation between Turkey and Greece, known as the Population Exchange of 1923. See Richard Clogg, “A Millet within a Millet: The Karamanlides,” in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Philip Issawi (Princeton, N.J: Darwin Press, 1999), 115; Raoul Blanchard, “The Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey,” *Geographical Review* 15, no. 3 (July 1, 1925): 449–456.

borrowed in his defenses of Islamic governance, but to a modern tradition of pluralist Hellenism that can be traced back to the eighteenth-century revolutionary Rhigas Velestinlis (1757-1798). Velestinlis himself cited Alexander the Great and the French Revolution as his inspirations, yet his commitment to a religiously and ethnically pluralistic empire arguably owes an equal debt to the example of Ottoman rule.¹³ Kasap's thought was also indebted to the time he spent in Europe, much of it in the company of Alexandre Dumas, with whom he traveled to Naples to aid in Garibaldi's campaign for Italian unification. The lessons Kasap absorbed from his adventures with Dumas included not only the art of using the press to promote oneself and one's cause, but an ideology of patriotism rooted in a democratic spirit of opposition to ruling elites, an ideology that welcomed transnational solidarity in pursuit of national autonomy and cultural flourishing.

Ironically, the very features of Kasap's persona and approach that have made him invisible to twentieth-century scholars were those that fueled the breadth of his popularity and the depth of his reach into Ottoman public life during his own lifetime. Through a combination of accidents of birth and deliberate self-fashioning, Kasap acquired early in life a broad set of linguistic and cultural competencies that positioned him as a mediator between the Greek- and Turkish-speaking Ottoman communities he traveled in, and later between the Ottoman and European cultural worlds. His provincial origins in the Karamanli community of central Anatolia gave a regionally specific flavor to the meaning of his *zimmi* (non-Muslim) legal status. It also gave him native fluency in Turkish, coupled

¹³ Rhigas's ideology is discussed at length in María López Villalba, "Balkanizing the French Revolution: Rhigas's New Political Constitution," in Dimitrios Tziouvas, ed., *Greece and the Balkans. Identities, Perceptions, and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 141-154.

with a very limited ability to read it, a predicament shared by millions of fellow Ottomans, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Despite having received a formal Greek education in Istanbul and having burnished his reputation through his association with Dumas, Kasap remained a literary populist who rejected the high-flown prose stylings of some of his elite contemporaries, preferring genres (plays, dialogues, and cartoons) that played to his gift for colloquial expression.

Kasap's hybridized social identity and broad education are what enabled him to move with relative ease throughout the greater Mediterranean sphere and to win friends among Ottomans and Europeans alike. In Europe, his status as a Christian and a "Greek" opened doors that might have otherwise remained closed to a native of the Ottoman Empire. The excellent French he learned there would fuel his initial success upon returning to Istanbul in 1870 and ensure him a place of esteem among both the Ottoman and European cultural elite. His success in living overseas gave added weight to his decision to return to the Ottoman capital after more than a decade abroad. In moving back to Istanbul, Kasap became an Ottoman both by birth and by choice: someone whose life choices were proof of his commitment to his homeland.

The degree of cultural mobility that Kasap possessed was remarkable, but not exceptional among his contemporaries. In fact, it is a recurring feature in the biographies of notable Ottoman figures throughout the history of the empire. What is exceptional about Kasap is that he lived in an age when cultural legibility was increasingly reliant on national identity, and thus his cultural self-expression was forced to bear the weight of political significance. Rather than seeking to escape the political meanings of his choices, Kasap

embraced them, and developed into a self-conscious political thinker who saw culture as fundamentally political. Furthermore, the political vision he pursued reflected his cultural hybridity in the sense that it aspired to build a politically unified Ottoman identity on the basis of the multi-confessional and multi-ethnic reality of the Ottoman state. Kasap's politics were built on the premise that his own mix of cultural identities and commitments was typical of Ottoman-ness and the best argument for what made it worth preserving.

This chapter argues that the deliberately pluralistic cultural politics that Kasap promoted were an integral aspect of the broader Ottomanist vision. The ethnic and religious pluralism of Ottoman political ideologies has begun to receive more attention in recent years, particularly as the historical reality of substantial non-Muslim involvement in late Ottoman political life has been brought to the fore.¹⁴ As I suggested in the introduction, the past decade of scholarship by Orit Bashkin, Julia Phillips Cohen, Michelle Campos, and others has emphasized how broadly Ottomanist ideals were shared among the empire's millions of non-Muslim subjects, many of whom grounded their loyalty to the state in what

¹⁴ Among the Greeks and Armenians who served the Ottoman state as diplomats and bureaucrats, many joined in the movement for liberal reforms. The most notable figures from the 1860s and 1870s are Krikor Agaton, who in 1868 was the first Armenian to become an Ottoman minister, and Krikor Odian, who helped to draft the Armenian constitution before becoming an aide to Mithat Pasha, one of drafters of the Ottoman constitution. For details on Krikor Agaton and Krikor Odian, see Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 134–35; for an overview of non-Muslims in the Ottoman diplomatic service, see Dogan Gurpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (I.B.Tauris, 2013). Alongside these loyal bureaucrats are several Christians who joined in conspiracies for regime change, the most famous of these being Cleanthi Scalieri, the Ottoman Greek merchant, Freemason, and political activist who played a role in numerous intrigues to bring his friend and fellow Freemason Murad V to the throne. For more on Scalieri's plots, see Florian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 71–83. Also worthy of mention are the Greek and Armenian publishers and typesetters who worked with the Young Ottomans on their journals in Istanbul and abroad. For details of their involvement, see Johann Strauss, "The Greek Connection in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Intellectual History," in *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters Since the Enlightenment*, ed. Dēmētrēs Tziouvas (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2003), 52.

Cohen describes an ideal of “imperial citizenship.”¹⁵ Beyond winning recognition for prominent non-Muslim Ottoman political actors, their work has pointed the way toward a deeper appreciation of the commitment to multi-confessionalism inherent in the lives of ordinary late Ottoman subjects, who formed pluralistic civic and military institutions and united to preserve their state from extinction. Thus far, much of this scholarship has looked to the geographical margins of the empire, especially Palestine and Iraq, and to the decades leading up to and immediately following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. The political contributions of non-Muslim Ottomans in the germinal phase of Ottomanist thought, before Abdülhamid II's rise to the throne in 1876, remain to be explored. The study of Kasap's political activities in the geographical and political heart of the empire represents a further step toward a broader reckoning with the multi-confessional reality of late Ottoman society.

In seeking to recover the distinctiveness of Kasap's contributions to Ottomanist thought, I also aim to challenge the notion that the Young Ottoman movement was driven by anti-Christian resentment.¹⁶ While Ottoman Muslim public discourse in this period does

¹⁵ Orit Bashkin, “‘Religious Hatred Shall Disappear from the Land’ – Iraqi Jews as Ottoman Subjects, 1864–1913,” *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 4, no. 3 (December 2010): For a discussion of these processes among non-Muslims in Baghdad and Jerusalem, see; Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).

¹⁶ The view of the Young Ottoman movement as exclusively Muslim and driven by hostility to Christians gained ground in contemporary European accounts, most notably those of the German author A.D. Mordtmann and the French journalist Benoit Brunswik, both of whom are discussed below. It became firmly embedded in English-language historical accounts through the writings of the mid-century American historian Roderic Davison, who wrote that most Young Ottomans believed in “in Muslim Turkish superiority among the united peoples of a united empire,” and were deeply distressed by the privileges afforded to Christian subjects through foreign patronage: “The Turkish mind, conditioned by centuries of Muslim and Ottoman dominance, was not yet ready to accept any absolute equality, much less to endorse the grant of particular privileges to Christians” (“Turkish Attitudes Concerning Muslim-Christian Equality

furnish evidence of hostility toward Ottoman Christians, particularly inspired by resentment of the legal and commercial privileges some of them enjoyed through the protection of foreign embassies, it is important to distinguish between these sectarian resentments and the Islamist rhetoric of Young Ottoman thinkers like Ali Suavi, whose Islamist ideology is explored in depth in the chapter that follows. By highlighting Kasap's centrality to the movement and his contributions to its thought, I aim to show that Ottomanism in this period was fundamentally committed to a religiously and ethnically pluralistic vision of the Ottoman state.

Finally, I want to use this chapter to explore how Kasap's literary commitments, expressed in his work as a translator, satirist, and critic, formed part of his contribution to Ottomanist thought. The cultural composition of Ottoman-ness was at the heart of Kasap's writings in the first half of the 1870s, when he actively engaged in redefining and then policing the boundaries of Ottoman culture. The ferocity of his responses to conservative Muslim rivals who cast doubt on his Ottomanness was matched by the harshness with which he attacked Greeks and Armenians who failed to meet his standards for Turkish literacy and Ottoman loyalty and his scathing words for Europeans who involved themselves in Ottoman politics. Yet for all his contentiousness, Kasap's collaborations and debates with fellow Ottomans on topics as diverse as the merits of French drama and Ottoman shadow-puppet theater were an important part of his efforts to unite Muslims and

in the Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review*, vol. 59, no. 4 [July 1954]: 844-864). Most recently, M. Şükrü Hanioglu's 2008 *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008) follows suit in maintaining that "Ottoman constitutionalism was fundamentally a reaction to the dictatorship of the bureaucracy coupled with resentment against the preferential treatment granted to non-Muslims" (112).

Christians under the banner of a shared Ottoman cultural identity. His success in this venture helped prepare the ground for an Ottomanist popular movement. Just as important, the debates over genre and theme went to the heart of the struggle to articulate Ottoman claims to civilization, which were closely linked to its claims to political legitimacy and to continued sovereignty. Kasap's positions on the continued worth and relevance of Ottoman cultural forms reflected his convictions about the continued worth and relevance of the Ottoman Empire and the approach it might take in adopting European political forms and principles.

The Melting Pot of the Mediterranean: Kasap's Cappadocian Origins

Kasap's birthplace of Cappadocia came late to its celebrated status as one of the historic homelands of the Greek people, a status complicated by the religious and ethnic pluralism that has characterized the region from its earliest recorded history. As one scholar tells us, "Hellenism spread late and unevenly" in Cappadocia following its conquest by Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE, and the region continued to serve as an alternately contested and neglected buffer zone between the Greco-Roman and Persian worlds.¹⁷ For centuries, the region was known as a land of troglodytes, a "pragmatic people" who dug deep into its volcanic landscape and built vast underground cities in order to take refuge from invaders rather than fight them to the death.¹⁸ The region's capital, Caesarea (Kayseri), became a center of Eastern Christianity in the fourth century CE when

¹⁷ J. Eric Cooper and Michael Decker, *Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 179.

¹⁸ Cooper and Decker, 34–41.

both the Armenian and Roman Churches established episcopal sees there, yet the population remained overwhelmingly rural, scattered among small villages.¹⁹ In addition to “Hellenized” indigenous Anatolians, who adopted their own dialect of Greek, the region was settled by Christian Arabs fleeing early Muslim expansion into Syria in the seventh century, and then by the forced resettlement of Slavs and Armenians under Byzantine rule.²⁰ From the eleventh century onward, the region absorbed successive waves of Turkic tribes, falling first to the Seljuks before passing under Ottoman control in the fifteenth century. At some point during these centuries, Turkish became the predominant language spoken in Cappadocia by Muslims and Christians alike.

Thus did Cappadocia become, in the words of one scholar, “the melting pot *par excellence* of the Mediterranean.”²¹ The legends of this region—those of Saint George the dragon-slayer within the Greek tradition and the warrior Seyyid Battal within the Turkish tradition, among others—reveal the centrality of miscegenation and conversion as themes of its social life. The quality of being *digenis*, of two races, was a heroic trope, and those who possessed mixed blood were endowed with a special mystical potency. As one scholar of this literature observes, “A religious syncretism emerged in this region, and like all syncretism, it could not have been exclusively religious”; instead, the heroes of Cappadocian legends were celebrated for their role in “the union of opposites, races,

¹⁹ Vrej Nersessian, “The Armenian Tradition,” in Augustine Casiday, ed., *The Orthodox Christian World* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 43.

²⁰ Cooper and Decker, *Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia*, 42–44.

²¹ Evangelia Balta, “‘Gerçi Rum İsek de Rumca Bilmez Türkçe Söyleriz’: The Adventure of an Identity in the Triptych: Vatan, Religion and Language,” *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi* 8 (2003): 28.

religions, cultures.”²²

As Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians, the family into which Kasap was born embodied this quality of *digenesis*. They were also wealthy: Kasap’s father, Serafim Kasapoğlu, was a cloth merchant with connections in Istanbul, a rare advantage in a community whose relations with coastal Greeks were distant, and often strained. The Istanbul Greek term for Anatolian Greeks, *Karamanlides*, was hated by the people to whom it was applied, given its connotations of ignorance and lack of manners.²³ Because of the gap between coastal Greeks and their landlocked co-religionists, the Hellenist revival that began among coastal Greek elites in the eighteenth century was little felt among Anatolian Christians until the second half of the nineteenth century. This marked absence of Greek nationalist sentiment is captured in a poem mourning the execution of the Greek patriarch Gregory V in the wake of the Greek Revolt of 1821.²⁴ Writing in Turkish, its author expresses deep sorrow for the loss of the Patriarch, yet he betrays no rancor toward the Sultan, and no sympathy for the rebels. Instead, the final stanza urges, “What has happened let us cover with a curtain.”²⁵ While this attitude would strike later historians as strange—

²² Ilias Anagnostakis, “La géographie romanesque de Cappadoce et de l’Euphrate et les chansons populaires grecques,” in *La Découverte de la Cappadoce au dix-neuvième siècle*, trans. Bruno Dulibine (Istanbul: Eren, 1994), 116–19.

²³ The name, derived from the Ottoman province of Karaman, has nevertheless passed into scholarly use. See Stefo Benlisoy, “Education in the Turcophone Orthodox Communities of Anatolia During the Nineteenth Century” (Boğaziçi University, 2010), 119.

²⁴ This poem was first recorded in a manuscript of Anatolian Greek folk traditions gathered by Anastasios Levidis, a Turcophone Orthodox schoolmaster who taught in Zincidere in the last decade of the nineteenth century. See Evangelia Balta and Ilias Anagnostakis, “Le cas Levidis : le premier relevé des traditions populaires,” in *La Découverte de la Cappadoce au dix-neuvième siècle*, trans. Bruno Dulibine (Istanbul: Eren, 1994), 63–69.

²⁵ R.M. Dawkins, “Turco-Christian Songs from Asia Minor,” in *Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales. Mélanges Bidez.*, vol. 2 (brussels, 1934), 206 See the full poem as it appears in Dawkins, 198–206. Among its verses are the following lines: “Islambol is destroyed.... [T]he Padishah is angry.... For the good of the faith he is dead, my Master.... Fear not; every Patriarch in this way dies not.”

one historian describes it as “curiously resigned and submissive” —it was in keeping with a milieu that shared little in the revolutionary currents of thought that moved coastal peoples, Christian and Muslim alike.²⁶

Over the course of the nineteenth century, a new spirit of “ethnic Manicheism” inspired by coastal elites would fuel efforts to purge this legacy of Cappadocian hybridity through education, religious proselytizing, resettlement, and ultimately mass violence. The Turcophone Orthodox peoples of this region in particular, embodying an “antithesis between the two parameters of nationalism, religion and language,” were to become a particular focus of nationalist anxieties among Greek and Turkish nationalists alike.²⁷ In 1856, one of the first of several folkloric studies of the Karamanli peoples appeared in Istanbul, describing them as true Greeks who were “submerged in the profound slumber of the ignorant.”²⁸ The task of “awakening” these Turcophone Orthodox Christians to their forgotten Greek heritage was to be one of the major projects of coastal Greek literary and philanthropic societies in the decades to come.

We know little of Kasap’s early childhood or the conditions of his education until his thirteenth year, when he was sent to study at the Great School of the Nation (*Megáli tou Genous Scholî*) run by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul. The school had been founded shortly after the fall of Byzantium for the purpose of educating select Orthodox

²⁶ Richard Clogg, “A Millet within a Millet: The Karamanlides,” in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Philip Issawi (Princeton, N.J: Darwin Press, 1999), 128.

²⁷ Balta, “‘Gerçi Rum İsek de Rumca Bilmez Türkçe Söyleriz’: The Adventure of an Identity in the Triptych: Vatan, Religion and Language,” 26.

²⁸ N. Rizos, *Kappadokika* (Istanbul: Anatoli, 1856), 102; quoted in Balta and Anagnostakis, *La Découverte de la Cappadoce au dix-neuvième siècle*, 24.

boys from throughout the empire, “so that they could read and understand well and correctly the Holy Scriptures and the various liturgical books.”²⁹ The nineteenth-century curriculum had been expanded to include mathematics, the exact sciences, and secular Greek classics, as well as Latin, French, Arabic, and Persian. Although the education aimed to produce a cultural uniformity among the Orthodox Christian sons of the empire, the atmosphere was clouded by ethnic rivalries; the memoir of the nineteenth-century Bulgarian nationalist hero G.S. Rakovski recounts being subjected to schoolyard taunts from Istanbul Greeks.³⁰ As a merchant’s son, Kasap may have been somewhat insulated from these attitudes. Or he may have been preoccupied by his extracurricular responsibilities as an apprentice at his cousin’s cloth shop in the Astarçılar Han, just outside the Grand Bazaar.³¹ In any case, he seems to have absorbed little of the Hellenist loyalties that were to become an important part of the curriculum in the revamped Greek educational system in the latter half of the nineteenth century.³²

On the Battlefield of Humanity: Kasap in Europe with Dumas

Shortly after reaching adulthood, Kasap left Istanbul for Paris, where he would spend more than a decade, much of it in the company of the novelist, journalist, and one-man publishing enterprise Alexandre Dumas. Almost all of our knowledge about this

²⁹ *Speaking the Truth in Love: Theological and Spiritual Exhortations of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 142.

³⁰ Cited in Assen Dimoff, “G.S. Rakovski, 1821-1867: political writer and activist of the Bulgarian Renaissance (unpublished MA thesis, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1968), 67.

³¹ These and other details of Kasap’s early life are drawn from Turgut Kut’s excellent article on Kasap in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 40 (2011), 473-475.

³² Stefo Benlisoy, “Education in the Turcophone Orthodox Communities of Anatolia During the Nineteenth Century” (Ph.D., Boğaziçi University, 2010).

formative period of Kasap's life comes from sources other than Kasap himself, who seems never to have written directly about his reasons for going to Europe or what he did there. Three competing legends are offered to explain how the young Kasap found his way to Paris in the first place. The first two begin with a French lieutenant on his way home from the battlefields of Crimea, whose eye is drawn by a handsome piece of cloth hanging in the window of a shop and steps inside to investigate. There, according to one version of the story, the officer spotted Kasap poring over his French books and invited him to come with him to France to continue his education.³³ In the more colorful version, it was Kasap who initiated their encounter by whispering that the price being charged for the cloth that interested him was too high, a piece of honesty that the French officer rewarded by taking the honorable lad back to France with him.³⁴ According to both legends, this French officer turned out to be a relation of Alexandre Dumas, who lost little time in hiring him as his secretary.

Yet a third version of the story of Kasap's arrival in Paris comes from the pen of Dumas himself:

One day I received a letter in handwriting of a bizarre sort, couched in the kind of Frankish dialect that is spoken on the shores of the Mediterranean [...]. Before attempting to read this lengthy epistle I went straight to the signature. Its author called himself Théodore Cassape, and my eyes had never before encountered either of these names. The author of the letter wrote to me that he was eighteen years of age, that he had been born at Caesarea, in Cappadocia, that he was a Turkish subject, although Greek by birth. He added that he had read my novel *Monte-Cristo* in a Greek translation, from which he deduced that I was very rich and very kind; that he had, on the basis of such hopes, raised a subscription

³³ Kut, "Teodor Kasap," 473.

³⁴ Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Namık Kemal Devrinin İnsanları ve Olayları Arasında [Namık Kemal Among the People and Events of His Time]*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1944), 586. This version of the story, like Kut's, is based on interviews with Kasap's descendants. Kuntay sets the encounter in Izmir rather than Istanbul.

among the members of his family which had enabled him to come to France; that, while he already spoke Greek and Turkish, his ambition was to add to these two dialects a third language; that this third language was French; and that he was counting on me for the fulfillment of a desire that would complete his education.

I replied to him that I was a bit too busy to complete his education myself, but that, if he wished to come see me, we could consult together on the means of achieving the goal he had set out for himself.

My Greek turned up the following day.³⁵

Dumas writes that Kasap struck him as being in “a state of profound ignorance,” yet possessed of a “genuine will to learn,” and so he agreed to pay for Kasap’s lodging at a pension on the rue d’Assas, where “five or six Turks” were already in residence. The pension’s owner, a certain M. Chastagner, was also charged with providing board for the young traveler and teaching him French “within a year,” all at a rate of 90 francs per month.

After this arrangement had been made, Dumas continues,

I put two or three louis in my scholar’s pocket and advised him to learn as quickly as possible, and not to bother me unless absolutely necessary. I invited him, besides, to come dine with me on days off, whenever it suited him. At the end of fifteen months, during which time Théodore came to dine five or six times on the rue d’Amsterdam, Théodore spoke French as you or I do.

At this point, says Dumas, Kasap informed him that “the goal for which he had come to the capital of the civilized world having been achieved, he saw nothing to prevent his return to Cappadocia.” He then took his leave, “assuring me of his gratitude,” and promising

³⁵ Alexandre Dumas, *Viva Garibaldi!: une odyssee en 1860*, ed. Claude Schopp (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 102–3. The book is an extended version of Dumas’s published account *Les Garibaldiens*, supplemented with diary entries from this period that Dumas assembled in 1862 but was unable to publish as a whole during his lifetime. See Schoppe, “Établissement du texte,” in *Viva Garibaldi!*, 447–451.

to rejoin Dumas if he ever made the trip to Greece he had long dreamed of making.³⁶³⁷

A few years later, Dumas made a trip to Russia and the Caucasus. His steamer returned along the southern coast of the Black Sea, but Dumas wasn't interested in visiting Ottoman territory. "I visited Trebizond despite myself," he wrote, and never left the ship during its six-day stop in Istanbul.³⁸ He was full of impatience to return to France in order to launch himself on his tour of the Mediterranean, and let word get around in Istanbul of his desire to have a small ship custom-built for this purpose. "Two months after my return [in May of 1859]," he writes, "my door opened, and Théodore walked in," nearly unrecognizable: the once bare-chinned youth had returned to him "bearded like the wandering Jew." He had come to offer his services "as a Greek interpreter and a Turkish dragoman, since I speak the two languages, plus French, thanks to you." Dumas accepted his offer and invited him to stay. Within a few months, they were on board a copper-bottomed ship bound for Greece, along with seventeen others, including a Greek navigator, a Georgian servant, and a handful of other young men, as well as Dumas's twenty-year-old mistress, who was known on board as "the Admiral."³⁹

Their ship, the *Emma*, raised anchor from Marseilles on May 9th, 1860. Dumas's plan was to stop off in Italy in hopes of reuniting with his friend Giuseppe Garibaldi, the famed Italian freedom fighter, who had just resigned as a general in the Sardinian army and was embarking on a campaign to liberate the Kingdom of Naples (also known as the Kingdom of

³⁶ Dumas, 103.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Dumas, *Le Caucase*, cited in Claude Schopp, "Preface," in *Viva Garibaldi! Une odyssée en 1860.*, by Alexandre Dumas, ed. Claude Schopp (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 14.

³⁹ Dumas, *Viva Garibaldi!*, 102.

the Two Sicilies) from the tyranny of Bourbon rule.⁴⁰ Before he did so, Dumas hoped to add another volume to the *Mémoires de Garibaldi* that the two men had begun together earlier that year. But as soon as the *Emma* arrived in Genoa and got wind of Garibaldi's landing in Sicily, Dumas formed the "fixed intention" to reach Garibaldi "as soon as possible, so that I could see all with my own eyes, and thus mingle my recital with action."⁴¹ The pace of events in Sicily soon led Dumas to abandon his plans for Greece entirely and devote himself to Garibaldi's cause, the liberation and unification of Italy. The passengers of the *Emma*, including Théodore Kasap, followed suit.

The adventures of Kasap and his fellow travelers on the Garibaldian campaign **are known to us only through Dumas's published memoirs. Yet if Dumas's account is to be credited, Kasap played an integral role in the indispensable if somewhat farcical efforts of Dumas and his friends to aid the Garibaldian cause. It was Kasap whom Dumas sent ashore to deliver** a letter offering the services of the *Emma* to transport arms from Marseilles for Garibaldi's troops.⁴² Garibaldi happily accepted the offer, and so Dumas and his entourage became arms traffickers, crisscrossing the Mediterranean with arms purchased in France to aid the Italian Risorgimento against French monarchical tyranny in Sicily. Although Kasap left us with no written record of his own concerning these adventures, he bore a physical trace in the form of a scar he claimed to have won on the

⁴⁰ Dumas, 132–33.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 155. While still in Marseilles, Dumas learned that Garibaldi had already left Genoa for Naples, and so went to the Neapolitan consulate in Marseilles to seek visas for himself and his traveling companions (see Dumas, 134). This most likely explains how Kasap's passport came to bear a Sicilian visa dated May 3rd, 1860, six days before their departure from Marseilles (Kut, "Teodor Kasap," 474).

⁴² Dumas, 394.

battlefield, fighting alongside Garibaldi's Redshirts.⁴³ (Apparently this scar made a strong impression on Namık Kemal upon their first meeting, in Paris.⁴⁴) One of the few other mementos Kasap preserved from his time in Paris was a first edition of one of Dumas's novels, inscribed by the author "à mon ami Théodore."

While on campaign with Garibaldi in the summer of 1860, Dumas alighted on the idea of founding a bilingual newspaper, which the two agreed to call *L'Independant/L'Indipendente*. Back in Marseilles to pick up weapons, Dumas wrote out its charter: "This Journal will be written half in Italian and half in French," he noted, adding that part of its mission would be to provide the French public with news and "detailed accounts" of Garibaldi's campaigns.⁴⁵ Garibaldi himself expressed the wish that Dumas's newspaper should serve to keep him honest, "should I ever deviate from my duty to the people or my fidelity to the principles of humanity."⁴⁶ That Garibaldi's struggle against the Bourbon monarchy in Sicily would be of interest to a French audience appears never to have been in doubt to Garibaldi or Dumas, for whom the campaign for Italian unification and "the principles of humanity" were one and the same.

Dumas's Garibaldian journal, funded by his own largesse, was published as a daily newspaper, largely in Italian, until May 1861, when his funds ran dry; it resumed publication a year later with a subvention from the newly constituted Italian government,

⁴³ Kuntay, 587. The anecdote was recounted to Kuntay by Kasap's younger son, Diogenes, Kuntay mistakenly identifies the battle in which Kasap sustained his wound as Battle of Solferino, which is impossible, as it took place in the north of Italy in 1859, before he arrived in Italy with Dumas.

⁴⁴ Kuntay, *Namık Kemal Devrinin İnsanları ve Olayları Arasında [Namık Kemal Among the People and Events of His Time]*, 1:586.

⁴⁵ Dumas, *On Board the Emma*, "Appendix III: Translation of the Original Prospectus of Dumas' Newspaper," 564-565.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 425.

again under Dumas's editorship. Language barriers proved to be no barrier at all; Dumas's manuscripts were translated into Italian, and his originals were sometimes also published in French newspapers as well.⁴⁷ The newspaper was explicitly conceived as a weapon on the battlefield of discourse.⁴⁸ Such a conception of the press is echoed by Kasap and Namık Kemal in their own respective inaugural letters to readers. Dumas's emphasis on humanism as a value that can be uniquely conveyed through the press was one of the most resonant themes here. In an essay written a decade later, Kasap bristles with indignation at his French opponent's criticism of the Ottoman press for "exciting patriotism among the Turks," writing in defense of these "*human* journals, which make war on the Turkish regime while having maintained patriotic feeling among the Turks."⁴⁹

Dumas remained in Naples at the helm of this newspaper for four years, returning to Paris in the spring of 1864. In the years that followed, Kasap may have stayed on as one of the bevy of young literary men whom Dumas kept around him, who played varying roles in the production of books and articles under his name. By the end of the decade, Dumas's financial situation had begun to deteriorate, raising the question of whether Kasap pursued a living by other means.⁵⁰ Yet they evidently remained friends throughout this period, as Namık Kemal could recall being introduced to Dumas by Kasap after his arrival in Paris in May of 1867. The three apparently dined together at least once at Dumas's home on the

⁴⁷ Anne Quinney and Michael H. Hoffheimer, "The Unforgiven: Alexandre Dumas's Review of Cavour in *L'indipendente* (1863)," *French Studies Bulletin* 30, no. 110 (March 20, 2009): 12–17.

⁴⁸ [Cite its inaugural issue.]

⁴⁹ Th. Cassape, *La Question des réformes et des garanties* (Constantinople [Istanbul]: Typographie et Lithographie Centrales, 1876), 21.

⁵⁰ Arthur F. Davison, *Alexander Dumas: His Life and Works* (Westminster; Archibald Constable & Co., 1902), 331ff.

Boulevard Malesherbes, enjoying a meal prepared for them by the novelist himself.⁵¹

Kasap's decision to leave Europe in early 1870 is yet another milestone in his life that went unmarked in any of his surviving writings. The threat of war between France and Prussia must have played a role in the decision, along with the disintegration of the Young Ottoman Society and the worsening of Dumas's illness and his finances. As a "Greek" with excellent French and literary connections, Kasap might have chosen to make his home in Europe, yet he chose to return to Istanbul, where his emergence as an Ottoman patriot would take place gradually over the course of the decade to come.

An Ottoman by Choice

Upon arriving in Istanbul after more than a decade's absence, Kasap would have found his city transformed. The Bosphorus was now crisscrossed by steamers bearing local passengers and international goods, while some of the city's oldest neighborhoods had become construction sites to make way for a system of horse-drawn trams.⁵² The influx of European capital in the wake of the Crimean War, both in the form of concessions to French and German companies and as loans to the Ottoman state by private investors in London and Paris, was remaking the urban landscape: Galata, the banking district, was bursting with grand new buildings in the European style along Bankalar Sokak (Bank Street), while

⁵¹ Kuntay, *Namik Kemal Devrinin İnsanları ve Olayları Arasında [Namik Kemal Among the People and Events of His Time]*, 1:589.

⁵² Regarding the installation of tramways in Galata, Aksaray, and other districts of the capital, see Philip Ernest Schoenberg, "The Evolution of Transport in Turkey (Eastern Thrace and Asia Minor) under Ottoman Rule, 1856-1918," *Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no. 3 (October 1977), pp. 359-372: 361.

embassies and private mansions were sprouting up along the northern shores of the Bosphorus.⁵³ The Ottoman capital had become a site of renewed curiosity and financial and political speculation, attracting more foreigners than ever before to the northern shores of the Golden Horn.

Kasap was exceptionally well positioned to find a place in this increasingly Europeanized society. His command of French would have easily intimidated those who had learned theirs from private tutors or in service to the Foreign Ministry's Translation Bureau, and his familiarity with Dumas and Paris literary culture was a further source of cultural capital. His French experience and his dignified bearing appear to have conveyed a strong impression of erudition among those who knew him, which was widely remarked upon in contemporary accounts of his character.⁵⁴ He lost little time in monetizing his European bona fides by securing a position as a professor of French, "as a matter of bread," as one of his biographers writes.⁵⁵ He also married a woman, Iulia, and started a family: state records indicate that their first son, Serafim, was born in 1870, while a second son, Aleko (also known as Alexandre), followed soon after, born in Istanbul's Beşiktaş district on September 13, 1871.⁵⁶

⁵³ See Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993). My thanks go to András Riedlmayer of the Harvard University Fine Arts Library for pointing me in this direction.

⁵⁴ References to Kasap's erudition are ubiquitous: in Bolayır, *Ali Ekrem Bolayır'ın hâtıraları*, 57-58; and Kuntay, 586, as well as the report on Kasap's arrest in the April 11, 1877 edition of the Paris journal *Le Temps*, discussed below, which notes (somewhat misleadingly) that Kasap "completed his studies in France." See also the allusion to Kasap's multilingualism in the Hacivat and Karagöz play "Gazeteci [Journalist]," published in Cevdet Kudret, ed., *Karagöz*, vol. 3 (Istanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1970), 431-438.

⁵⁵ Kuntay, *Namik Kemal Devrinin İnsanları ve Olayları Arasında [Namik Kemal Among the People and Events of His Time]*, 1:590.

⁵⁶ Kut, "Teodor Kasap," 474, 475. Although not mentioned in Kut's article, Ottoman birth records indicate that Teodor and Iulia had a first son, Serafim, born in the Hijri year 1286, two years before Aleko (BOA DH.Said 63/301 and DH.Said 43/371). Aleko, also known as Alexandre, gained admission to the palace school

Yet rather than remain a schoolteacher, Kasap aspired to follow in the footsteps of his friends Dumas and Namık Kemal, for whom a man of words was a man of action. While in France, Kasap had witnessed the role of the press, particularly the satirical press, in a state governed by a repressive monarchy, where it offered one of the few venues for criticism and resistance. Just as it had in the Ottoman Empire, the number and readership of French newspapers had expanded dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century, a response to the availability of cheap paper and print, and to the laying of telegraph lines that enabled journalists to relay more exciting and immediate news reports from distant places. In Istanbul, journalism had also become a growth industry. While the Turkish-language press struggled to remain in print under the watchful eyes of censors, newspapers in other languages thrived in this period. The French- and English-language newspapers that had served the merchant communities of Izmir and Istanbul for decades had multiplied, and were now joined by an array of Greek, Greco-Turkish, Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, Judeo-Spanish, and Arabic-language journals.⁵⁷ Among these journals, a substantial number were satirical.⁵⁸ Yet in contrast to the Young Ottoman journals published in exile, which included sections or supplements in French and sometimes

(Mekteb-i Sultânî), after which he entered the Foreign Ministry, where he worked from 1891 until the collapse of the Ottoman state in 1922.

⁵⁷ Some of the journals that began to appear in Ottoman territory in the second half of the nineteenth century include the Karamanli journal *Anatoli* (founded in the 1840s), the Bulgarian journal *Tsarigradski Vestnik* (1848), the Ladino journals *Or Israel* (1853), *Djurnal Yisraelit* (1860), and *El Nasyonal* (1872); Ahmed Faris Efendi's Arabic-language *Al-Jawa'ib* (1861); and the Turkish journals *Mecmu'a-i Fünun* (1862), *Tercüman-ı Ahvâl* (1862), *Tasvir-i Efkar* (1862), *Mümeyyiz* (1869), and *Basiret* (1870).

⁵⁸ These include the Armenian *Meghu* ("The Wasp"), founded in 1856; the Ladino *Djoha i Djohayko*, founded in 1860; the Bulgarian *Gayda*, founded in 1863; Anestis's Greek or Karamanli satirical *Zenbur* ("The Wasp"); for more details, see Johann Strauss, "Notes on the First Satirical Journals in the Ottoman Empire," in *Amtsblatt, Vilayet Gazetesi Und Unabhängiges Journal: Die Anfänge Der Presse Im Nahen Osten* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 121-138.

English as well as Turkish, these Istanbul journals published in one language and were aimed at one audience.

In France, Kasap had seen how satire afforded a tool for journalists to address the repressive political atmosphere, as they strove to stay one step ahead of the censors through indirect allusions to current events and public figures. By making his first foray into Istanbul's press world a satirical venture, Kasap signaled his desire to stay in print and steer clear of official anger. He was aided in this goal by his decision to publish his journal as a bilingual French and Greek edition, using two languages that were far less subject to state scrutiny. The first issues of his journal, *Diogène/Ho Diogenês*, appeared in French and Greek.⁵⁹

Yet within a few months, Kasap had decided to switch over to Turkish. This decision would mean inviting increased scrutiny from state censors, and it also meant risking publication in a language that Kasap himself could barely read or write. Yet in order to build the kind of diverse and inclusive Ottoman public on which the Young Ottoman political project depended, it was necessary to reach more readers. The impetus for the switch may have come from his friend Namık Kemal, who had recently arrived in Istanbul and ended up playing an important behind-the-scenes role as an anonymous contributor to Kasap's journals.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Although these early issues have been lost, their existence is testified to in other journals of the time, including the very first Turkish-language satirical journal, *Terakki* ("Progress"). They are also referred to in the letter to readers in *Diyojen's* very first Turkish-language edition, where Kasap notes that the journal had begun its life "some months earlier" in French and Greek.

⁶⁰ Avni Özgürel, "Diyojen gülmeyi öğretti," *Radikal*, October 12, 2003, sec. Yorum, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=91797>.

The magazine, named *Diyojen* after the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes, was supposed to be fun to read, but it had a strong sense of mission. As Kasap explained in his opening letter to Turkish readers, its first mission was to offer “interpretations of public opinion and of the aims of the imperial government”—very much in keeping with every other newspaper published in this period, especially those aligned with the Young Ottoman movement. But it also had a second mission: to provide “eloquence, provocations, and mockery concerning morals, manners, and things foreign to our homeland.”⁶¹ The second set of aims was just as important as the first. Satire, playful provocations, and outright mockery turned out to be valuable tools for drawing a line in the sand between what the indigenous and the foreign, and the ability to command these tools persuasively turned out to be a brilliant way for Kasap to stake a claim to indigeneity for himself and his fellow non-Muslims.

Why Diogenes? The choice of an Anatolian Greek namesake was surely no accident, reflecting a distinctly regional pride on Kasap’s part, while mirroring the general vogue for ancient Greek philosophy that swept Istanbul’s literary culture from the 1850s onward (Strauss, “The Greek Connection in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Intellectual History,” 53–55). Kasap may also have been aware of the British satirical magazine *Diogenes, a Light on Many Subjects*, which was published in London from 1853 to 1855. Kasap himself explained the choice of name by identifying Diogenes as “one of the Greek philosophers, a great madman [*meczub*] from Sinop who was famous for sitting in a barrel,” and that “his spirit and approach [*meşreb ü mezhebi*] were deemed well-suited to the principles of this

⁶¹ Teodor Kasap, “Muqaddime,” *Diyojen*, no. 1 (November 12, 1286): 1. “[M]aqsadı ise efkâr-ı ümumiye ve mekâsîd-ı hükûmet-i seniyyeye tercümanlık ve ahlâk ü terbiye ve vatanımıza ecnebi olan şeyler hakkında ta’riz ü istihzâ ile terzebânîlıq olduğundan...”

journal.”⁶² Directly beneath the journal’s title, Kasap included a cartoon depicting Diogenes’s famous apocryphal encounter with Alexander the Great, in which the philosopher, an old man seated in the mouth of a barrel, addresses the brazen hero and his phalanx of warriors. According to the legend, Alexander had once sought out Diogenes and promised him anything he liked; his reply was printed in the caption below the illustration: “Don’t block my sunlight, that’s all I ask.”⁶³

Kasap’s embrace of Diogenes was a clear signal of his anti-authoritarian stance, placing him journal in playful opposition to the state. Yet it was also an artful subversion of the vogue for Greek revivalism, and particularly Alexander the Great, that had begun to sweep Greek-language literary culture. Beginning with Rhigas Velestinlis, Greek cultural revivalists had sought to reclaim Alexander and with him the *megali idea* of recovering a lost Greek empire. Throughout the 1860s, Greek and Greco-Turkish editions of the *Phyllada*, narrating Alexander’s conquest of Asia Minor, enjoyed an unprecedented popularity amid a renewed interest in Anatolia as “the first homeland of the Greek race.”⁶⁴ By taking as its mascot a classic Greek philosopher imbued with an anti-authoritarian and implicitly anti-Hellenist ideological coloring, the journal directed its “glibness, satire, and mockery” at the Ottoman government and the Greek establishment alike.

Nor did Kasap stop there. The very first issues of *Diyojen* took aim at the French- and English-language journals that in 1870 still dominated the newsstands of the capital,

⁶² Ibid. “Diyojen hukemâ-yı yunaniyeden hüm-nişinlikle şöhet-i şî’âr Sinoplu bir meczûb-i kâmil olup meşreb ü mezhebi bu gazetenin muvâfik mesleği olduğundan bu ism ile tevsimi münasib görüldü.”

⁶³ “Gölge etme başka ihsan istemem.” *Diyojen*, Nos. 1-61. The cartoon was discontinued after the 61st issue (Sungu, “*Diyojen gazetesi*,” 339).

⁶⁴ Evangelia Balta and Ilias Anagnostakis, *La Découverte de la Cappadoce au dix-neuvième siècle*, trans. Bruno Dulibine (Istanbul: Eren, 1994), 30.

questioning where their true loyalties lay. In the first issues there appeared articles that charged the *Levant Times* with “seeking to advance the French cause in its English form,” accused the journal *Esprit* of being a crypto-Jesuit publication, and even attacked the *Courrier d’Orient*, asking, “Of what possible use are its language and ideas in the East?”⁶⁵ As a whole, these journals were an “abominable assemblage [*güruh-ı mekruh*] that had abandoned the homeland and snapped the tether” in “pushing their rudeness [*edepsizlik*] beyond the usual point and daring to insult the state and nation.”⁶⁶ Such harsh words were particularly bold given that these journals held control of the city’s few actual presses; *Diyojen* would at one point be printed using the press that belonged to another of his targets, the journal *La Turquie*.⁶⁷ In addition, several of these newspapers’ editors were friends of the Young Ottomans who had publicly championed the constitutionalist cause. (The founding editor of the *Courrier d’Orient*, a certain M.-J. Giampietri, had played an instrumental role in facilitating Namık Kemal’s escape from Istanbul to Paris in 1867.⁶⁸) Yet such rhetoric succeeded in establishing *Diyojen*’s place among its rivals by marking out for itself a new ideological territory, claiming the high ground as the journal of true Ottoman patriots. Its critiques of these journals amounted to attacks on the European diplomatic elite in Istanbul and their influence over Ottoman policy. Just as important, they served to assert the independence of Ottoman liberal opinion from its European counterparts: a perspective within which loyalty to the Ottoman nation was just as important as loyalty to

⁶⁵ Mustafa Nihat Özön, “Kemal İstanbul’da,” in *Namık Kemal ve İbret gazetesi* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1938), 3-4.

⁶⁶ *Diyojen* no. 6, 9 February 1871; quoted in Özön, 3-4.

⁶⁷ Cihangir Gündoğdu, “Diyogen Dergisi ve Dizini,” *Müteferrika*, no. 35 (Summer 2009): 55.

⁶⁸ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 33, where his name appears as Giampetry.

the liberal cause.

Kasap's own claims to Ottomanness were initially complicated by his *zimmi* status, his long absence from the country, and the fact that he was initially unable to read or write in Turkish, even though it was his native tongue. How did Kasap manage to publish a journal in a language he could not write himself? As he had seen Dumas do in Italy a decade earlier, Kasap found talented writers in the language he lacked and worked closely with them. At first, he relied heavily on friends and younger family members, before expanding his stable of writings to include the Ahmed Mithat and other young talents.⁶⁹ Kasap was helped by the fact that, unlike Dumas, he was a native speaker of the language he could not write. Rather than having his articles translated, he simply dictated them. The clear literary style that resulted from this approach became a trademark of all his publications, a virtue born of necessity that Kasap himself celebrated indirectly in his denunciations of the over-written prose of certain rival newspapers.⁷⁰ The most basic strategy in Kasap's arsenal of compensatory techniques was to publish a series of newspapers that were heavy on dialogues and illustrations, and whose humor was expressed in colloquial language. Besides making it easier for Kasap, this approach made his journals more accessible to other readers who faced the same limitations with written Turkish that he did—Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Muslims without sufficient education to easily read the Perso-Arabic script.

Kasap's choice of satire as a mode of expression paired well with his enthusiasm for

⁶⁹ Kut, 474.

⁷⁰ İhsan Sungu, "Diyojen Gazetesi," *Aylık Ansiklopedisi* 1, no. 11 (March 1945): 339.

drama, another medium that relies on an ear for spoken language. In addition to producing Turkish-language adaptations of plays by Molière, Dumas *père et fils*, and Hugo, he seized on drama criticism as a means of elaborating his ideas about Ottoman identity. In the first year of *Diyojen*'s existence, Kasap took to its pages to denounce the theatrical performances staged by Güllü Agop, an Armenian producer who had been granted a license by the state to found an "Ottoman Theater" for the staging of Turkish-language plays.⁷¹ Kasap disapproved of Agop's selection of which works to bring to the stage, and he was particularly incensed by the poor quality of the adaptations and their on-stage Turkish elocution. He called it "laughable" that a play "written about French morals and manners, and translated by an Armenian who doesn't know Turkish," would be presented to an Ottoman audience.⁷²

With this assertion, Kasap drew a sharp line between good and bad adaptations of French literature. It was crucial, he maintained, for the subject matter to be appropriate to an Ottoman audience, and it was equally crucial for the quality of the Turkish rendering to uphold rather than debase the literary standards of the language. In this, as in many other cases, Kasap reserved his harshest words for fellow Ottoman Christians, denigrating his opponents' command of Turkish in order to set the terms for their participation in Ottoman culture. For Kasap, the importance of the theater went beyond aesthetics; at stake was nothing less than the character and integrity of the Ottoman nation. "What is called theater

⁷¹ The pieces he wrote were unsigned, but Kasap made little effort to conceal his identity, which was easily guessed in any case. Cevdet Kudret, "Teodor Kasap," in *Işkilli Memo: Molière'in Sganarelle ou le Cocu imaginaire imaginaire adlı komedyansından aktaran*, trans. Teodor Kasap, ed. Cevdet Kudret (Istanbul: Elif Yayınları, 1965), 7.

⁷² *Diyojen* No. 161, 9 Teşrinisani 1288/21 November 1872, quoted in *ibid.*

is really a school of morals,” he wrote, “and plays are lessons given for the improvement of morals, so that a play designed for the correction of French morals can be of no use whatsoever for the correction of Turkish morals, and indeed may do harm.” In a follow-up article that appeared a few days later, Kasap asked, “So long as we don't know the letter *elif* from a stick, what lesson can we draw from a play written about the inner feelings of Monsieur So-and-So and his Parisian tarts?”⁷³ Such a play might be useful for the instruction of Parisian morals, but for an Ottoman audience it was an ill-conceived frivolity.

Kasap's allusion to audience members who “don't know an *elif* from a stick,” although certainly pejorative, is oddly inclusive: it draws together the diverse cross-section of Istanbul's inhabitants who spoke Turkish but could not read it. This group ranged from uneducated Muslims to educated Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, whose literacy was confined to the alphabets used in their sacred texts. It may have also included Kasap himself, who by one account did not learn to read and write the Arabic script until his stint in Sultanahmet jail in 1877.⁷⁴ In Kasap's formula, all of these people were “Ottomans,” equal in their claim to Ottoman identity and in their need for instruction in Ottoman culture and values. One of the chief aims of Ottoman drama, in his view, was to provide this instruction. Kasap's usage of the term “Ottoman” marked a shift away from the older custom of reserving the term for members of the elite Muslim *askeri* class of bureaucrats

⁷³ *Diyogen* No. 164, 15 Teşrinisani 1288/27 November 1872, quoted in *ibid.* Elif (ل) is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, in which Turkish was most commonly written until 1928, when the Turkish Republic mandate the adoption of a modified Latin script.

⁷⁴ One of Kasap's friends, Mehmet 'Ata, recalls visiting him in prison and finding his friend struggling to teach himself how to write in Turkish. Mehmet Ata, “Memalik-i Osmaniyede sansür'ün tarihi,” *İkdam*, 6 Rebiülevvel 1337 [10 December, 1918]; cited in İhsan Sungu, “Teodor Kasap,” *Aylık Ansiklopedisi* 1, no. 4 (August 1944): 127.

and soldiers. The explosion of the Ottoman press and theater and their mass audiences was rapidly broadening the term “Ottoman” to include everyday subjects of the sultan. Kasap was not alone in using the term in this broader sense: Many of his contemporaries were champions of this expansion, especially Namık Kemal, whose journal *İbret* (“Lesson”) made popular education an explicit part of its mission. What was distinctive about Kasap’s contribution to this effort was his efforts to include non-Muslims, not least of all himself, in the newly expanded category.

Of course, this also involved heavy policing of his fellow non-Muslim Ottomans like Agop to ensure that they met and upheld standards of Ottoman acculturation. In his early years, Kasap made a target of his fellow Ottoman Greek journalist’s newspaper *Anatoli* (the Greek word for “East”), which was published in Karamanli, or Turkish written in the Greek alphabet.⁷⁵ In his own newspaper, Kasap mocked it as a “green-grocer’s newspaper” addressed to “very ordinary people.”⁷⁶ His scorn arose from the newspaper’s catering to Turcophone Greeks as a separate community; as Johann Strauss notes, Kasap was “opposed to communitarianism” in all its forms.⁷⁷

Yet it was in that very spirit that Kasap urged his readers to consume more of the minority press, despite the disdain he evidently held for its editors. One of his early newspapers includes a notice inviting readers to his publishing house to take lessons in the Armenian alphabet, a service intended for those who wished to read Armeno-Turkish

⁷⁵ The *Anatoli* newspaper ran from 1841 until the end of the empire in 1922, one of the longest-lived newspapers in Ottoman publishing history.

⁷⁶ Kasap, writing in *Çingiraklı Tatar* no. 12, 11 March 1287; quoted in Strauss, “Is Karamanli Literature Part of a ‘Christian-Turkish (Turco-Christian) Literature?’,” 189.

⁷⁷ Strauss, 189.

newspapers.⁷⁸ In the same issue, the journal carried a brief item entitled “A little statistics” [*ufacik bir istatistik*] that provided a table of Istanbul’s population and the number of newspapers published in each language. The numbers are presented without comment, but they make clear that Greeks and Armenians dominate the press, with a total of 16 newspapers despite a combined population of only 400,000, while the Turks, with a population of 800,000, have only three. The reader might wonder why Kasap is drawing his Turkish-language readers’ attention to these statistics. The table certainly serves to heighten his readers’ awareness of the previously separate linguistic and cultural spheres that Ottomans inhabit, and of their unequal representation in the journalistic sphere; the question remains, to what end? One aspect of his intervention, it seems, is to urge these newspapers and communities to acknowledge and address each other.

Besides the fellow Christians who were subject to his mockery, Kasap irritated plenty of conservative Muslim journalists for whom his Christian status made him suspect. The very first play that he staged, an adaptation of Molière’s 1668 comedy *The Miser*, encountered criticism even before its debut from the newspaper *Basiret*. The author, known as Basiretçi Ali Efendi, questioned Kasap’s decision to name his adaptation *Pinti Hamid* (“Stingy Hamid”), an editorial choice that it interpreted as a slur against Muslims. In response, Kasap reprinted his critic’s article in full in his own newspaper, adding his own parenthetical retorts after each of the author’s points, as follows:

According to our investigations, this play was translated from the French, and its title was *The Miser*. Indeed, we were not able to understand the aim of the individual who exerted himself to produce this translation in his rendering of

⁷⁸ Strauss, 182.

The Miser as Stingy Hamid. Supposing his aim was the thought that this name indicates an excess of miserliness (*Not because it indicates an excess of miserliness, but simply because Stingy Hamid is a well-known figure in stories, whose name appears in proverbs about miserliness, that's why*), he neglected to consider this, that one can find plenty of misers with the names Nikola or Petro. (*How could I have neglected to consider it? I considered it, but I feared that if I should use the names Nikola or Petro, as you say, you would criticize me saying, "Why isn't he called Istefan or Artin?" In any case, there are misers in every millet. Ottomans will not be fooled by this sort of sycophancy.*) And according to what we have heard, the translator of this play is apparently a Christian; and so to this Christian "monsieur" we say that Muslims are famous for their generosity. (*Yes, but Stingy Hamid is known for his miserliness.*)⁷⁹

In effect, Kasap turned *Basiret's* critical monologue into a dramatic dialogue, amusing his audience and winning their sympathy with witty comebacks that allowed him the last word in the argument. Kasap's retorts strenuously attest to a familiarity with Ottoman culture shared between himself and his readers: his jokes refer not only to the folk character Pinti Hamid, but to the ages-old rivalry between Armenians and Greeks. His writing is full of confidence that his readers will understand these references, and that "Ottomans will not be fooled" by *Basiret's* attempt at Christian-baiting. In these and similar episodes, Kasap presented his readers with an opportunity to envision a broader Ottoman identity than that of a population divided along sectarian lines. In its place he offered the image of a multi-confessional Ottoman public, united by a common cultural and linguistic heritage. The social identity of a reader who recognized himself as part of this public was a necessary precursor to the formation of a political identity amenable to a multi-confessional empire with political representation of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The pugnacious yet inviting persona that Kasap projected in his writings took on a

⁷⁹ *Çingiraklı Tatar* no. 2, 29 Mart 1289 [10 April 1873], original article in *Basiret* No. 895, 25 Mart 1289 [6 April 1873]; cited in Kudret, "Teodor Kasap," 19.

more concrete form in the journal he founded in April 1873, a few months after the government's final closure of *Diyojen*. The new journal, titled *Çingiraklı Tatar* ("Jangling Courier"), lasted for only 29 issues before it, too, was shut down by the government. Yet its short publication life marked an important shift in tone for Kasap, and a broadening of his cultural and political ambitions.

The newfound flamboyancy of Kasap's public guise was captured in its first issue, which opened with an imaginary dialogue between the Jangling Courier and his fellow newspaper caricatures, in which he brags about his victory in securing a license to publish a newspaper after his previous journal had been shuttered:

- Jangle jangle, here I am!
- Welcome, jangly one!
- Oh, oh, you don't have any jangles! But if you want I can give you some, because it's my privilege both to wear them and to attach them. No one can wear them without a license. [...] Do you know what troubles! what suffering! what pains! I had to go through to get this license? They don't like to give out such nice things...⁸⁰

On the third page, Kasap offered a visual depiction of this scene of encounter: the Jangling Courier stands perched on a rock, dressed like a court jester with bells from head to toe. Wearing a moustache and a playful smile, he looks more than a bit like Kasap himself. In one hand is a large bell; in the other, a whip, which he has raised above his head, poised to lash out at his fellow journalists, who recoil below: the hat-wearing gentlemen of the British newspapers, the scowling turbaned *hocas* of the conservative Turkish press, the three-headed figure of the Greek journal *Neologos* and a crowd of other French, Greek,

⁸⁰ *Çingiraklı Tatar* No. 1, March 24, 1289 [April 5 1873].

Armenian and Bulgarian journalists, all regarding the newcomer with a mix of aggression, alarm, and obliviousness. (As Johann Strauss points out, the figure in donkey ears is Garabed Panosian, the Armenian editor of the widely read Armeno-Turkish journal *Manzume-i Efkâr*, who was the first figure after Diogenes himself to be depicted in cartoon form in the pages of *Diyojen*.) Looking on in mild bemusement from the edge of this crowd, beyond the reach of the Courier's whip, is a fez-wearing figure labeled "İbret," who must be Kasap's friend Namık Kemal. The image it presents is comically exaggerated yet remarkably informative, depicting the whole colorful range of personalities, languages, ideologies, and alphabets represented in the press landscape of 1870s Istanbul. He cleverly satirizes this world and his own ambition to dominate it.

From Ottoman-ness to Ottomanism

In the spring of 1873, as Kasap was debuting his new journal, a pall was cast over Istanbul's political and literary life by a government backlash in response to the spontaneous street demonstration that erupted following the premiere of Namık Kemal's play *Vatan yahud Silistre*. Namık Kemal, Ebüzziya Tevfik, Ahmed Mithat and several others were arrested and exiled to remote Aegean islands. Kasap was allowed to remain in Istanbul with his family, although his latest journal would again be forcibly closed. The letters exchanged between Namık Kemal and Kasap during this period show that they remained in close contact, exchanging books and manuscripts throughout the three and a half years of his imprisonment.

In addition to his journal, Kasap's role as a translator and publisher made him a valve governing the flow of ideas, tastes, and morals, not just between France and Istanbul, but

among Istanbul's disparate linguistic communities. In December of 1873, he submitted a petition for a license for yet another journal, to be called *Hayâl* ("Fantasy"), which he intended to publish in five languages: Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, and French.⁸¹ Kasap's plan for this journal, although not elaborated in his petition to the government, was to respond creatively to the crackdown by reverting to a classically Ottoman mode of protest, built around the figures of *Hacıvat* and *Karagöz*.⁸² *Hacıvat* and *Karagöz* were a tool for exploring the play between two forms of Ottoman simplicity: the educated insider, with all the knowledge, and the honest person, who is ethnically a bit of an outsider but a sort of simple embodiment of Ottoman values. Kasap had *Karagöz*, the simple outsider, drawn to resemble himself. *Hayâl* was a runaway success: its Turkish edition ran for nearly four years and 368 issues until it, too, was shut down by Ottoman authorities. During those four years, Kasap used his press to publish not only newspapers but books, including many of the works Namık Kemal wrote in exile, alongside numerous translations. Several of these were translations from contemporary French literature undertaken by Kasap himself.

Yet despite his success in avoiding state censors, Kasap sought a more active political presence, and in August of 1875, he made a decisive move in that direction when he decided to transfer the title of his press license for *Hayâl* to his former rival Evangelinos Misailidis, the editor of the Karamanli journal *Anatoli*.⁸³ In its place, he picked up the reins of a successful daily newspaper, the journal *İstikbâl* ("Future"). The shift in Kasap's focus

⁸¹ MF.MKT 14/139: Ruhsat for Teodor Kasab Efendi to Open a Press in Zindankapi to Publish a Journal Called *İstikbâl* in 5 Languages, December 2, 1873, MF.MKT 14/139, BOA.

⁸² For an extended treatment of Kasap's use of these figures, see Elmas, "Teodor Kassab's Adaptation of the Ottoman Shadow Theatre *Karagöz*."

⁸³ Kut, "Teodor Kasap," 474.

reflected a broader shift in the political mood: a collective effervescence as Sultan Abdulaziz's evident unpopularity encouraged new boldness among his restive subjects. The plot that would unseat the unpopular sovereign and replace him with his favored nephew, Murad, was already in motion, and its echoes could be felt at all levels of Istanbul's political society. As Kasap was to recount later, the Sultan himself was the last to know: "His indifference to affairs was such that he did not even have wind of the plot that was hatching around him and against him, so that, eight days before his deposition, the eunuchs were speaking of it openly within his own palace."⁸⁴

With the success of the coup, the return of the exiled Young Ottomans to Istanbul was not long in coming, and with it the undertaking of a constitutional campaign. Namık Kemal joined the committee that drafted the constitution, while Kasap remained on the outside as a supportive onlooker of the process. His role bore at least a superficial resemblance to Dumas's in the Risorgimento: he was the press wing of the broader campaign. Yet even more than Dumas, Kasap served as the loyal opposition, pointing out shortcomings in articles of the constitution as it was being drafted. Yet he also used his new journal to defend the effort from its attackers, a role that placed him in direct conflict with Ali Suavi. Recently returned from Paris, Suavi had lost little time in insinuating himself into the Istanbul press. When he published his article in *Vakit* criticizing the constitution, *İstikbâl* "was at the head of those on the attack" against him, writing, "Rights are not given to the

⁸⁴ Th. Cassape, *Lettres à Son Excellence Saïd Pacha au sujet des fautes et trahisons des gouvernants [Letters to His Highness Saïd Pasha on the Subject of the Flaws and Betrayals of Leaders]* (Paris: Impr. Victor Goupy, 1877), 9.

nation; they are taken.”⁸⁵ The militant Jacobin tone of Kasap’s new journal made it a particular target of the newly enthroned sultan Abdulhamid, who reportedly complained about *İstikbâl* to his grand vizier Mithat Pasha on more than one occasion.⁸⁶

Kasap and the “Honorable Cosmopolitans”

In the fall of 1876, the hopes of the constitutionalists collided with the realities of an already compromised Ottoman sovereignty when a group of European delegations descended on Istanbul for an emergency conference. A series of revolts in the Balkans—in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875, and Bulgaria in April of 1876—were met with violent suppression by Ottoman troops, which received extensive and outraged coverage in the European press and resurrected the perennially troubling question of the status of Ottoman Christians and of the overall justness of Ottoman rule.⁸⁷ As it had in 1853, the Russian government was threatening to invade Ottoman territory out of concern for the plight of Ottoman Christians. (Indeed, the Russian government was widely suspected of having instigated the revolts.) **It was amid these conditions that** the chief Russian envoy in Istanbul, Count Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatieff, had summoned his European peers to demand a stark slate of reforms and territorial concessions from the Ottoman state. Only a decade earlier, Istanbul had been the site of another major diplomatic summit, convened on very different terms: the International Sanitary Conference of 1866 had taken place at the Galatasaray school at the invitation of the Ottoman state, which had then counted itself

⁸⁵ İhsan Sungu, “Teodor Kasap,” *Aylık Ansiklopedisi* 1, no. 4 (August 1944): 127. “Millete hak verilmez ; hak alınır.”

⁸⁶ Sungu, 127.

⁸⁷ Nazan Çiçek, “The Turkish Response to Bulgarian Horrors: A Study in English Turcophobia,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 87–102.

among the *Grandes Puissances*, a partner in solving the gravest problems of science and humanity. By contrast, the most important scenes of the 1876 gathering took place behind the closed doors of General Ignatieff's drawing room, with Ottoman subjects largely excluded from the proceedings.⁸⁸

It is striking that Kasap, who had never before written for a European audience, felt moved to do so in the fall of 1876. This latest "Eastern crisis" bore at least a superficial resemblance to the crisis that had prompted the outbreak of Crimean War in 1853. Yet much had shifted in the international balance of power since Russia's last attempt on Ottoman territory. France and Britain, which had united with Ottoman forces to repel Russia twenty years earlier, were far less certain of their position. In the aftermath of the costly Crimean War, the Ottoman sovereign debt to private European lenders had mounted rapidly with every passing year. British and French diplomats still jockeyed for the status of most prized ally and advisor to the Ottoman state in order to advance their respective national trade interests. Yet popular opinion at home had begun to shift against the Ottomans, who were increasingly perceived as "the permanent nuisance of Europe," in the words of an 1858 article in the London *Evening Star*. The article's author, Edward August Freeman, went so far as to anticipate the immanent death of the Ottoman state: **"[A]s we have undertaken the post of bear-leader to the Grand Turk, we must help to keep our savage protégé in proper order. If his sickness is clearly unto death, it will be a**

⁸⁸ "Report on the Conference of Constantinople, 1876-77," June 1877, held at Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 50MD/119, NO. 19, folio 100.

charity to teach him to ‘die decently.’”⁸⁹

The most dramatic change in European discourse on “the Eastern Question” was its newfound racialization. This racist turn owed much to the prolific writings of Edward Augustus Freeman, a popular British historian who published extensively on the history and current affairs of Greece, the Balkans, and “the Turks.”⁹⁰ One of Freeman’s major contributions to European political discourse was to give the concepts of barbarism and civilization an explicitly racial cast, and to trace the origins of contemporary conflicts through their supposed ancient bloodlines. His numerous articles on the Balkan crisis put forth a view of the conflict as a clash of races. He identified the Ottoman Turks as “absolutely alien in blood” to the races of Europe, a group “which did not belong to that great Aryan stock to which nearly all the nations of Europe belong.” This people, or rather this power—for “in strictness the Ottoman Turks cannot be called a nation, but merely a power”—had extended its dominion over much of eastern Europe and its inhabitants, yet unlike other conquerors who had successfully assimilated themselves to Europe civilization, “they remain to this day a distinct and ruling people, a people of oppressors.”⁹¹ This denial of nationhood in racial and civilizational terms proved a crucial precursor to asserting the illegitimacy of Ottoman rule, not only throughout the Balkans but in Turkey

⁸⁹ Untitled and unsigned article by Edward Augustus Freeman in *The Evening Star*, May 22, 1858; included among the Edward Augustus Freeman Papers, John Rylands Library, FA2/2/21.

⁹⁰ For more on Freeman’s “liberal racialism,” see C. J. W. Parker, “The Failure of Liberal Racialism: The Racial Ideas of E. A. Freeman,” *The Historical Journal* 24, no. 4 (December 1, 1981): 825–46. For an overview of racialized Turkophobia in the Victorian press, see Paul Auchterlonie, “From the Eastern Question to the Death of General Gordon: Representations of the Middle East in the Victorian Periodical Press, 1876-1885,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 1 (May 1, 2001): 5–24.

⁹¹ Edward Augustus Freeman, *The Eastern Question in Its Historical Bearings: An Address Delivered in Manchester, November 15, 1876*. (Manchester: National Reform Union, 1876), 6–12.

itself. Freeman insisted that “a power which cannot make the most necessary reforms, which cannot do the commonest and simplest act of justice, is a power which must be swept away from the earth. We must secure the independence and integrity of Turkey by putting an end to the rule of the Turks.”⁹²

Freeman’s racialized argument against the legitimacy of Ottoman rule is echoed in the rhetoric of the Liberal politician William Gladstone, whose bestselling pamphlet on “the Bulgarian horrors” famously denounced the Ottomans as “the one great anti-human specimen of humanity.” Published in September of 1876, just as diplomats had begun to gather in Istanbul in search of a permanent solution to the Eastern Question, Gladstone followed Freeman in calling for “the extinction of the Turkish executive power in Bulgaria,” and by implication everywhere else as well.⁹³ In proposing to strip a fellow sovereign power of its sovereignty, Gladstone justified his boldness with an appeal to the essential lawlessness embedded in the Turkish race: “It is not a question of Mahometanism simply, but of Mahometanism compounded with the peculiar character of a race,” he wrote, adding, “They represented everywhere government by force, as opposed to government by law.”⁹⁴

It is significant that these calls for the curtailment of Ottoman rule emphasize its illegitimacy and derive that illegitimacy from its racial origins. The abuses committed against Christians under Ottoman rule had already served many times as a pretext for invasion of Ottoman lands by Russia and France; now they were being deployed as a cause

⁹² Ibid., 15.

⁹³ William Ewart Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (New York: Lovell, 1876), 38–39, <http://archive.org/details/bulgarianhorrors01gladuoft>.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 10.

for abolishing the state in its entirety. **European attitudes toward the Ottoman state had reached perhaps their lowest point since the Siege of Vienna in 1683; yet rather than simply serving as the perennial enemy of Europe, the Ottomans were now cast as the enemy of liberty, civilization, and humanity itself.**

This hyperbolic racialized discourse serves as the ideological backdrop for the conference of 1876. To brief them on current events, the diplomats called in the French journalist Benoît Brunswik, a longtime resident of the Ottoman capital and self-proclaimed friend of Turkey.⁹⁵ For the occasion, Brunswik prepared a memorandum in which he welcomed the opportunity to present his “mature reflections” on the state of Ottoman reform, informed by years of close observation, not to mention contact with Turkey’s most celebrated statesmen.⁹⁶ In contrast to Freeman and Gladstone, who wrote with open hostility toward the Ottoman state, Brunswik’s tone was warm and conciliatory, offering “my opinion on the best manner of rendering Turkey capable of fulfilling her role in the modern political world and of accomplishing her mission in human society.”⁹⁷ Yet the

⁹⁵ Little is known about Brunswik besides the numerous publications left in his wake, which include a dictionary of telegraphic code and various treatises on Ottoman commercial policy, property rights, and financial and legal reforms. A brief obituary published in the July 24, 1889 issue of the Paris journal *Le Temps* identifies him as former correspondent for the newspaper, adding, “M. Brunswik was well-known among those who take an interest in foreign policy subjects. Throughout a long career spent almost entirely in Constantinople, he treated all the questions of the Orient with great competence.”

⁹⁶ “Quelques Considérations sur la Question des Réformes et des Garanties, présentées à la Conférence par Benoît Brunswik,” November 22, 1876. Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 50MD/119, No. 12. Brunswik’s memorandum opens with his professing to have “consecrated long years and assiduous study to the question of Reform in Turkey,” and adding, “The ideas which are presented here are mature reflections; they have taken shape since 1869 and were to have given rise to published articles, but certain Turkish political figures found them too bold to encounter their adherents within the Governments, and consequently dangerous to throw before the public, no less compromising for the writer than for the cause that he would have wanted to serve.” Brunswik’s words appeared to have been well-heeded by the French delegation, which recorded the gist of his speech in its informal notes and sent back a copy of the memorandum to the attention of the French Foreign Minister in Paris. See Bourgoing to Ducazes, November 22, 1876, 50MD/119, No. 12.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, folios 39-40.

practical import of his opinions were largely the same as Gladstone's: the only future imaginable for Turkey was to abandon the aspiration of reforming Ottoman rule and allow each of its provinces their autonomy.

Brunswik was obscure about the causes that had rendered Ottoman reforms impracticable in his judgment, but he was careful not to blame Islam, which he declared to be "no more hostile to the progress of enlightenment, and to the equality of men before the law, than Christianity." Instead, he laid the blame on the callowness of Ottoman statesmen, whose reform edicts were "**conceived and formed, not for the service of Turkey, but for the approval of Europe.**" It is this "**original sin,**" more than the Islamic foundations of the Ottoman state or the character of its people, that Brunswik blamed for the **present crisis.** Recounting a conversation with Ali Pasha the year before his death, he quoted the grand vizier as saying, "Turkey resembles a stake planted in the sand, as it can neither advance nor retreat without falling." It was Brunswik's reluctant duty to inform his audience that this status quo could no longer stand: "Turkey is close to succumbing under the full weight of its peoples and under the reprobation of the European peoples," he wrote, and the "obvious effects" of these forces could no longer be denied. Unless it granted autonomy to every province which sought it, Turkey would surely collapse altogether.

Of all the commentaries on the Eastern Question circulating in the European press in the fall of 1876, it was Brunswik's unpublished memorandum that drew Teodor Kasap's particular notice and goaded him to a written response, in French, so that the same diplomats whom Brunswik addressed might hear a different perspective on the same subject. How the memorandum came into Kasap's hands is unclear: a copy may have

landed on the shelf of one of Pera's bookstores, or it may have passed through the hands of one of Kasap's friends employed at the European embassies.⁹⁸ It may even have been handed to Kasap by Brunswik himself, as the two men were already known to one another as fellow journalists in the Ottoman capital. (Brunswik would later write admiringly in *Le Temps* of Paris of Kasap's "moral courage" in resisting state censorship.⁹⁹) In any case, it was Brunswik's audacity in presuming to be a friend of Turkey that appears to have particularly irritated Kasap, as the opening of his own response makes clear:

M. Brunswik never misses the opportunity occasioned by a new development to share his way of thinking on each event, however trivial, which concerns the Orient, particularly Turkey.... He's one of those honorable cosmopolitans whose entire lives are spent imposing themselves on a foreign country like adoptive children, and whose smallest gestures are demands for the approbation of their so-called mother.¹⁰⁰

For all the scorn he conveys towards its author, Kasap treats his arguments with seriousness, summarizing them carefully before seeking to refute them point by point. In his view, Brunswik "has certainly penetrated some of the causes of the weakening of the country, but the remedy he indicates is more likely to kill the patient than to help him recover."¹⁰¹ While Kasap makes Brunswik into his nominal interlocutor for this essay, his

⁹⁸ A postscript to Brunswik's memorandum notes that 25 copies of it were prepared, "the approximate number necessary for the plenipotentiaries and their respective Cabinets. Whether this work receives a wider distribution will depend on the Conference itself. B.B."

⁹⁹ "Lettres de Turquie," *Le Temps*, April 11, 1877, unsigned article. My attribution of this article to Brunswik is speculative, based on the fact that he was known to be *Le Temps*'s Turkey correspondent.

¹⁰⁰ Th. Cassape, *La Question des réformes et des garanties* (Constantinople [Istanbul]: Typographie et Lithographie Centrales, 1876), 3–4. He could not resist adding, in a footnote, "The rumor in high governmental circles [is] that M. Brunswik, following the publication of his latest brochure, was introducing himself everywhere with the declaration that he had just rendered a new service to Turkey and thereby acquired a new claim upon the country's gratitude. This naïveté surprised no one." One cannot help thinking of the parallels between Brunswik's career in the Ottoman Empire and Alexandre Dumas's enthusiastic participation in the campaign for Italian unification.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

real target is the underlying European ideology that rejects the legitimacy of Ottoman rule. Beyond refuting Brunswik's arguments for the practicality and advisability of granting autonomy to rebellious provinces, Kasap confronts a broader challenge: that of rendering Ottoman political aspirations legible to an audience of European diplomats gathered to decide the fate of his country.

To begin with, he underlines Brunswik's acknowledgement that Islam is not the problem, and pursues this thought further:

We would humbly have M. Brunswik observe that the form of government bequeathed to the Muslims by their Prophet has succeeded in preventing more of the evils of absolute power than has that bequeathed to the Christian states by their divine legislator, or rather by the clergy.¹⁰²

In Kasap's view, *sharia* is an essential source of Ottoman justice: **"The fundamental principle of the Muslim law is the equality of all believers before Sharia, and we could cite examples of Caliphs appearing at tribunals at the request of simple private individuals"¹⁰³ He is of course aware that non-Muslims have been denied equality under this law, and for this reason he celebrates the edicts of 1839 and 1856 as a corrective to this inequality. Yet he returns repeatedly to the theme of Islamic justice, citing "the rigorous non-observation of the law of Sharia" as one of the chief causes of Ottoman maladministration.¹⁰⁴ This sentiment directly echoes the language of the 1839 Edict of Gülhane itself, which proclaimed the equality of all Ottoman subjects while insisting that this principle was merely a return to age-old Ottoman practices.¹⁰⁵ This**

¹⁰² Ibid., 13.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰⁵ "MFB 48: Edict of Gülhane" (Istanbul, November 3, 1839), MFB 48, BOA.

very traditionalism is part of Kasap's strategy for appealing to his European audience: by insisting on the Islamic origins of Ottoman law, he emphasizes its roots in an age-old legal tradition in order to counter the notion, advanced by Gladstone and countless others, that the government of the Turks is simply "government by force." Instead, as Brunswik concedes and Kasap repeats several times over the 24-page course of his pamphlet, the tenets of Islamic law are "in no way despotic or contrary to progress."¹⁰⁶ "Since it is so," writes Kasap, "there is nothing to do but respect the Muslim law, and to say to the Muslims: be what you must be."

Kasap's wording serves as a reminder to his readers of his Christian status – a fact which would already have been evident to his readers from his first name. It even resembles the Turcophile rhetoric of the Conservative faction in Britain, led by David Urquhart, whose admiration for the nobility of the Turkish race is tinged with unmistakable condescension. Yet unlike Urquhart, Kasap pairs this deeply conservative sentiment with a progressive's embrace of radical change, and indeed of revolution. To drive his point home, Kasap goes back to the remark attributed to Ali Pasha likening the Ottoman state to a pole stuck precariously in the sand, and suggests that the esteemed former grand vizier got it wrong: **"In order for the comparison to be exact, he ought to have said: 'This pole may encounter on its march terrain more unstable than sand, but it will advance until it finds a solid surface on which to ground itself.'"**¹⁰⁷ With the principles of *sharia* informing their sense of justice, Kasap argues that the Ottoman public

¹⁰⁶ La Question des réformes et des garanties, 9.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 8.

has gradually embraced a wider understanding of political equality and rights than was once thought imaginable. "Here," he writes, "in the space of barely forty years, the principles proclaimed by the edict of **Gülhane** have had an admirable effect on the populations, and a truly prodigious development. Here is a true moral revolution, accomplished in very little time." He adds, "Consider, and respond with your hand upon your conscience: are relations between Muslims and Christians the same today as they were fifty years ago?" Speaking as an Ottoman Christian, Kasap delivers his optimism with particular authority. "The germ of equality," he writes, "has been placed in fertile soil."

Kasap is equally insistent that this "germ of equality" belongs to a common human heritage, and that Turkey's struggle to embrace equality is a reflection not of its exceptional backwardness but precisely the opposite. "Other countries before Turkey have passed through these sorts of social and political revolutions," he writes:

Who can rightly say how much time will pass between the moment when a principle is proclaimed and the moment when it will become a law in vigor? The equality of men before God was proclaimed by the Evangelist eighteen hundred years ago, and we are still not perfectly equal. How much time did Christianity need to propagate the idea of the unity of God among the pagans, and how much time did Islamism require to obtain the same result among the idolators of Asia? In France much noise is made about the principles of '89; they are invoked at every occasion, but after ninety years of revolutions and torrents of blood spilled, they remain, for most, mere principles.

Here Kasap sketches a narrative of progress that places the early Christians and present-day Ottoman Muslim reformers on the same side as the Jacobins. His reference to the shared role of Christianity and Islam in uniting the world under the banner of monotheism is a pointed rhetorical gesture likely to attract the notice of his European readers. It represents an appeal to an older notion of civilization premised on religion

rather than racial origins. While the racially derived concept of civilization championed by Freeman and other Europeans also had a religious basis, it was one fixed on the embrace of the New Testament rather than simple monotheism. (This was the logic that explained Freeman's preference for Russian to Ottoman rule in the Balkans, if forced to choose **"between a civilized and a barbarous despotism."**¹⁰⁸)

Despite his earlier talk of the "moral revolution" effected in the Ottoman Empire over the space of forty years, Kasap strongly believes in a gradualist approach to reform. Mindful of the "torrents of blood" spilled in the wake of the French Revolution, he notes that "the Ottoman nation, habituated for centuries to let itself be guided by an absolute government, would smash against more than one rock if it woke up one morning absolutely free." What's needed is an approach that honors existing traditions and beliefs while transforming them slowly:

[W]e will remind [Brunswik] that it is not presently a question of overturning everything, but of reforming the administrative system, that we are not working to demolish, but rather to repair an old edifice that, even in its diminished state, would stun the world with the solidity of its foundations. [...] Demand as much authority and liberty for the Chamber [of Deputies] as Sharia allows and there lies the best guarantee for reform, there lies the peace of Europe, there too the progress of the country, and there finally what Christians and Muslims alike are seeking by common accord.¹⁰⁹

On the subject of the newly enacted constitution, Kasap acknowledges Brunswick's "doubts, his fears," and opposes them with his own confident hopes. In response to Brunswick's objection that such a diverse empire cannot be governed by a single set of laws,

¹⁰⁸ Edward Augustus Freeman, "Present Aspects of the Eastern Question," *The Fortnightly Review*, October 1, 1876.

¹⁰⁹ *La Question des réformes et des garanties*, 13-14.

Kasap scoffs: “Is there a second French code for the colonies and possessions of Africa?” In his view, it is a simple matter to unite diverse peoples under the rule of a single set of laws, provided that these laws allow for a diversity of *regulations* to govern each province **“according to the *moeurs*, aptitudes and tendencies of its inhabitants.”**¹¹⁰ This requirement, in his view, has been provided for in a new law concerning provincial governance recent adopted by the Ottoman state, and will continue to be addressed by the representative institutions outlined by the constitution. What is essential for Kasap is that all of the diverse inhabitants of these provinces belong to what he calls “the Ottoman nation,” a people united by a common predicament and a common political project: the creation of a liberal Ottoman state. Kasap recognizes the causes that have led to the uprisings in the Balkan provinces, but he wishes to see them liberate themselves *as* Ottomans, rather than *from* Ottoman rule.

In the final pages of his pamphlet, Kasap lashes out against Brunswik’s proposal in favor of autonomy for the rebellious provinces, and particularly against the hollowness of his assertion that the empire could thereby remain “whole,” with its sovereign suffering no loss of dignity in the eyes of his subjects. Kasap finds this proposition as insulting as it is absurd, and rephrases it thus: “That is to say, dismember, divide, annihilate, but take care to preserve the name of the Sultan.”¹¹¹ The motive behind this formula, he observes, is the desire to avoid “exciting the patriotism of the Turks,” a sentiment that Brunswik maintains must be “carefully avoided.” This patriotic feeling is precisely what Kasap credits for the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 22.

empowerment of Ottoman subjects and for the dramatic progress they have made in securing equality and rights and reforming corruption. "For us," he writes, "the best guarantee [of rights] to take and to give is the renaissance of the nation in its political life. Once departed from the state of torpor in which she has vegetated for centuries, it is up to her to secure herself, in the manner that suits her best, against oppression, at least provided that this not be precisely what certain *friends* of the country do not wish at all."¹¹² In the final words of his pamphlet, he cautions these friends against interfering with the progress of liberal reforms in the Ottoman state, either by moving to dismember it or by stipulating other measures injurious to its sovereignty:

To ask for guarantees of another nature [than a constitution based on representative principles] would be not only insulting, but humiliating, not just to the sovereign but to the Ottoman nation; it would seek, in a deliberate manner, to trouble the peace of the country, of Europe, and perhaps of the entire world.¹¹³

These final words contain a dual argument against the practical as well as the moral consequences of further violating Ottoman sovereignty. At the core of both arguments is his insistence that the Ottoman Empire is more than a moribund state to be carefully disposed of: it is a living, breathing *nation*, composed of Christians and Muslims alike, whose hopes and political dignity hang on its continued existence. To cut short the life of this entity would be to violate a fellow creature and the sanctity of political sovereignty among civilized nations.

It is worth noting that Kasap's pamphlet was printed not by his own press, but by the

¹¹² Ibid., 16.

¹¹³ Ibid., 24.

Typographie et Lithographie Centrales, the French-language printing outfit of the Ottoman government.¹¹⁴ Its chief policy recommendations, furthermore, are entirely in line with those that were being advanced through back channels by Mithat Pasha and his aides, including through a secret mission to London by the Armenian statesman Krikor Odian Efendi in early January.¹¹⁵ We can thus think of Kasap's pamphlet as representing his inaugural act of formal collaboration with the Ottoman state. For Kasap's entry into this collaboration can be understood as the product of two powerful motivating factors: on the one hand, the high optimism inspired by the progress of the constitution; on the other, daily rumors of impending invasion by Russia circulating throughout Istanbul, which lent a powerful urgency to the attempt to persuade Europeans of the justice, legitimacy, and viability of the Ottoman state.

Kasap's pamphlet appears to have reached at least some members of the European diplomatic circle, as one copy returned to London with the British delegation, where it entered the archives of the Foreign Office and is preserved there today.¹¹⁶ (There are no traces of the pamphlet in the records of the French delegation.) It is unclear to what extent Kasap's views were absorbed and reflected in the Conference's final proposal, which in any case fell far short of his hopes, as it stipulated the creation of a European commission to supervise Ottoman reforms, and European approval for the appointment of Ottoman governors in the rebellious Balkan provinces.

¹¹⁴ Strauss, "Le livre français d'Istanbul (1730-1908)."

¹¹⁵ Davison, 391–392.

¹¹⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection, University of Manchester, John Rylands University Library (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/60234272>).

In the end, this recommendation would be unanimously rejected by the gathering of some 250 Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish notables assembled by the grand vizier, Mithat Pasha, on January 18.¹¹⁷ According to the memoirs of the French delegate to the Conference, “We had counted a bit on [the 60 Christian delegates] to second the proposals of the *Puissances* to improve the lot of their co-religionists,” yet in the end, it was precisely these delegates who “showed themselves the most intractable adversaries to the program of the Conference.”¹¹⁸ The Conference disbanded on January 20th, with the delegates “making haste to leave, to mark their protest against the Porte's refusal to cooperate with their amicable counsels.”¹¹⁹

In the euphoria that followed, Kasap announced his candidacy for the newly created Chamber of Deputies, and won ample support. Yet he never had the chance to serve. The new sultan's abrupt suppression of the constitutionalist movement began in early February, with the forced resignation of the grand vizier, Mithat Pasha. Other architects of the constitution, including Namık Kemal, were taken into custody. Kasap responded by withdrawing his candidacy, writing in his newspaper that he no longer considered himself a suitable candidate.¹²⁰ Two days later, on February 20, 1877, *Hayâl* published a cartoon that resulted in Kasap's joining his friend Namık Kemal in the Sultanahmet jail. It depicts the classic Ottoman comedy duo *Hacivat and Karagöz*, the latter with his hands and feet bound in shackles. In response to Hacivat's query—“What's this state you're in?”—Karagöz

¹¹⁷ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton University Press, 1963), 393.

¹¹⁸ “Souvenirs de la Mission Extraordinaire du Comte du Chaudordy à Constantinople, 1876-1877,” August 1877, f. 158, 50MD/119, NO. 20, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères.

¹¹⁹ “Report on the Conference of Constantinople, 1876-77,” June 1877, f. 119, 50MD/119, NO. 19, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères.

¹²⁰ *İstikbâl* No. 233, 4 Safer 1294 [February 18, 1877]; cited in Kut, “Teodor Kasap,” 474.

replies, “This is freedom [*serbestî*] within the limits of the law.”¹²¹

Within a matter of weeks, Kasap had been arrested, tried, and sentenced to three years in prison, in a trial that attracted international attention and only furthered his celebrity.¹²² He had been charged with violating Article 15 of the press law, which banned offenses against the dignity of the Constitution and, by extension, the sovereign himself. Denied the right to appear before his tribunal in his own defense, Kasap drafted a written reply in protest, and sent copies to the court, the grand vizier, and Said Pasha, Abdulhamid’s chief military advisor and a personage whom Kasap had once found sympathetic to his cause, with the express wish that they place it before the eyes of the sultan. He also sent copies to the leading journals of Istanbul, which duly published it in full. It opens with the following declaration:

His Majesty the Sultan is the master and sovereign of all the Ottomans. His will is the law of the diverse peoples who live under his all-powerful scepter. He is the source of all legislation, and justice is distributed in his venerated name from east to west. [...] As I have the misfortune of appearing guilty to His Majesty, my duty is to incline myself respectfully before this supreme authority and to await with resignation the punishment it shall please him to inflict upon me. To be fully convinced that I am guilty, it would suffice that my august Sovereign declare it and I don’t see the necessity of the confirmation of my guilty by the authority of a tribunal. I will consider myself happy, even, to be accused, judged, condemned, and punished by my august master and lord. But to recognize the right of any tribunal to deliberate on a charge pronounced against me by His Majesty, I will not render myself guilty of such an irreverence, for this would be to call into doubt the justice of the opinions of my sovereign legislator; it would be to overturn the order of things and to suppose that the charges of the supreme court, to be valid, require the confirmation of an inferior tribunal.

¹²¹ “Nedir bu hal Karagöz?” “Kanun dairesinde serbestî.” Hayâl No. 319, 20 February 1877.

¹²² Kasap's conflicts with Ottoman authorities was featured in a series of articles in the Parisian journal *Le Temps* that was also excerpted in *Le* .

In short, Kasap insisted that his esteem for the sultan prevented his recognizing the authority of the court convened to try him. Kasap's eloquent sophistry did not allow him to escape conviction. The prison to which he was taken, in Sultanahmet, was the same one where his comrade Namık Kemal was being held. The two proceeded to spend “day and night” in each other’s cells.¹²³ Although sentenced to three years, Kasap was released after only three months, on the notion that Kasap was to become the editor of a new journal designed to air the sultan’s political views. Instead, Kasap donned a disguise and fled to France on a steamer, leaving his family behind in Istanbul.

Kasap in Exile

Teodor Kasap’s flight from Istanbul took him back to Paris. He appears to have taken up residence along the Champs-Élysées, where he spent the next several months drafting a written account of his recent experiences.¹²⁴ This account was published in December of 1877 as a 92-page octavo book under the title *Letters to His Highness Saïd Pasha on the Subject of the Errors and Betrayals of Those Who Rule*.¹²⁵ Its publisher, the Paris-based printing house of Victor Goupy, was also the chief publisher of Ali Suavi’s works during his time in Paris.

The epigraph chosen by Kasap for his book, a quotation from Machiavelli’s *Discourses*

¹²³ Namık Kemal’s son, Ali Ekrem, recalls that “Kasap Efendi would sit alongside my father day and night” during their incarceration. *Ali Ekrem Bolayır’ın hâtıraları*, 57–58. An account of Kasap’s time in jail filtered through his own son can be found in Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu, “Aleko Kasap’tan Ali Ekrem’e Yazılmış Bir Mektup,” *Türk dünyası* 62 (1965), pp. 188-189.

¹²⁴ Kasap’s address in Paris was noted as “avenue du Rond Point des Champs Elysées, 6” (today’s avenue Franklin Roosevelt) on the *registre d’inscription* submitted to French authorities on the occasion of his book’s publication, which is dated December 28, 1877.

¹²⁵ Cassape, *Lettres à Son Excellence Saïd Pacha*.

on *Livy*, is revealing in more ways than one. It warns that “nothing is more disastrous for a state than to reawaken, every day, new resentments in the hearts of citizens through an endless series of outrages.”¹²⁶ In addition to drawing the Ottoman sultan into a chain of historic tyrants including those of sixteenth-century Europe and ancient Rome, Kasap also implicitly suggests a resemblance between himself and Machiavelli. In fact, the resemblance is strong: both men wrote from exile, having spent time in prison for their political activity, and both their texts walk a fine line between loyalty to their sovereigns and allegiance to republican ideals. Kasap’s open letter is a text with a palimpsest of readerships: its title marks it as an open letter to Abdülhamid’s chief military advisor, whom Kasap praises as “an honest man, a brave soldier, and a good patriot.” Yet it opens with a dedication “to my oppressed compatriots”:

you who, like me, far from your families, suffer in exile or else in prison, or who, near your dear ones, look on powerless as your children are reduced to poverty... May these pages bring you, dear afflicted ones, with my affectionate salutation, a weak consolation in your sufferings, and may the God of clemency and mercy inspire feelings of humanity and patriotism in our oppressors.¹²⁷

The final audience for this text, although never explicitly addressed within it, is of course the international audience of readers interested in the Eastern Question. This is the audience presumably envisioned by the publisher, Victor Goupy, when he agreed to an

¹²⁶ “Rien n'est plus funeste dans un Etat que de réveiller chaque jour, dans le cœur des citoyens, de nouveaux ressentiments par des outrages prodigués sans cesse à tels ou tels d'entre eux... Rien de plus dangereux qu'une pareille conduite ; car les hommes qui commencent à trembler pour eux-mêmes, se précautionnent à tout prix contre les dangers ; leur audace s'accroît et bientôt rien ne les arrête dans leurs tentatives.” The lines are taken from Book I, Ch. 45 of Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy*, translated by Jean-Vincent Périès, whose French editions of Machiavelli, completed from 1823 to 1826, remained in print for most of the nineteenth century.

¹²⁷ Cassape, *Lettres à Son Excellence Saïd Pacha*, 4.

initial print run of a thousand copies for Kasap's book.¹²⁸

Kasap was used to writing for a diverse audience, but this time the challenge exceeds even his considerable capacities. The text is unfocused and contradictory, alternating between flattery of Said Pacha and insults to his intelligence. A good portion of the text consists of an expository summary of recent events for the benefit of his European readers, while the last ten pages are devoted to a detailed account of Kasap's trial, including the full text of the credo he wrote in his defense.

Kasap seems to have cherished the hope that a shift in European public opinion would be enough to help turn the tide against Ottoman state repression. Yet his book seems to have gotten little traction in the European press, and his hope of mobilizing French intellectuals in support of the Ottoman cause was disappointed. Accordingly, Kasap left Paris for Naples, retracing his steps as a young man in the company of Dumas. Once in Naples, he united with his former collaborator, Ali Şefkati, to whom he had left the editorship of *İstikbâl* during his imprisonment. Ali himself had recently fled Istanbul after being arrested for his publishing activities, going first to Athens to seek the company of the exiled Ottoman Greek failed revolutionary Cleanthi Scalieri, before heading to Naples to join Kasap. Once reunited, the two of them set to work making arrangements to resume publication of *İstikbâl* as the voice of Ottoman constitutionalism in exile. As early as June 1879, the pair became an object of keen interest for the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, whose

¹²⁸ The *tirage* figure of 1,000 is given in the *registre d'inscription* prepared by Goupy on behalf of Kasap's book, which was enclosed in the copy of the book submitted to French authorities and now held in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

internal correspondence from this period describes Kasap as “a known agitator.”¹²⁹ At the prompting of the Foreign Minister, the Ottoman ambassador to Italy reached out to the Neapolitan police to seek further information on their whereabouts and activities. In a report a month later, the ambassador was forced to admit that the authorities had been no help at all.¹³⁰

The first overseas issue of *İstikbâl* appeared a few months later, on October 26, 1879. It was printed lithographically for want of a set of Arabic type, and smuggled into Istanbul, where it was avidly consumed by bureaucrats and students alike.¹³¹ Poverty and isolation made their lives difficult, and relations between its two editors were apparently already strained: if the reports of the Ottoman consul at Naples are to be trusted, they parted ways in November, after which Kasap agreed to a meeting with an Ottoman envoy and revealed that financial support for *İstikbâl* was coming from Ismail Pasha, the former Egyptian khedive.¹³² By the end of November, Kasap, “facing poverty and indigence,” had sought and obtained an imperial pardon that allowed him to return to his family in Istanbul.¹³³ Ali

¹²⁹ Ali’s trajectory is described in a June 21, 1879 telegram the Ottoman Foreign Minister, Alexander Caratheory Pasha, to his ambassador in Rome, Turkman Husny Bey (HR.SYS 1789/9). At Husny’s request, the conspirators’ physical features are described in a subsequent telegram as follows: “[Kasap] est assez gros et d’une taille moyenne. Ses yeux sont petits et bordés de peu de cils. Son teint est blanchâtre. Il a des moustaches noires courtes lui tombant sur la bouche. Quant à Ali Bey, il est également d’une taille moyenne et assez gros. Sa barbe est noire et peu touffue. Son visage porte quelques marques de la petite verole.”

¹³⁰ Letter from Turkman Husny to Al. Carathéodory Pasha, BOA, HR.TO 95/21, dated July 15, 1879/25 Receb 1296.

¹³¹ Citing İbrahim Temo’s memoir, Mardin notes that it was popular among students of the military academy. Şerif Mardin, “Libertarian Movements in the Ottoman Empire 1878-1895,” *Middle East Journal* 16, no. 2 (April 1, 1962): 71.

¹³² Turkman Husny to Savas Pasha, “Very confidential,” January 6, 1880 (Ziyad Ebüzziya Papers at İSAM, ZE 43/998). See also a Foreign Ministry report dated November 3, 1879 (Y.PRK.HR 4/78), which reports on the troublesome activities of Teodor Kasap and Ali Bey -- “fesededen oldukları ve ihbar edilen ihtilal tertibe ile muzır matbuat hakkında tahkikat.”

¹³³ İ.HR 280/17309, 7 Zilhicce 1296 [21 November, 1879].

Şefkati also left Naples at around this time, heading to Geneva and then to Paris, where he continued to publish *İstikbâl* until his death in 1896. During this period, he served as a crucial link between the Young Ottoman movement and its successors, the Young Turks.¹³⁴

It was Ebüzziya Tevfik who helped to broker Kasap's imperial pardon after several years in European exile, allowing him to return to Istanbul and the sultan's good graces.¹³⁵ Kasap spent his last fifteen years in relative comfort and obscurity as Abdülhamid II's palace librarian, occasionally turning his literary talents to the translation of detective novels for His Majesty's personal reading pleasure.¹³⁶ Following his death on June 5, 1897, at the age of 62, his funeral was held at a Greek Orthodox church just down the hill from the Yıldız imperial palace.¹³⁷

Kasap's return to the imperial fold was good for his family's fortunes. His eldest son, Alexandre Kasap, graduated from the prestigious Galatasaray (*Mekteb-i Sultânî*) in 1890, and was admitted a year later into a position with the Foreign Ministry, where he would remain until the empire's dissolution in 1922.¹³⁸ Kasap's position in the sultan's palace, and his son's rise within the Foreign Ministry, can be viewed as evidence of a harmonious outcome—certainly more so than that of Ali Suavi, and even more so than that of Namık

¹³⁴ Mardin, "Libertarian Movements in the Ottoman Empire 1878-1895."

¹³⁵ Y.EE 15/84: A Letter from Ebuzziya Tevfik Urging Abdulhamid to Pardon Teodor Kasap," April 27, 1909, Y.EE 15/84, BOA; Sungu, "Teodor Kasap."

¹³⁶ During this period Kasap also wrote an original detective novel of his own, entitled *Haydut Yusuf* (Yusuf the Bandit), of which only two copies are known to exist: one in the Yıldız Palace Library, and the other in the Kasap family's private collection. Kut, "Teodor Kasap," 475.

¹³⁷ According to Kasap's entry in the death register of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, services were held at the Cihannüma Meryem Ana (Panagia) Greek Orthodox Church on Çağlayan Caddesi in Beşiktaş. Ibid.

¹³⁸ Kut, "Teodor Kasap," 475. It seems that both of Kasap's sons, Aleko and Diyojen, moved overseas, to Greece and or France, with the arrival of the Turkish Republic.

Kemal, who struggled until the end to publish his work and died an early death, and whose son did not fare well in the Ottoman bureaucracy.

Yet Kasap's troubles with the state did not end with his entry into palace service. We can catch a glimpse of them in a bureaucratic memorandum found in the archives of the Interior Ministry. Dated December 14, 1891, it records the contents of a petition filed by Kasap in which he informs the ministry of his intention to pay the military tax (*bedalat-ı askeriye*) owed by one of his sisters, who still lives in their birthplace of Kayseri, and asks that no pressure be placed on her to pay it.¹³⁹ The petition gives us a glimpse of the continued vulnerability of non-Muslim subjects to special taxation, and shows us that this vulnerability extended even to an intimate member of the palace retinue and his family. Even after nearly a decade of service to the sultan, Kasap could not escape his *zimmi* status.

In the coming decades, the pluralistic vision of Ottoman nationhood that animated Kasap's writings would fade slowly into oblivion. The Russo-Ottoman War coincided with Abdülhamid II's decision to reverse the expansion of the Ottoman public sphere and the more expansive nationhood it afforded. In its place, he established a new state ideology with an Islamic cast rooted in the Muslim identity of its subjects rather than the Islamic sources of its governing principles. The cultivation of an exclusivist Muslim identity was accompanied by escalating episodes of violence against non-Muslims, fueled by increasingly dire economic conditions and state repression. And yet the expansiveness of Kasap's political vision survived intact over decades of underground dissident activity overseas and in provincial outposts at a safe remove from Istanbul. A new generation of

¹³⁹ DH.MKT 1901/3, dated 12 Cumadiülevvel 1309.

dissidents known as the Young Turks, populated by a still greater proportion of non-Muslim members than the Young Ottomans had seen, embraced his conception of Ottoman identity as founded in a common cultural rather than religious heritage.

His writings give us a window into an alternative political future for the Ottoman state. Writing from exile in Paris in 1877 in the midst of this war, Kasap warned the sultan and his European allies alike that the Ottoman nation would not stand to see its rights so trampled:

Wise and all-knowing Europe fails to recognize that in exasperating to the point of death a nation of a heroism so pure, it perpetuates its troubles in the East, for it is obvious that a humiliating peace, concluded with a government illegally reconciled, will never be accepted by the Ottoman nation.¹⁴⁰

The Ottoman nation that Kasap invokes here is partially his own invention: a delicate creation that had only begun to emerge over the course of a decade of careful nurturing in the pages of Ottoman newspapers and in theaters where safely remote tales were recast as Ottoman dramas. Having studied the rebirth of Greece and born witness to the invention of Italy, Kasap was animated by a faith in nationhood as a guard against all forms of oppression, foreign and domestic. Yet these examples had also taught him that such collective self-invention was only possible with the material and moral support of Europe.

¹⁴⁰ Cassape, *Lettres à Son Excellence Saïd Pacha*, 86.

Chapter 4: Ali Suavi and the Ottomanist Critique of Liberalism

In January of 1870, an envelope containing two recent issues of the Turkish-language journal *Hürriyet* made its way from the Ottoman embassy in London to the offices of the British foreign minister. In an accompanying letter, the Ottoman ambassador explained that the journal, which had its offices in London's seedy Soho district, was of keen interest to them both:

[It] has, as is known, for its unique object a revolutionary propaganda aiming to impede the current and projected reforms through false arguments that they are tyrannical violations of the precepts of the Muslim faith, in order to excite ignorance and religious fanaticism and provoke bloody conflicts in Turkey among populations with different beliefs, and to thereby, out of personal interest, compromise the progress realized so far.¹⁴¹

As the ambassador reminded the foreign minister, the problem was not new: *Hürriyet* and its predecessor, *Le Mukhbir*, had been publishing in London since August of 1867, "encouraged," in the ambassador's words, "by the impunity of which they believed themselves assured in England" through its vaunted press freedoms. Yet in recent months, the ambassador insisted, the journal had gone too far: it had "pushed perversity to the point of preaching assassination." Exhibit A in support of this charge was an article that had recently appeared in its pages by Ali Suavi, as well as a brief item in the following issue that repeated Suavi's main claims.¹⁴² The ambassador had helpfully included a French translation of the passages he deemed most incendiary, in which Ali Suavi cites Islamic law

¹⁴¹ The National Archives of the UK (TNA), HO 45/9472/A38025, "As to prosecution of 'Hurriyete,' a Turkish Newspaper published in London." Copy of letter from Musurus Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in London, to Lord Clarendon, British Secretary of Foreign Affairs, 19 January, 1870.

¹⁴² "Suavi Efendi tarafından gelen mektub surati fi 7 Ramazan sene 1286," *Hürriyet*, no. 78 (December 20, 1869): 1-3; "Keza," *Hürriyet*, no. 79 (December 27, 1869): 4.

to sanction the killing of tyrants and those who abet them in their tyranny, and singles out the Ottoman grand vizier, Âli Pasha, as an “infamous miscreant” whose murder is enjoined as a collective obligation.¹⁴³ On behalf of the Sublime Porte, the ambassador hereby requested that “the publishers and editors of ‘Hurriyet’ be pursued and punished to the full extent of the law.”

This was not the first time the Ottoman government had petitioned its British counterparts for aid in censoring the Young Ottomans, but it was the first time the British had obliged so fully.¹⁴⁴ Britain had a well-deserved reputation as a haven for political refugees from abroad, and throughout the 1860s and 1870s it observed the “broad principle of asylum” as “sacrosanct”; the prosecution of the editor of *Hürriyet* was to stand as the “one solitary exception” to this principle.¹⁴⁵ The Foreign Office lost no time in forwarding the Ottoman ambassador’s request to Britain’s Home Secretary, with the invitation to “take such steps as he may consider proper in the matter.”¹⁴⁶ Within ten days, a response came back from Her Majesty’s Attorney and Solicitor General: “We are of opinion that the article of 20th December, 1869, is indictable as a libel on Aali Pacha, and as

¹⁴³ The language of the Turkish original is arguably stronger than the Ottoman embassy’s translation conveys: “Ve billahilkerim katli farz olan kâfir-i le’îm işte bu zâlim-i zemîm Âli Paşa’dır,” Suavi writes, departing from his usual unadorned style to deploy a trio of rhyming phrases that name the grand vizier as a “despicable infidel” and a “reprehensible tyrant.” This loaded choice of words is discussed below.

¹⁴⁴ As discussed in Chapter 1, the Ottoman government had previously petitioned British authorities to prevent the circulation of *Le Mukhbir* into Ottoman territory, and had also made clear its wish to see the journal shut down in its entirety. See especially the letter from Fuad Pasha, Ottoman Foreign Minister, to Musurus Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in London, marked “Private,” March 26, 1868 (BOA HR.SFR.3 135/6; reprinted in M. Kaya Bilgegil, *Ziyâ Paşa üzerinde bir araştırma* [Erzurum, Turkey: Atatürk Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1970], 343–45).

¹⁴⁵ Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question in Mid-Victorian Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 207.

¹⁴⁶ HO 45/9472/A38025, Letter from E. Hammond, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to Adolphus Liddell, Undersecretary of State for the Home Department, January 19, 1870.

containing an incitement to assassinate him. We advise that a prosecution be instituted by the Crown.” In late February, the editor of *Hürriyet* was formally charged with “defamatory libel” and “inciting to murder,” and a warrant was issued for his arrest. The Young Ottoman publishing enterprise was effectively shut down.¹⁴⁷

By the time Suavi’s article was singled out by the Home Office for its perversity, it had already been met with angry public denunciations from other members of the now-splintered Young Ottoman Society.¹⁴⁸ In the wake of *Hürriyet*’s demise, Suavi became the chief scapegoat both for its closure and for the apparent demise of the Young Ottoman movement as a whole. The incident is highlighted as a pivotal one in Ebüzziya Tevfik’s influential early account, which described Suavi’s articles as a kind of “trickery,” a deliberate sabotage of his peers’ work.¹⁴⁹ The incident was, to Ebüzziya, a perfect illustration of everything that was wrong with Suavi: his grandiosity, his reflexive radicalism, and his lack of political judgment. Several of Suavi’s own Young Ottoman comrades had condemned him in similar terms: in Nuri’s words, “Suavi’s craziness, his moral faults, and his selfish aims, were known to all of us.”¹⁵⁰ More importantly, the

¹⁴⁷ To escape arrest, the editor, Ziya, fled London for Geneva in early March, leaving behind most of his belongings, including the precious printing type brought from Istanbul. The final few issues of *Hürriyet* were published lithographically in Geneva before the journal was abandoned altogether following its 88th issue on February 28, 1870. Although he fled the country, Ziya initially hoped to recover his property and clear his name: in April he sent a letter to the Foreign Office seeking to be allowed to return to stand trial without being taken into custody. His letter was forwarded to the Home Office, where it was met with a hard reply: “no guarantee of the kind requested by Zia Bey can be given.” (HO 45/9472/A38025, Hammond to Lidell, April 26, 1870; response from Lidell to Hammond, April 28, 1870.)

¹⁴⁸ Two members of the Young Ottoman group were moved to announce their formal split from the journal in the wake of its publication. Ebüzziya Tevfik, *Yeni osmanlılar tarihi*, ed. Ziyad Ebüziyya, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Kervan, 1973), 64 fn. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Ebüzziya Tevfik, *Yeni osmanlılar tarihi*, ed. Ziyad Ebüziyya, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Kervan, 1973), 165.

¹⁵⁰ From the unpublished memoir of Menâpirzâde Nuri Bey, quoted in Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1998), 208; original in Kaplan, *Namık Kemal*, 67-68.

incident seemed to point up his fundamental misalignment with Young Ottoman values. To Ebüzziya, and to the many who relied on his account, Suavi was a cuckoo in the nest: a malign figure who had insinuated himself into the heart of the movement and destroyed it from within. By birth, temperament, and ideology, they insisted, Suavi did not belong.

Ali Suavi's relatively brief career is marked by a number of dramatic and paradoxical turns: he went from being one of the most prominent members of the Young Ottoman movement to becoming its most vociferous critic, before becoming its first martyr. In the face of his many and seemingly contradictory ideological commitments, particularly his disdain for the project of an Ottoman constitution and disavowal of the notion of "popular sovereignty" altogether, scholars have repeatedly sought to set him apart from a movement they see as fundamentally liberal in its orientation and political goals. Suavi's ideas are routinely cast as deeply idiosyncratic, anachronistic, and isolated from those of his peers. Even the sympathetic account of Suavi in Mithat Cemal Kuntay's biography depicts him as a lone martyr: "Sometimes a nation's debt is paid by one person," he writes.¹⁵¹ While Suavi's role in late Ottoman political history is obvious, the nature of his contribution to Ottoman political thought is far less clear.

In what follows, I aim to show how Suavi, misfit though he may have been, played an integral role in the development of Young Ottoman thought. Suavi's political vision arose amid the same geopolitical circumstances as those of Namık Kemal and Teodor Kasap, in

¹⁵¹ Mithat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı ihtilâlcî Ali Suavi* (Istanbul: Ahmet Halit Kitabevi, 1946), 8. In his excellent biography of Suavi, Hüseyin Çelik notes that the tendency to celebrate Suavi's martyrdom while ignoring the substance of his ideas began in the decades immediately following his death, when his example was taken up by the Young Turks despite a lack of access to his writings (*Ali Suavi ve dönemi*, 452-460).

response to the same ideological crisis, and in pursuit of the same broad goals. Furthermore, it developed in conversation with his fellow Young Ottomans, and it left a lasting mark on Ottomanist thought. Against those who view Suavi's rejection of constitutionalism as a betrayal of Young Ottoman principles, I argue for a broader understanding of the movement as committed to the democratization of Ottoman government and society through a variety of means, both institutional and social, and above all through the promotion of nationhood as the foundation of Ottoman sovereignty. While Suavi's intellectual trajectory took him further afield than many of his peers, it was by no means isolated, and it remained true to the animating principles of a movement that sought to radically alter the basis of Ottoman government in order to save it.

The chapter proceeds by tracing the development of Suavi's thought as it emerged over the course of his life, depicting his shifting allegiances against the backdrop of his shifting circumstances. Through a survey of the various intellectual communities in which Suavi immersed himself over the course of his career, I examine the diverse currents of political thought, both liberal and anti-liberal, in which he was steeped, and the emergence in his writings of a strain of radicalism that resonated broadly with thinkers across the ideological spectrum. Suavi's lack of enthusiasm for the liberal reform program that animated Namık Kemal, and his insistence on underscoring the Islamic religious underpinnings of his own vision of reform, undoubtedly served to distance him from his Young Ottoman comrades; yet it also served as a bridge linking him to a transnational (chiefly European) network of critics of liberalism, and to the material and ideological resources they provided. It was this network that sustained and enriched his political

thought for much of the decade that Suavi spent in Europe. When he finally returned to Istanbul and Ottoman public life in late 1876, Suavi was able to contribute a distinctive worldview that had been transformed through a sustained encounter with European anti-liberal thought, and that in turn left its mark on the broader discourse of Ottomanism.

At bottom, it is Suavi's rejection of liberalism that has drawn the most perplexed attention from scholars, while also serving to disqualify him from serious consideration as a thinker. The pairing of his democratic sensibility with his fierce loyalty to the sultanate and his public opposition to the project of an Ottoman constitution has led scholars to variously describe him as mentally unbalanced, fundamentally out of step with his time, a reckless opportunist, or simply "confused."¹⁵² One of Suavi's first biographers in the twentieth century assigned him the posthumous moniker "the turbaned revolutionary," and the image it conjures has stuck. In keeping with this image, Şerif Mardin paid homage to Suavi as "the first modern Turk to die in the pursuit of democratic ideals" while dismissing his political writings as demagogic and intellectually underdeveloped, marred by the crude anti-Westernism typical of the *ulema* class as a whole.¹⁵³ In Mardin's words, "his essential force consisted in being in touch with the large, inchoate mass of dissatisfaction which modern political manipulators usually equate with 'the people.'"¹⁵⁴ For Mardin, Suavi is the voice of unlettered extremism, a figure whose populist sympathies went hand in hand with his hostility to liberal ideas, evincing a timeless reactionary spirit.

¹⁵² Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), 360.

¹⁵³ Mardin, 360.

¹⁵⁴ Mardin, 360.

Borrowing the language of the American anthropologist Robert Redfield, Mardin linked Suavi to the so-called “Little Tradition” of the uneducated Turkish Muslim masses, which stood in opposition to the “Great Tradition” of high Ottoman culture exemplified by his social betters, Namık Kemal chief among them.¹⁵⁵

Mardin’s gloss on Suavi misconstrues both his intellectual capacities and his political commitments. Suavi’s suspicion of the state and hostility toward elites in general should not be confused with a disdain for high culture, when his writings throughout his career show otherwise, from his passion for educational reform to the translations and commentaries he produced on neglected works in Arabic and Greek. Suavi’s democratizing impulse was reflected in his demand for improved access to the Islamic scholarly tradition, rather than a lack of interest in preserving it. The taint of provincialism that has clung to Suavi’s posthumous reputation is likewise undeserved: by several measures, he was the best educated and worldliest member of his cohort, a consummate cosmopolitan with an unusually broad social milieu who was rivaled only by Teodor Kasap in the number of miles he traveled and the number of years he spent living abroad. The key to understanding Suavi’s thought, including its Islamist underpinnings, lies precisely in recovering these cosmopolitan influences.

¹⁵⁵ Şerif Mardin, “Super-Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Turkey: Geographic and Social Perspectives*, ed. P. Benedict, E. Tümerkin, and F. Mansur (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

A Pious Cosmopolitan in Training

Ali Suavi's birth in Istanbul's Cerrahpaşa district in 1839 coincided with two events often viewed as marking the start of the Tanzimat Era. The first and more famous event was the Edict of Gülhane, declaring the sanctity of the life, property, and honor of all Ottoman subjects; the second event, less publicized but perhaps equally significant, was the creation of a new ministry, the Ministry of Primary Schools, which would oversee the transformation of Ottoman education in the century to come.¹⁵⁶ Ali Suavi's life would be shaped by the emergence of this new set of institutions and the growing divide they represented between the imperatives of Islamic tradition and those of the state. As Benjamin Fortna and other scholars have pointed out, the relationship between the old and new educational systems has been falsely caricatured as one of diametrical opposition, when in fact there were many points of continuity: teachers in both sets of institutions were known to their students as *hocas*, and members of the *ulema* class participated at every level of the new state education system.¹⁵⁷ Yet the fact remains that Suavi's education and early career were pursued along two parallel tracks. The first consisted of Tanzimat-era institutions like the *rüşdiye* he attended in his early adolescence, the first to be established in the Ottoman Empire, and the bureaucratic posts it qualified him for.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Brill, 2001), 33.

¹⁵⁷ Benjamin C Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13.

¹⁵⁸ On the establishment of the Davutpaşa *rüşdiye*, see Cahit Yalçın Bilim, *Türkiye'de çağdaş eğitim tarihi, 1734-1876* (Anadolu Üniversitesi, 1998), 157. One of Suavi's first bureaucratic appointments was as principal (*muallim-i evvel*) of the first *rüşdiye* in Bursa, where he recalls having taught a wide range of subjects that included Arabic, Persian, history, geography, mathematics, and ethics. Suavi's description of his time at the Bursa *rüşdiye* can be found in his article "Nekayis der usul-u atika" (Deficiencies of the Old Method (of Pedagogy)), *Ulûm* No. 7, p. 406.

Meanwhile, Suavi pursued a second education in Islamic scholarship throughout his life, first as a student in his neighborhood *medrese*, and then through self-study, eventually claiming for himself the title of *hoca*. Both sets of institutions granted Suavi access to different worlds of learning that would furnish him with unusual range as a scholar and political thinker. For Suavi, scholarship represented both a pious pursuit and a source of political authority in its own right.

The significance of Islam as both an ethical and a scholarly tradition independent of the state is a leitmotif that emerges from the very first page of Ali Suavi's memoir.¹⁵⁹ His ancestors, he writes, "belonged to the class of learned people [*ulema*], but my father, who settled in Istanbul when he married my city-dwelling mother, belonged to the class of shopkeepers [*efrad-i esnaf*]." Suavi emphasizes, "He was a Muslim," and continues, "He could read only as much as he was able to learn from my mother, and of mathematics he learned only basic arithmetic," yet "he had great respect for people of learning [*ehl-i ilm*]." What he disliked most was injustice, which would cause him to lose his temper and seek out the perpetrators in order to "knock their brains out."¹⁶⁰

By his own account, Suavi's career was driven by his father's deep if untutored identification with Islam as a source of justice, which he paired with a lifelong quest to

¹⁵⁹ "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," *Ulûm Gazetesi*, no. 15 (1870): 892–932. What I refer to here as Ali Suavi's memoir is in fact an article bearing the title "The History of the Young Ottomans," which the 30-year-old Suavi wrote in Paris sometime in the first few months of 1870, just a few months after his incendiary articles for *Hürriyet* had cut him off from contact with his Ottoman compatriots. The article reads as a lengthy attempt at self-justification, which helps explain why most of its forty handwritten pages are given over to recounting Suavi's own upbringing, attitudes, and achievements. This source has been used extensively by other scholars, particularly İsmail Doğan and Hüseyin Çelik, to furnish the details of Suavi's life; my use of it here is with the aim of helping to reconstruct how Suavi understood himself and his actions.

¹⁶⁰ Suavi, 893.

attain the Islamic learning his father lacked. He claims to have written his first scientific treatise at the age of 17.¹⁶¹ Soon after completing it, Suavi opted to leave his clerkship in the Ministry of War in order to undertake the haj—an unusual choice that signaled his independence from the state apparatus, the most reliable source of professional prestige and security for Ottoman Muslim men. As it turned out, Suavi’s departure from his post did not end his career in state service, but it set the pattern for an irregular bureaucratic career marked by abrupt departures. His extended haj itinerary took him throughout Egypt, Arabia, Iraq, Syria, and western Anatolia, a route that allowed Suavi to pursue to the kind of knowledge that would serve him well as an Islamist thinker for a new global era, and that Suavi himself would use as evidence of both his piety and his cosmopolitanism. In the biographical note that precedes one of his later essays, published in Paris, Suavi introduces himself thus to his Francophone readers: “Born in Istanbul, Ottoman Muslim, having voyaged throughout the extent of the Ottoman Empire, in Asia Minor, Iraq, Syria, Arabia, Africa and Europe, I have studied on site sciences, religions, people and things, knowledge which has made of me a Khodja.”¹⁶²

Yet Islamic learning, performances of piety, and status within the *ulema* hierarchy were not all they were cracked up to be, as Suavi recounts having learned early in his career. His memoir offers an anecdote that illustrates this lesson: his encounter with a provincial official named Hacı Hafizoğlu, who, despite his name and sanctimonious

¹⁶¹ Suavi, 894. Suavi describes this treatise, which no longer survives, as a commentary on the principles of Sunnism according to Abu Hanifa. After completing it, he submitted it for review to a hoca at the Bayezit mosque, who returned it to him with only a single correction. Suavi brought the treatise with him on the haj and sold it along the way (to an Iranian scholar) to pay his travel expenses.

¹⁶² Ali Suavi, *À propos de l’Herzégovine* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1875).

clutching of prayer beads, used his government office to exploit and humiliate a poor old woman who had come to him seeking justice for the theft of some trinkets. After determining that her case could not be tried for lack of evidence, he insisted that she pay the substantial court costs nonetheless. Suavi recalls feeling sick at the thoughts prompted by the official's behavior: "What a situation, what a ruling, what kind of *sharia* is this, or rather what a betrayal is this sort of abuse of *sharia*, what corruption, what a state this is, and what awful ignorance among these people!"¹⁶³ That the final item in this litany should be "ignorance" serves to reiterate the degree to which Suavi was committed to the spread of learning as the antidote to the routine injustice that plagued Tanzimat-era bureaucracy.

Among the Islamic sciences that Suavi cultivated, he writes, "my favorite science was hadith." He took advantage of the long land route to Mecca to memorize a massive and authoritative corpus of hadiths that would equip him for his future as a hoca, sermonizer, and dissident journalist. Working entirely on his own ("*kendim bittetebbü*"), he emphasizes, he mastered al-Bukhari's canonical collection of nearly three thousand hadiths, producing a summary of each of them "in a new style."¹⁶⁴ What led Suavi to concentrate so much of his attention on the mastery of this corpus? In his telling, the stories of the Prophet's words and deeds were responsible for furnishing Suavi with his sense of Islam as a source of justice in the world:

I considered Muhammad's condemnation of oppression [*zulüm*] in such strong terms to be his first and greatest miracle. These hadiths so fed my hatred for injustice that I would feel every hair of my body a hero rising up

¹⁶³ Suavi, "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," 905.

¹⁶⁴ Suavi, 896. Suavi's memoir makes no mention of his having received a formal *icazet*, or license to teach a particular text and/or subject, from any of the medreses where he studied; to the contrary, his emphasis on self-study would seem to suggest that he did not.

against the oppressor, leaving me ready to fight the oppressor with every inch of my body, and even be killed by him if I were defeated.¹⁶⁵

In this striking passage, Suavi unintentionally prefigures his own death fighting a regime he would come to regard as oppressive. He also reveals an important dimension of his experience of Islamic scholarship. For Suavi, there is nothing dry or esoteric about the science of hadith; instead, his response to reading the Prophet's encounters with injustice is as visceral as his father's reaction to reports of injustice in his midst. The kind of religious fervor described here is one that implicitly sanctions violent revolt in the face of oppression, mobilizing the authenticity of his own emotional and physical reaction to the sacred text as its warrant. The intense emotionalism that Suavi brings to Islamic scholarship mirrors the nationalist zealotry (*hamiyet*) on display in Namık Kemal's accounts of Ottoman battles, but without the tedious attention to conflicting accounts of events. To study hadith the way Suavi did was to collapse the distance between his own historical moment and the age of the Prophet, diminishing the significance of centuries of learned commentary on the proper interpretation of those hadiths within a specific legal tradition. By overlooking such burdensome barriers to engagement, Suavi's style of Islamic scholarship anticipated that of many twentieth-century Islamist authors seeking a similar sense of immediacy and universality, for which they were willing to sacrifice the rigors of scholarly tradition.

Beyond furnishing himself with a direct link to the Prophet as a political role model, Suavi would have had practical reasons for his close study of hadith. Its subject matter is

¹⁶⁵ Suavi, 896.

worldly as well as divine, trading in concrete examples of God's will being instantiated on earth. Suavi's early mastery of the hadith corpus gave him access to a register of Islamic doctrinal authority that resonated broadly, and well outside the confines of the Ottoman Islamic scholarly community. It allowed Suavi to speak to Muslims of all traditions, not just those bound by the Hanafi legal traditions and Ash'ari theology that dominated Ottoman *medreses*. Hadiths furnished Suavi with the raw materials for an Islamist discourse with a populist tenor and universalist aspirations.

A Strategic Alliance with Liberalism

After completing his year of pilgrimage and study in 1857 or 1858, the young scholar, known at this point as Hacı Ali, was able to serve as a *müderriş*, or *medrese* instructor, and deliver sermons at mosques throughout the Ottoman Empire. For the next several years, he performed this role alongside a string of bureaucratic posts in the Anatolian and Balkan provinces. The tensions that arose from his dual role as a civil servant and an interpreter of sacred texts proved increasingly difficult to reconcile. In 1866, after being fired from an administrative post in Filibe (today's Plovdiv, Bulgaria) on account of a politically charged sermon at one of the city's central mosques, Suavi packed his bags and returned to Istanbul.¹⁶⁶ Before long, he was delivering sermons and lessons at Şehzade, a historic mosque in the heart of Istanbul, where he was began to attract a large and star-studded audience that included Namık Kemal and Fuad Pasha.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve dönemi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1994), 62–63.

¹⁶⁷ Namık Kemal, *Namık Kemal'in husûsî mektupları I* [*The Personal Letters of Namık Kemal I*], ed. Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1967), 75, cited in Doğan, p. 191; Suavi recalls that Fuad Pasha sometimes attended his lessons as well, and once invited him to a meal together afterwards. "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," 906.

Suavi's reputation as a polemicist soon attracted the notice of an Armenian journalist, Filip Efendi, who invited him to collaborate on a new journal, *Muhbir* ("Reporter"). After some hesitation, Suavi agreed, inaugurating a collaboration with Filip that would span a decade. The first period of their collaboration was brief, lasting only two and a half months, from the first issue of *Muhbir* on January 1st, 1867 through the government's suspension of the journal in mid-March. Their collaboration would recommence a decade later, in August 1876, when Suavi began contributing articles to Filip's journal *Vakit*, this time as a correspondent from abroad. In the interim, Suavi would kidnap the journal's name and take it with him to Europe, where he would repurpose it as *Le Muhkbir*, the official press organ of the Young Ottoman Society.

Suavi's collaboration with Filip was perhaps the longest-lived of his partnerships, and its basis provides a window into Suavi's core commitments. As Suavi makes clear in his memoir, his entry into journalism was of a piece with his teaching and preaching: its primary aim was to educate and enlighten his compatriots about Islam as a guide to right living. It was due to his involvement with the crusading journal *Muhbir* that Suavi was drafted into the Young Ottoman movement. Yet Suavi's recruitment may have rested on a case of mistaken identity: as he tells it, "My main reason for getting mixed up in this business was to break our nation's newspapers of their outmoded style and senseless tributes to ancient customs. I both broke the language and injected 'freedom of the pen' [*hürriyet-i aklâm*] into our country."¹⁶⁸ What he did *not* seek to do was become a champion of the political reforms proposed by Mustafa Fazıl Pasha, despite his initial enthusiasm for

¹⁶⁸ Suavi, "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," 909.

this figure in his willingness to defy the ministers. “I prayed for the pasha,” he writes. If there was one thing that Ali Suavi and his new comrades agreed on, then, it was that the status quo needed changing. But by what methods, and to what ends?

Despite his evident enthusiasm for “freedom of the pen,” Suavi’s articles for *Muhbir* reflect a deeply embedded skepticism toward many of the dogmas of European liberalism, and particularly toward the notion of political representation as a guarantor of justice. This early phase of his political writings express views that can be seen as congruent with European conservative or reactionary responses to liberal agitation. One example can be found in an article he published in March of 1867, shortly before *Muhbir’s* suspension, in which he raised doubts about the supreme value attached to “freedom” (*serbestlik*), a word he understands to mean “that everyone, low or highly placed, is limited by the law.” While agreeing that it is “a fine thing,” he argues that the quest to achieve freedom through democratic institutions has led to enormous strife in Europe. “Justice,” he writes, “should come from the top downward.” In support of this anti-democratic notion, he cites a saying that he attributes to the Greek poet Homer: “Too many cooks spoil the sauce.”¹⁶⁹ As this article shows, Suavi was certainly interested in engaging the language of liberalism and exploring its meaning. But he was not himself identified with this language, and to the contrary, he made a point of resisting it.

¹⁶⁹ “Serbestlik,” 27 Şevval 1283 [March 4, 1867], p. 2; quoted in Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 380.

Filip's writings for *Muhbir*, by contrast, suggest that the Armenian Catholic journalist fit the bill of a liberal patriotic firebrand better than his Muslim collaborator.¹⁷⁰ Although it was Suavi's article condemning the Sublime Porte's decision to leave its Belgrade fortress in the hands of the Serbs that drew the March 9th order suspending *Muhbir*, it was Filip Efendi who wrote a fierce letter protesting the order, which *Tasvir-i Efkâr* took the risk of printing, a few weeks before it, too, was suspended.¹⁷¹ And it was Filip, rather than Suavi, who seems to have been the animating spirit behind the newspaper's campaign on behalf of the Muslims of Crete. As we explored in Chapter 1, the revolt of Christians on the island that erupted in 1866, backed by the Greek and Russian governments, became a rallying point for Ottoman newspapers as they sought to become an independent and critical voice on Ottoman state policy. *Muhbir* quickly established itself as the leading champion of displaced Muslim families, publicizing their plight and even raising funds to help them. Other newspapers, including *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, followed suit more timidly, knowing that this publicizing of a crisis in Ottoman territory, and its implicit criticism of the government for failing to resolve it, was bound to upset someone. After his license to publish was restored in April, Filip Efendi continued to lead the charge, traveling to Crete to personally deliver the funds that *Muhbir* had raised and writing at length about his experiences there.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Şahinoğlu Filip Diyarbakırlı, an Armenian Catholic, published a series of newspapers in Istanbul from 1867 through the 1880s. After the demise of *Muhbir* in May of 1867, he founded the journals *Terakki*, *Haka'ik'ul-Vekayi*, *Vakit*, and *Tarîk*. For details about *Muhbir*'s campaign for Cretan refugees, see İhsan Sungu, 'Muhbir Gazetesi, Aylık Ansiklopedi

¹⁷¹ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 208.

¹⁷² İhsan Sungu, "Muhbir Gazetesi," *Aylık Ansiklopedi* 1, no. 13 (May 1945): 401.

Suavi himself appears to suggest that Filip's views were more congruent with Mustafa Fazıl Pasha's than his own. In his memoir, he disavows his role in *Muhbir's* decision to publish a Turkish translation of Mustafa Fazıl's incendiary letter to the *Nord* in February, which identified "the great party of *la Jeune Turquie*" as made up of "all the men of progress, or all the good patriots, which are the same thing."¹⁷³ According to Suavi, the translation was published by Filip without his involvement or consent. Yet he acknowledges that the act was thought to be his doing, and notes that "from that date onward I began to be counted as a partisan of Fazıl Pasha."¹⁷⁴ Although Filip, as the license-holder for *Muhbir*, was the person legally responsible for its contents, Suavi had the larger reputation, and he was widely assumed to be the primary if not sole author of the entire journal.¹⁷⁵ (The combination of Armenian or Greek license-holders and Muslim lead authors was one that appeared often in this period, as evidenced by Teodor Kasap's publications and Namık Kemal's journal *İbret*, which was published under a license held by Aleksan Sarafyan.¹⁷⁶) Thus when *Muhbir* was suspended, it was Suavi who was exiled from the capital, and Suavi who was recruited by Mustafa Fazıl Pasha to come to Paris and serve as the editor-in-chief of the first official organ of his Young Ottoman Society.

As Mustafa Fazıl Pasha was to discover with the first issue of *Le Muhkbir*, that decision was a mistake: Suavi's his intentions for the journal were quite at odds with those of its patron. As discussed in Chapter 1, Suavi had been tasked with getting the journal's

¹⁷³ *Muhbir* No. 20, 5 Şevval 1283 (21 February 1867).

¹⁷⁴ Suavi, "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," 910.

¹⁷⁵ İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın iki ucu: Münif Paşa ve Ali Suavi : sosyo-pedagojik bir karşılaştırma* (Merter-İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1991), 191.

¹⁷⁶ Mustafa Nihat Özön, "Kemal İstanbul'da," in *Namık Kemal ve İbret gazetesi*, by Namık Kemal and Mustafa Nihat Özön (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1938), 15–16.

operations up and running in London while the other leading Young Ottomans gathered with fellow European subversives for a summit on the Continent, where they drew up a charter for the society that declared these aims: “First, to realize the reform program of Prince Mustafa Fazıl Pasha, contained in his letter to the sultan, and by consequence to effect the overthrow of the regime and of the men who oppress and deplete the Ottoman Empire; and second, to eradicate Russian influence in the Orient through the emancipation of the Christian populations in Turkey.” No trace of these goals made it into first issue of *Le Mukhbir*, which appeared in London the day after the charter was signed. The journal’s opening letter to readers proclaimed its authors to be an “Islamic society” that had temporarily relocated to Europe for the purpose of advancing learning in Ottoman lands, and declared its first aim to be the printing of textbooks for use in schools. (Somewhat defensively, the announcement continues, “And is this goal not a service to the country?” He added, “We’ve fled the country, but we’re not abandoning our work for the good of the nation. We know our duty, and we’re proving it with every word and action for as long as we live.”) A secondary goal of the journal would be “to correct Europeans’ ideas about Easterners.”¹⁷⁷

Thus began a two-and-a-half-year internecine struggle for the soul of the Young Ottoman Society. Ali Suavi had already been written out of the Society’s charter, but he still held the keys to the *Le Mukhbir*’s offices, which contained the valuable Ottoman Turkish typeface that Mustafa Fazıl had shipped from Istanbul. Mustafa Fazıl Pasha continued to pay out personal stipends as promised and cover the newspaper’s expenses for the next

¹⁷⁷ Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve dönemi*, 98.

several months, leaving Ziya and Namık Kemal to reassert the group's constitutionalist agenda in its pages. This proved difficult. Suavi, Kemal, and Ziya vied for space in the newspaper, each writing items that underscored his own personal priorities.

Suavi did not entirely neglect the question of constitutional reform. The very first issue of *Le Mukhbir* includes mention of an allegedly forthcoming treatise entitled, "Muslimness Is Not an Obstacle to Progress [Müslümanlık terakkiye mani değildir]," in which Suavi promises to explain how "The government of Islamic *sharia* was founded on consultation, along with constitution and nation." The treatise, to our knowledge, was never published, and it is unlikely to have been a subject that Suavi would relish taking up in detail. As Çelik observes, "In *Muhbir* he became a total constitutionalist, except that whenever a consultative body was mentioned, he would put the *ulema* in place of the Senate." Likewise, he repeatedly stressed the conditionality of the sultan's rule, and his susceptibility to the authority vested in Islamic scholars. Like Kemal, Suavi insisted that constitutional government was ordained by Islam, and made frequent references to the example of the Prophet.¹⁷⁸

Yet while Suavi seemed willing to toe the line of support for constitutional reform during this period, his main interests lay elsewhere. He was interested in the material underpinnings of international diplomacy, in the philosophical underpinnings of sovereignty, and especially in correcting misunderstandings of Islam, Ottoman society, and "the East" in general. An apt early illustration of these interests is a treatise that Suavi wrote during his exile in Kastamonu, which survives only in the summary he provides in

¹⁷⁸ Çelik, 104.

his memoir. Entitled “You Too Are on the Ship [*Sen de gemidesin*],” it was a treatise on the “the structures of law, wealth, and power that govern every state.” The title was a reference to a Prophetic hadith that Suavi glosses and interprets in the introduction to his work.¹⁷⁹ Known as the Parable of the Ship, the hadith relates an analogy drawn by the Prophet between the members of a partnership and the passengers of a ship, in which those who find themselves in the ship’s hold may be tempted to drill a hole in the hull in order to get water for themselves without troubling those above. The Prophet points out that if those above allow this action, everyone one will drown, and so they should instead act to prevent catastrophe.

In addition to addressing his Ottoman and Muslim readers, Suavi made an early point of reaching out to Europeans.

While the obvious target of these interventions was Europeans, his Ottoman readers formed an equally important audience for his lessons. One of Suavi’s favorite ways of generating material for *Le Mukhbir*, and for *Ulûm*, his later journal, seems to have been to scan the European press for mistaken views in need of correcting.¹⁸⁰ (Another was

¹⁷⁹ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 3, Book 44, Number 673.

¹⁸⁰ *Ulûm* (“The Sciences”) was an “encyclopedic journal” that Ali Suavi singlehandedly wrote and published for a period of roughly a year, from December of 1869 through November or December of 1870. The journal, which began as a handwritten and lithographically reproduced operation, was financially supported by the Egyptian for much of its year-long run. Çelik speculates that the journal ended because of Suavi’s refusal to take direction or heed warnings about taboo subjects from his Egyptian sponsors (Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve dönemi*, 259-264).

responding to his critics.) Given the steady flow of news and commentary regarding events in Ottoman territories, and the importance assigned to “the Eastern Question” in the European press, Suavi was never at a loss for material.

Despite numerous attempts at diplomacy, Namik Kemal and Ziya grew frustrated with Suavi’s high-handed refusal to compromise. His formal role as editor-in-chief of the Young Ottoman Society’s official journal lasted less than a year, from the publication of the first issue of *Le Mukhbir* on August 31, 1867 until June of the following year, when Kemal and Ziya succeeded in arranging the heist of the Ottoman Turkish typeface out of *Le Mukhbir*’s offices into those of their new journal, *Hürriyet*.¹⁸¹

Yet during that first year before the means of production were wrested from his grasp, Suavi managed to leave his imprint on the group’s reputation among both Ottomans and Europeans. His victory is reflected in the accounts given in the European press of the Young Ottoman society, which mention Suavi’s name with far greater frequency than any other member of the society. In Istanbul, as well, most of the glory of this daring operation accrued to its editor-in-chief, and photos of a turban-clad Suavi with dreamy eyes became a sought-after memento.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve dönemi*, 156-158. The previous month, the two had sent a letter to Suavi formally requesting that he stop using the seal of the Young Ottoman Society in the pages of *Le Mukhbir*; Suavi refused, and continued to publish *Le Mukhbir* until November of 1868, when his stipend from Mustafa Fazıl Pasha finally dried up and his printer, Anesti Fortunali, left for Greece. The name of *Le Mukhbir*’s Greek printer is found in HO 45/9472/A38025, the criminal files related to the *Hurriyet* legal proceedings, in the testimony of Antonius Ameuney.

¹⁸² Çelik, 166–67. The photograph of Suavi that circulated during his lifetime and was reproduced in endless newspaper sketches is from Suavi’s youth. By the time he arrived in Europe he had traded in the turban for the fez.

On the strength of his popularity, Suavi refused to hand over the reins of the journal when asked, or to stop using the seal of the Young Ottoman society in its pages. He would obstinately continue to publish *Le Mukhbir* using an inferior typeface for several months afterwards, before finally closing up shop and turning his attention to a new project, his “encyclopedic journal” *Ulûm*. Meanwhile, he was allowed to contribute a handful of articles to the new Young Ottoman organ. As late as August 1868, when *Le Mukhbir* had been stripped of its formal link to the society as well as most of its collaborators, Suavi would still write, “I declare my pride in being part of such a society, when the intent of that society is to unite all the world’s 200 million Muslims.”¹⁸³ This declaration, while clearly recalcitrant in its opposition to Mustafa Fazil Pasha, indicates a substantial broadening of Suavi’s initial aims. Over the course of the year he spent editing *Le Mukhbir*, his vision for it shifted from being an arm of Ottoman educational reform to becoming a tool of Islamic unification. By 1868, as Çelik notes, “he didn’t limit himself to being an Ottoman, but encompassed the entire Islamic world in his appeal.”¹⁸⁴

It was to the Islamic world that Suavi seems to have been speaking in his fateful December 1869 article for *Hürriyet*. The content of this article worth exploring in some detail because it cuts to the heart of Suavi’s critique of the Tanzimat government and exemplifies his use of Islam as a political and ethical tool. The article opens with a detailed analysis of the recently released Ottoman state budget, on the rationale that “it is necessary to show, by means of a few instances, by what vain promises the people are being put off

¹⁸³ *Le Mukhbir* No. 47, 31 August 1868; cited in Çelik, 156–58.

¹⁸⁴ Çelik, 158.

and by what devices they are being deceived.” Suavi closely examines the ordinary and extraordinary expenditures that have been tallied in the budget and compares them with projected revenues, suspending disbelief for long enough to show that even if all the optimistic projections prove true, the budget has not been balanced. After showing his work, the essay declares the budget to be a tissue of lies drawn up with the aim of disguising its only real source of revenue, that of tax farming, or “fleecing the people,” in a manner “contrary to all the established laws.” As with so many of Suavi’s essays, it marshals an impressive command of technical detail to make a blunt moral judgment. In addition to accusing the grand vizier of “administrative incapacity,” it declares him an “enemy of the sultanate, that is, of the exercise of dominion [*sultanatın yani tasallutun düşmanı*],” presumably because he was usurping the power that properly lay with the sultan and because the injustice being committed in his name undermined the legitimacy of the sultan’s own rule.

Suavi proceeds to assess the grand vizier’s deeds as crimes against the faith: “tyranny, rebellion, blasphemy, malevolence are all here.” Suavi names two fundamental ways in which Âli Pasha’s actions are offenses against Islam: first, by tyrannically exploiting his people in violation of the precepts of Islamic justice (the sin of *zulüm*); and second, by harming the dignity of *Islamdom*, by embarrassing it in the eyes of non-believers. “Alas, for Islam, Alas! A polytheistical state would not commit such tyranny, would not show such rancor,” he writes, adding, “When the non-Muslim nations see this, they attribute it to the defectiveness of the religion of Islam in matters of government. How shall Islam accept

this?”¹⁸⁵ It is on the basis of the two-pronged nature of his offense—both violating Islam and discrediting it—that Suavi declares the urgency of taking action against Âli Pasha. To bolster his case, he cites three separate classical works of Sunni Islamic scholarship that purportedly endorse “the slaughter of the oppressor” and his associates.¹⁸⁶ Startlingly, he concludes by labeling the grand vizier not just a “reprehensible tyrant [*zâlim-i zemîm*]” but a “despicable infidel [*kâfir-i le’îm*],” and in so doing banishes him from the community of believers for his deeds in order to license his killing.

Such an act of *takfir* was severe and highly contentious: according to one well-sourced hadith found in al-Bukhari, a source Suavi knew well, the Prophet likened accusing someone of *kufir* to killing him.¹⁸⁷ Those few clerics who have been willing to declare *takfir* against a sitting Muslim ruler, such as Ibn Taymiyya in the fourteenth century and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the eighteenth, are regarded as extremists. In the twentieth century, *takfir* against a sitting Muslim governor would become an unsurprising, if still contentious gesture among a new style of Islamist thinker; but in the nineteenth century, it still counted as a rather stunning departure from Sunni Islamic etiquette.

Where, then, did Suavi draw his inspiration for the bold rhetorical move of a call for assassination? While he gestures to the Hanafi legal tradition as providing support for his

¹⁸⁵ “Suavi Efendi tarafından gelen mektub surati fi 7 Ramazan sene 1286,” *Hürriyet*, no. 78 (December 20, 1869): 1–3. Translation by J.W. Redhouse (included as evidence in HO 45/9472/A38025), with a few modifications by me.

¹⁸⁶ The specific works he cites are *Al-Mujtaba*, referring to the *Sunan al-Nasa’i* of the ninth-century CE Khurasani hadith scholar Imam al-Nasa’i, which belongs to the canon of six classic works of Sunni hadith scholarship, or *kutub al-sittah*, still taught today; *Al-Nahr al-Fa’iq*, authored by the 16th-century Egyptian Ottoman scholar Sirah al-Din ibn Nujaym; and the fatwa collection of the 16th-century Palestinian Ottoman jurist Muhammad al-Timurtashi.

¹⁸⁷ Camilla Adang et al., *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfir* (Brill, 2015), 3.

move, it is more likely that the Suavi's inspiration came not from those dusty texts, but from recent events in Europe. A year before Suavi wrote his article, the Serbian prince Michael Obrenovich had been killed in a plot said to have been orchestrated by liberals frustrated with his absolutist turn. In 1858, the Italian patriot Felice Orsini had been sentenced to death for plotting to kill Napoleon III. Calls for assassination, though fundamentally illiberal, had been deployed in the service of liberal causes often enough to make Suavi's call for assassination part of a broad pattern in nineteenth-century Europe. There are equally striking parallels between Suavi's rhetoric and that of the anarchists for whom "propaganda by the deed" would become an article of faith in the decades to follow. (In fact, Suavi would be posthumously likened to these "sons of the revolution" in some wings of the European press in the wake of his failed attempt to reinstate Murad V as sultan in 1878.¹⁸⁸) What is particularly novel about Suavi's article is its deployment of sixteenth-century works of Hanafi *fiqh* to support a call for revolutionary violence resonant of Mikhail Bakunin, uncovering (or inventing) a previously buried strain of revolutionism in legal tradition historically supported by, and closely aligned with, the state.

In effect, Suavi's article is a kind of informal fatwa, which lacks the stylistic conventions of a legal opinion but nevertheless puts forth a series of juridical and theological claims based on the author's putative expertise in matters of *fiqh* and *kalam*. Suavi was on thin ice both in laying claim to such expertise and in drawing on it for this

¹⁸⁸ "Vera Zassoulitch in Saint-Petersburg, Hoedel in Berlin, Ali Suavi in Constantinople, each of the three sons of the revolution, itself the daughter of irreligion, have been reported one after the other. A serious lesson for heads of state and for their governments, which can understand that the salutary influence of Catholicism is the only barrier capable of stopping the rising tide of socialism." "Correspondence de Constantinople," *Les Missions catholiques: bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'oeuvre de la propagation de la foi*, June 14, 1877, 279.

purpose. As a product of Ottoman medreses, he was certainly an heir to the Ottoman jurisprudential tradition, but without a diploma from one of its institutions or an official appointment of any kind within its hierarchy, his authority to issue a fatwa condemning the Ottoman grand vizier as both a tyrant and an infidel, and to thereby sanction his killing, went well outside the bounds of established convention. Of course, that was precisely the point of Suavi's exercise: in the curious coda of his piece, he alludes to the responsibility he feels "not to conceal what I know." In taking this liberty, he was merely stepping into the breach left by the timid members of the state-supported *ulema* hierarchy who abetted the tyrant in his violation of established laws. As Suavi would argue some years later in an essay "On the Administration of Justice and the Hierarchy of the Ulema," the crumbling of this hierarchy had created a vacuum of authority, disrupting the mechanisms of justice that had once obtained in an earlier age of Ottoman rule. (To buttress this claim, Suavi cites an old proverb: "The governors govern the people, the sultan rules over the governors, the *ulema* rule over the sultan, and *ilm* (science) rules over the *ulema*."¹⁸⁹) It was into this vacuum that Suavi evidently felt learned and morally responsible individuals like himself must step.

Suavi's article was disruptive in many ways. Despite his professed admiration for the institutions of the *ulema*, Suavi doesn't hesitate to undermine their authority by taking on a role traditionally reserved for members of an institutionalized hierarchy. Nor does he hesitate to take the extreme step of publicly sanctioning the killing of a sitting state

¹⁸⁹ Pierre Guillaume Frédéric Le Play, *Les Ouvriers de l'Orient et leurs essais de la Méditerranée. Populations soumises à la tradition dont le bien-être se conserve sous trois influences dominantes*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Tours: Alfred Mame et Fils, 1877), 270.

minister, pitting the principles of Islam itself against the prerogatives of an Islamic state and its leaders. In declaring *takfir* against the grand vizier, Suavi's article enacts the theologically revolutionary gesture of expelling Âli Pasha from the community of believers alongside the politically insurrectionary act of calling for his death. He also charts new theological and political territory in identifying a new breed of offense against Islam, that of embarrassing the Islamic faith and discrediting its political legitimacy in the eyes of non-believers. This was a novel problem in the annals of Islamic jurisprudence, and one which could only have presented itself amid the new global order of the nineteenth century, in which Islam newly found itself and its institutions summarily judged by non-believers and susceptible to their opinions. Suavi's inclusion of this as an offense in its own right was a creative leap in response to this new global era.

In writing this explosive article, Suavi acted as a spoiler in more ways than one: in precipitating the trial that would lead to the end of *Hürriyet*, he exposed the limits of British liberalism and the depth of its complicity with the Ottoman governing elite in its efforts to consolidate power and suppress dissent. The official response to Suavi's articles marks one of the first instances of interstate collaboration to target Muslim "religious fanaticism" as an enemy of liberal religious tolerance. And yet Suavi's articles contained no calls for violence against Christians; the only targets of his Islamist rhetoric are the Muslim leaders of a regime he accuses of victimizing its subjects, Muslim and Christian alike. His example serves to illustrate a pattern that would become more familiar in the twentieth century: the deployment of the specter of Muslim fanaticism by rulers of majority-Muslim countries to enlist European and American support for their undemocratic regimes.

Suavi's European interlocutors

Of the new connections that Ali Suavi made in London, perhaps the most important was Elisabeth Mary (or Marie) Stanley, the Englishwoman who became his wife and collaborator throughout what was to be the final decade of his life. Few details about Stanley have been preserved, yet a handful of documentary sources allow us to glean some idea of the figure she cut and the role she played in Suavi's life. She appears to have met Suavi in 1867, the year in which her presence is first noted, with a mixture of awe and envy, by Suavi's fellow Young Ottomans in letters back home.¹⁹⁰ While Mary Stanley's name rarely appears, she figures prominently in contemporary accounts of Suavi's activities, which describe her as a linguistically gifted and active participant in her husband's political life.¹⁹¹ Mary Stanley left her mark in the pages of *Le Mukhbir*, as Suavi apparently relied on his wife's linguistic skills to scan the contents of British newspapers for items to discuss in his articles for the journal.¹⁹² Her literacy in both Turkish and English would have been a boon to Suavi as editor, helping him effectuate the switch from French to English as the journal's second language in mid-1868. We can also speculate that her multilingualism helped facilitate Suavi's cultivation of contacts in Britain, and later in France and Geneva, and the deepening of his friendships with figures like David Urquhart and Frédéric Le Play.

¹⁹⁰ The other Young Ottomans appear to have called her Hasene Hanım or "Madame Marie," and to have admired her greatly, while noting her eccentricities. Ebüzziya Tevfik, *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi [single volume]*, trans. Şemsettin Kutlu (Istanbul: Hürriyet Yayınları, 1973); One of them, Kânipaşazâde Rifat, would later cite the relationship as evidence of Suavi's religious hypocrisy, alleging that the two had not been properly wed. *Hakikat-i hal der def'-i ihtilal*. (Paris: Imp. Lith. de V, Janson, 1869).

¹⁹¹ "Madame Ali Suavi is both English and handsome," wrote a correspondent for an English magazine in 1878, repeating her two most commonly cited attributes. ("Echoes from Abroad: Constantinople," *Truth*, June 6, 1878, 719.)

¹⁹² This claim, originally made by Reşad as part of an attempt to discredit Suavi, is recorded in Ebüzziya Tevfik's *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi*, tefrikas 56 and 57; cited in Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve dönemi*, 109–10.

Later, in Istanbul, Stanley turned out to be a gifted diplomat, where she impressed one observer with her “elegant Turkish” and talent for enlisting support for Suavi’s schemes.¹⁹³ Like Suavi himself, she was suspected of being a British agent, an accusation not without irony, as Mary Stanley would discover years later that her marriage to a foreigner had left her effectively stateless.¹⁹⁴

Suavi’s marriage to Mary Stanley was one token of his eagerness to cultivate European friends and interlocutors in Europe, a pattern that he pursued early on and maintained throughout the nine years of his exile. While the correspondence of the other Young Ottomans shows a lively and somewhat insular community of fellow Ottoman expatriates, Suavi seems largely to have eschew the company of his compatriots. Instead, he formed early and strong bonds with a handful of British intellectuals, whose scholarly and political interests would contribute to the development of Suavi’s own worldview. Suavi’s success at forming these relationships is particularly striking given that he seems to have arrived in London with seemingly no English and very little French. These linguistic limitations would help determine the roster of his companions: besides Mary Stanley, he formed an early friendship with the Orientalist Charles Wells, whose proficiency in Turkish

¹⁹³ “[Un diplomate ancien], *L’Angleterre et l’Allemagne en Orient ou le massacre des innocents*, 1881, 13 The anonymous author of this pamphlet credits “Madame Ali Suavi” with encouraging pro-Ottoman sentiment among British diplomats, and hosting soirées at their home in Galatasaray that were attended by high Ottoman functionaries.

¹⁹⁴ This detail is preserved in the annals of French case law, where she made her mark thanks to a June 1892 petition for divorce from her second husband, Paul Totvianian. In the case of “la dame Totvianian, née Elisabeth Stanley,” we learn that Stanley’s marriage to Suavi had caused her to forfeit her British citizenship without gaining Ottoman citizenship in its place, since Ottoman law did not automatically extend citizenship to the wives of its subjects. (French jurists ruled that in such a case, French law would obtain in place of Ottoman or British standards.) Édouard Clunet, ed., “Divorce. Etrangers de nationalité différente,” *Journal du droit international privé et de la jurisprudence comparée* 20 (1893): 1167–69.

corresponded to a general Turcophilia and a set of conservative thinkers of the old school, including David Urquhart and H.A. Munro Butler-Johnstone.

Through Charles Wells and his connections, Suavi helped create an international profile for himself and for *Le Mukhbir*. Wells published summaries of several of Suavi's articles in a journal he edited called *Public Opinion*, enabling Suavi's critiques of the Ottoman government to reach Anglophone audiences. Suavi returned the favor by printing several of Wells' articles in the pages of *Le Mukhbir*. Suavi's journal received positive coverage in some parts of the Parisian press, and according to its own excited report, seems to have seen some circulation in Russia as well.¹⁹⁵

Alongside Wells and Mary Stanley, who both played crucial instrumental roles in Suavi's assimilation to Europe, Suavi formed a substantive intellectual relationship with the Scottish statesman David Urquhart. Urquhart, who would have been in his late sixties by the time Suavi met him, is often presented as an amusing footnote to the historiography of nineteenth-century European conservatism: a sentimental Turcophile and a rabid Russophobe whose political sensibilities were thoroughly impractical and out of date even by the standards of his fellow conservatives. Among the nicest things said about him was Wilfred Blunt's speculation that he was "the first exponent of Mohammedanism to Englishmen," which of course is not true, but he was probably the first man to open a Turkish bath in London.¹⁹⁶ Urquhart's first contact with the Young Ottomans had come not through Ali Suavi but from another member of the group, who was drawn by Urquhart's a

¹⁹⁵ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve dönemi*, 178–179. For reports of Muhbir's penetration into Russia, see *Muhbir* No. 14, 18 November 1867.

¹⁹⁶ *The Future of Islam*, 135.

reputation as a Turcophile and the man who'd brought the Turkish bath to London. And while most of the Young Ottomans soon drifted away from Urquhart, perhaps picking up on his eccentric and marginal status in British politics, where he was *persona non grata* among conservative and liberal politicians alike, Suavi drifted closer to him.

Their bond may have initially been a matter of cultural and linguistic affinity, but their affinities were soon revealed to be of a far deeper sort. The cornerstone of Urquhart's politics was his suspicion of political innovations like diplomacy, and with all the fashionable abstractions on which it rested: words like freedom, progress, and civilization. As he wrote in an essay entitled *Familiar Words, as Affecting the Conduct of England in 1855*, "If your fathers shed blood, they did it with a motive. You perpetrate the same acts on the objects of your enlarged sympathies whilst ignorant of what you do. In your Freedom you have forgotten Law; in your Civilisation, Patriotism, Justice, Integrity, and Conscience. In your Factions you have lost the men."¹⁹⁷

Two of the familiar words that bothered Urquhart the most were "religion" and "politics"—two words that, he noted, descended from different linguistic paths, yet ultimately meant the same thing: both, he writes, were once "equivalent to freedom and justice." (19) Or, as he specifies, "Politics was the knowledge of what was right, Religion the obligation to perform it." Yet in the modern insistence on their separation, both are destroyed. For modern Britons, he writes, "Religion is fruitless faith, and policy is lawless practice." (20) Needless to say, this critique of secularism resonated strongly with the

¹⁹⁷ David Urquhart, *Familiar Words, as Affecting the Conduct of England in 1855* (London: Trübner & Co., 1855), 19.

critique that Suavi had gestured towards in his early writings on Muhbir. In later issues, and in the “encyclopedic journal” that he would go on to publish for a year or so after Muhbir was forced to close, Suavi would meditate at length on similar themes.

Just as many aspects of Urquhart’s ideas resonated with Suavi, so, too, did his methods: both hoped to enlist the common people of their respective countries as allies in achieving their ends. Urquhart, after his effective banishment from the British diplomatic corps where he had served as a young man, had set about forming an association of reading groups for the education of working men on foreign affairs. These “Foreign Affairs Committees,” as they were called, dedicated hours to the study of the Blue Books published by the Foreign Office, which contained copies of original correspondence, memoranda, and treaties exchanged by British diplomats. While poring over these documents was tedious work, Urquhart insisted it was the only way for honest Britons to know what was being done in their name. His goal was to school the British working classes in modern diplomacy as well as ancient moral law, and so to mold them into a bulwark against the further erosion of Christian values by Britain’s ministerial elite, whose rootlessness and venality made them especially vulnerable to Russian intrigues. (The insatiability of the Russian Empire and the unrelenting wickedness of its designs on the rest of the world figured as the mover unmoved in Urquhart’s system.)

Urquhart’s whole philosophy may well fit the label *sui generis*, but elements of his critique of modern diplomacy resonated strongly with his contemporaries across the political spectrum, from Frédéric Le Play to Karl Marx. Marx actually wrote for Urquhart’s publications on a couple of occasions, and he and Engels defended Urquhart from some of

his critics on the left. For his own part, Urquhart was someone who readily saw past superficial distinctions of party and faction—which were after all only meaningless modern abstractions—and was happy to collaborate with anyone who shared his goals of educating the populace and ending the unchecked rule of elites.

Ali Suavi was a man similarly disposed, and the two men embarked on a long and fruitful collaboration. They found much on which to agree: Urquhart's critique of British government resonated strongly with the Young Ottoman critique of their own leading ministers. By stressing the linkage between strong religious institutions and good government, and the values of intergenerational continuity and civilizational distinctiveness in producing a stable world order, both men challenged the liberal consensus that prevailed among most Young Ottomans and among the Western European foreign policy elite. Both Suavi and Urquhart took a deep scholarly interest in the histories of nations, an interest which corresponded to their keen interest in preserving the bright lines between states and civilizations, the better to appreciate their distinctiveness. Both were Turcophiles, and with time Suavi developed into a fully fledged Russophobe as well.

One of the first publications produced by Suavi after he was forced to abandon his encyclopedic journal was a pamphlet taking as its ostensible subject the fate of Khiva, a small Turkic Muslim khanate located in today's Uzbekistan. Published in the spring of 1873, on the heels of the Russian invasion of Khiva. The book was such a hit, he writes, that he was persuaded to translate it into French for publication as well. *Le Khiva en Mars 1873* was Ali Suavi's first major foray into writing for a European audience. Taking the same approach as he followed in his very first articles for *Muhbir*, Suavi patiently if somewhat

didactically explains the location of Khiva and the history of Russia's interest in conquering it. After the encyclopedic style of many nineteenth-century scholars, Suavi drowns his reader in details concerning the flora, fauna, climate, and population of the region, relating details of its natural history and its very long history of continuous occupation and cultural efflorescence, along with information the ethnic diversity of its present-day inhabitants in tabular form. Yet the heart of the book is a study in international power relations. In the course of his book, Suavi observes the tremendous consistency of Russian foreign policy over the course of centuries, and draws his readers' attention to the way that this policy is now intersecting with the foreign policy of Britain:

Russia and English would appear, for many years now, to have a policy of dividing the Muslims of Asia.... [They] rule Muslims not with indifference, but with calculation and artifice. For they have profoundly studied the art of ruling these peoples. Thus they say from experience: 1) that one must not lay a finger on the Muslim religion; 2) that one must preserve the civil rights of Muslims in entirely fair courts. So long as one continues to respect these two points, Muslims will hardly regret having fallen under the power of the Russians and the English. Here I only repeat what they have said themselves."¹⁹⁸

In this passage, and throughout the remainder of the book, Suavi gives evidence of his growing capacity for sophisticated and cold-blooded analysis of geopolitics with a materialist bent, a reflection of Urquhart's influence, certainly. Yet the book concludes with a final word to the reader in which Suavi tips his hand and spills his emotion on the page. He points out that in recent years, both France and England have made expensive forays into foreign countries (Syria and Abyssinia) for the sake of their co-religionists, and recalls

¹⁹⁸ Ali Suavi, *Le Khiva en mars 1873* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1873), 14–15.

that this is something that the Ottoman state was once known to do, as lately as the Crimean War. “Yet things have changed since those days,” he writes:

Today Russians have invaded Transoxiana [Mawarannahr], the homeland of the scholars and wise men whose books we study in mosques and medreses, and take pride in even if we can’t understand two words of them. And Istanbul doesn’t show even a trace of regret. [...] They are Turkish Muslims who belong to our religion, our race [*qavm*], our family [*familya*]... How are they, I wonder? No one even wants to listen.¹⁹⁹

The pamphlet, while originally published in Turkish in March of 1873, appeared the following month in French as well, at the urging of his friends, as he explains. It marks a shift in the emphasis of Suavi’s writing, away from the scholarly and toward the overtly political. The shift may be attributed to Urquhart’s encouragement, but it was also due to the increasingly dire state of international affairs. A series of Christian revolts in the region had led to widespread reports of atrocities, as well as a flood of Muslim refugees fleeing the region southward toward the Ottoman capital. The Ottoman hold on its Balkan lands, once considered the heartland of the empire, was weakening. It was in this climate that Suavi published his pamphlet on Herzegovina. Originally published in French, it proved popular enough to warrant three printings and attract notice in several French and British newspapers. A follow-up publication, “The Truth about Bulgarian Affairs,” was published in English by Urquhart’s press. These pieces were translated into Turkish, and they paved the way for Suavi to eventually return to Istanbul.

Just as important to understanding the evolution of Suavi’s anti-liberalism in these years is his collaboration with Frédéric Le Play, the French sociologist and conservative

¹⁹⁹ Ali Suavi, *Hive fi Muharrem 1290* (Paris: Impr. Victor Goupy, 1873), 129.

ideologue. Le Play enjoyed tremendous prestige and influence in France under the Second Empire, serving as a counselor of state and senator under Napoleon III, who named him a grand officer of the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honor.²⁰⁰ Trained as an economist and engineer, Le Play dedicated his life's work to developing what he called "the science of society," undertaking close ethnographies of social structures in diverse locations with the goal of uncovering the secret of social happiness. His most famous work was a six-volume study entitled "European Workers," in which he compared the economic and social structures of the working classes in communities ranging from the steppes of Central Asia to the slums of Paris. He was particularly interested in family budgets, and on the relationship between family structure and economic sustenance. Based on these studies, Le Play concluded that "the secret of social happiness" for all times and all ages lay in strong familial institutions, which had been lost through the industrial re-organization of society and the political upheavals of the French Revolution and its aftermath. He was particularly scathing in his condemnation of "the three false dogmas of the Revolution," which he enumerated as original perfection, providential equality, and the right of revolt."²⁰¹ In their place, he wished to see Christianity—and in particular, the principles of the Ten Commandments—enshrined as the basis for legal codes in France and elsewhere.

It was through Urquhart that Le Play and Suavi became acquainted, in the year 1876. His contribution to Le Play's work came in the form of his collaboration on a series of

²⁰⁰ *Bulletin des lois de la République Française* (Impr. Nat. des Lois, 1867), 1212.

²⁰¹ Frédéric Le Play, "A Monsieur Edmond Demolins," in *Le mouvement communal et municipal au moyen âge assai sur l'origine: le développement et la chute des libertés publiques en France. Précédé d'une lettre de M. F. Le Play*, by Edmond Demolins (Paris: Didier et cie., 1875), x.

revisions to Le Play's famous studies of family life in the East. These studies, or monographies, were gathered in Volume 2 of Le Play's six-volume series entitled "European Workers." The studies are organized from most to least patriarchal, or law-bound. Volume 2, on which Suavi collaborated, surveys "The workers of the Orient and their Mediterranean hordes: Populations subject to tradition, whose well-being is maintained under three dominant influences: the eternal Decalogue, the patriarchal family, and the spontaneous product of the earth." The monographies in the book profiling nomads and peasants from Russia, Central Asia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Syria, and Morocco. Suavi's contribution to the book is a treatise "On the institution of justice and the hierarchy of the *ulema*." It starts out by explaining in rather dry, technical detail how a civil trial works in Turkey—the sequence of judges and administrators to which one appeals, and how much each civil servant is paid for his work, and by whom. This is followed by a detailed enumeration of the hierarchy of *ulema*, a group whose status in the late nineteenth century had plummeted. He is essentially describing a set of institutions for the administration of justice which no longer functions as described.

It may be hard to credit that Suavi's rejection of liberalism was not atavistic or nostalgic, given the ideological kinship I show between Suavi and European conservatives, whose rhetoric often *was* couched in a tone of nostalgia for pre-industrial social structures and attitudes. The European thinkers Suavi befriended were absolutely wistful champions of a vanished paternalism, and Suavi's thinking on certain matters bore a strong resemblance to theirs: regarding the structure of the family, certainly, and also regarding the centrality of religious law as the bedrock of good governance. But Suavi's fundamental

orientation toward the policies he championed was not nostalgic or backward-looking. It was fundamentally strategic and future-oriented.

Suavi came to see the political fortunes of his beleaguered state as aligned not with liberal reform, but with the consolidation of authority, a perspective that placed him in alignment with those of European septuagenarians who set the agenda for European conservative thought in their day. Suavi's partnership with these men was a real and importance influence on his political views, but it should be remembered that Suavi's underlying worldview and values were already in place by the time he encountered them.

In August of 1876, Suavi made his first re-entry into the Ottoman press through an article in Filip Efendi's popular newspaper *Vakit*. It was a coy debut, bearing the headline "A copy of a letter written by Ali Suavi Efendi to a person in Izmir that we've obtained."²⁰² The letter offered a detailed report on the state of European diplomacy drawn from French and British press accounts and "official documents." Suavi had effectively taken over *Vakit* to warn readers about the machinations of Russia and the unreliability of European states. It concludes with a warning to "the people of the east who aren't dead" [*mevta olmayan ehli şarq*]: "Russia has created an Eastern Question. Out of such an Eastern Question the state of Italy was born; out of such an Eastern Question the state of Germany was born."

Suavi's writings for *Vakit* helped restore him to favor in the eyes of Abdülhamid. It also appears that Mary Stanley's friendship with "İngiliz" Mehmed Said Pasha, the career

²⁰² Ali Suavi, "Ali Suavi Efendi'nin Izmir'de bir zata yazmış olduğu bir mektubun elimize geçen suretidir.," *Vakit* 2, no. 301 (August 28, 1876): 2-3. Suavi's contributions to the journal begin with No. 300, in 1876, but see especially Nos. 323 (19 September 1876, reproduced in Kuntay, pp. 90-97) and 345, 346 and 347, where Suavi shares parts of his "Truth about Bulgarian Affairs" with Turcophone readers in the Ottoman capital, and argues that the European countries are forming a Christian alliance against the Ottoman state.

Ottoman civil employee who may have studied alongside Stanley at Edinburgh, was instrumental in helping Suavi return to Istanbul. İngiliz Said Pasha had become a close advisor to the newly anointed Sultan Abdülhamid II, and interceded on behalf of Suavi to secure his pardon and permission to return to the Ottoman capital. In fact, it took little to persuade Abdülhamid that a man so gifted in multilingual propagandizing could be a tremendous asset to him in his quest to consolidate power. In the month before Suavi's return, Said Pasha's abortive attempt to create a "Translation Council"—a sort of think tank for producing pro-Ottoman propaganda in multiple European languages, which he hoped to fill with the best writers in Istanbul—foundered on the refusal of the others to work with Suavi. When the sultan heard that members like Namik Kemal and Ziya refused to work with Suavi, he scrapped the council in its entirety.²⁰³

It happened that Suavi's return to Istanbul in December of 1876 coincided with the start of the Constantinople Conference. His opposition to constitutionalism and the principle of political representation did not keep him from joining the Ottomanist cause by seeking to persuade the European diplomats assembled that Ottoman reforms were well underway and sufficient to protect the rights of Ottoman Christians. To that end, he and his wife, Mary Stanley, invited Butler-Johnstone to Istanbul to help advance the Ottomanist cause among European diplomats. But the failure of Butler-Johnstone's visit, and of Ottoman efforts to persuade the diplomats to protect Ottoman sovereignty, was soon enough followed by the Russian invasion of Ottoman territory in April of 1877. Abdulhamid responded by clamping down on the constitutionalist movement, expelling Mithat Pasha

²⁰³ Burhan Çağlar, *İngiliz Said Paşa ve günlüğü (jurnal)* (Istanbul: Arı Sanat, 2010), 23.

and jailing both Namik Kemal and Teodor Kasap, among others. Suavi remained a loyalist at this point. He was, after all, a direct employee of the state—he was head of the *Mekteb-i Sultani* (Galatasaray), and engrossed in his reform plans there. Yet his concerns were broader than pedagogical ones: he continued to write articles in the Ottoman newspapers *Vakit* and *Basiret*—both major newspapers with close ties to the government.

While the theme of these articles was initially to call for material and spiritual support to the Ottoman army (*Vakit* No. 634, 1 August 1877, p. 3; *Vakit* No. 637, 4 August 1877, p. 2), his tone became increasingly desperate and critical as his attention turned to the plight of Balkan Muslims forced to seek refuge in Istanbul after being driven from their homes by the Russian army. He began to write in *Basiret* with open hostility toward the British government, an attitude that helped to get him dismissed from his post as director of Galatasaray in December of 1877. After his dismissal, he returned to sermonizing in Istanbul mosques, calling attention to the growing refugee crisis in the capital. In the end, Abdülhamid yielded and dismissed him in December of 1877, but not before seeking, unsuccessfully, to have him installed as the Ottoman ambassador in Bombay—a notion that the English ambassador indignantly refused.²⁰⁴

Meanwhile, on the 10th of December, the town of Plevna in Bulgaria fell to the Russians, a decisive turn in the war. At the Treaty of San Stefano, signed on 3 March 1878, ended Ottoman rule in Bulgaria and recognized Romanian independence. This momentous series of events all passed without public comment from Suavi, who since his dismissal from his government post had become dangerously silent man. As Çelik points out, his

²⁰⁴ Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve dönemi*, appendix.

disappearance from the pages of *Vakit* was unlikely to have been voluntary, and was probably the result of an order from the state.

On the morning of May 20th, Ali Suavi led a rag-tag group of several hundred Muslim Balkan refugees in an assault on one of the imperial palaces. It was an attempt to liberate and re-enthroned the deposed sultan Murad V. It ended with dozens of deaths, injuries, and arrests. Suavi himself was killed by a blow to the head from a police officer's baton. The attack has been exhaustively studied by those trying to understand it. On a practical level, they ask why Suavi would risk his life to unseat a sultan who had so recently been his patron, and who held out the promise of doing still more for him? And why would his effort appear to involve so few other men of consequence, relying instead on a group of men who simply had nothing to lose in the attempt? It was known to contemporaries as an absurdly poorly planned attempt, bordering on farce: "the stupid plot of Ali Suavy," as one contemporary dismissed it.²⁰⁵

On an ideological level, too, Suavi's choice requires some explaining. How could someone who so cherished sultanic authority orchestrate an attempt to overthrow the sultan? And why would he make it his object to reinstate Murad V, the darling of the liberal reformers he opposed in the press? On a practical level, we can only speculate as to why—or even whether—Suavi deemed his plan plausible. It may have been an act of desperation more than calculation. According to the Turkish historian İsmail Hami Danişmend, Suavi's decision to revolt followed an unsuccessful attempt to persuade Abdülhamid to reject the

²⁰⁵ İsmail Kemal Bey, *The Memoirs of İsmail Kemal Bey*, ed. Sommerville Story (London: Constable, 1920), 120.

terms offered by the Russians at San Stefano, and keep fighting instead.²⁰⁶ It appears that Suavi's cohort of co-plotters—as described in the extensive report on the plot, including interviews with numerous members of the conspiracy—had persuaded him that a revolt was plausible. Still, how did Suavi reach a point where he decided that the violent overthrow of the reigning sultan in favor of a man who didn't share Suavi's Islamist convictions and who had willingly yielded the throne after only three months in 1876 because of his mental instability, was the solution to the state's military and financial crisis? The fact that both Suavi and Murad V were Freemasons could well have played a role in persuading Suavi to regard his "brother" as a promising vehicle of the reforms he sought. The bottom line is that Suavi's abiding commitment to sultanic rule gave him few options. He could either continue his efforts to influence Abdülhamid, or he could seek to replace him with the only other living figure with a legitimate claim to the title: the deposed Murad V.

To understand Suavi's attack on Çırağan Palace, we have to appreciate that he and his European friends had come to see Abdülhamid as under the control of foreign powers. He had said as much in his enormously popular commentary on the revolt of Herzegovina, which concludes with the following firm admonition:

If the Ottoman Empire wants to become grand, rich, and strong, it must understand its own strength, resulting from its geographical situation and the patriotism of its people; it must not count on any power but its own, and it must at last cease to remain a disguised protectorate of European governments.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Cited in Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 131.

²⁰⁷ Ali Suavi, *À propos de l'Herzégovine*, 93.

In the end, it was Suavi's refusal to recognize the inevitability of the Ottoman dependence on Europe that drove him to pursue the approach of rallying a mob, in this case an assembly of battered Muslim refugees, the victims of failed Ottoman diplomacy—to effect a transfer of sovereignty. The method he chose was the final proof of his radical democratic political convictions, and its failure can be taken as the final rebuttal to his long-running debate with Namik Kemal and the other optimists in the Young Ottoman movement.

From Anti-Liberalism to Islamism

Buried in an 1878 issue of the conservative British magazine *The Spectator* is the following *aperçu*:

Nothing is more curious than the fact that while residence in England seems to overawe some dark men, it inspires in others a profound hatred of English civilisation. Jung Bahadoor and Salar Jung stood by us in the Mutiny because they had driven over London Bridge, but Azimoollah murdered us the more energetically for the same reason, and Ali Suavi left England with a profound hatred of English policy.²⁰⁸

Suavi's friend Urquhart, had he been alive, would have bristled at this conflation of "English civilization" and "English policy," and likely so would Suavi himself. For if Suavi learned anything from the time he spent in London, and in Europe overall, it was how to distinguish the material underpinnings of European hegemony from its ideological overlays. Accordingly, London had played a crucial role in shaping Suavi's worldview. This influence made itself felt in the friendships he formed with English people: Mary Stanley,

²⁰⁸ "The Graver Magazines," *The Spectator: A Weekly Review of Politics, Literature, Theology, and Art*. 51, no. 2606 (June 8, 1878): 739.

Charles Wells, and David Urquhart chief among them. But the London that shaped Suavi was more than a city of Englishmen and Englishwomen; it was, like Paris, a symbol of a new system of global hegemony and of resistance to that hegemony, a city that attracted the likes of Mazzini, Orsini, Engels, Marx; of the Bavarian anarchist Johann Most and the Liberian pan-Africanist Islamophile Edward Wilmot Blyden. In London and Paris, Suavi had immersed himself in the twin capitals of European liberalism and European empire, allowing him to bear witness to both the endemic and increasingly racialized cultural condescension of nineteenth-century Europe and the profound social tensions and ideological rifts that this condescension masked. He had learned the porousness and flexibility of liberalism as a hegemonic set of principles, and their susceptibility to manipulation through the fickle tool of public opinion.

Yet Suavi's alliance with European conservatives does not make him a fellow conservative. Within the context of Ottoman politics, it made him a radical dissident from the better-known tendencies of Ottoman political thought, in both their traditionalist and liberal reformist guises. What he shared with his conservative allies was a mistrust of liberal doctrines and their blithe confidence in social progress. His radicalism was a product of both his ideological and his strategic or practical concerns: his carefully considered reflections about the nature of political sovereignty, on the one hand, and on the other, his diagnosis of the imminent threat posed to Ottoman sovereignty by foreign powers in the new geopolitical landscape that emerged in the wake of the Crimean War.

In Europe, Suavi developed a command of several different idioms: he learned to address himself to audiences in a variety of languages and registers. He learned to make

good use of the liberty of the press afforded to journalists in Britain, until that liberty was withdrawn, and in the process had exposed the internal limitations of the ideology of liberalism of which British society considered itself the epitome. Namik Kemal admitted to being impressed by London and what the spectator would call “English civilisation,” whose praises he sang in an article entitled “Progress” a few years after his return to Istanbul; Suavi, for his part, never held a candle for progress, but he may have understood the ideology of progressivism more deeply than his progressive peers did. His suspicion of European liberalism was not the product of simple xenophobia or nostalgia for a lost Ottoman golden age: rather, it was a carefully considered calculation born out a close attunement to geopolitical realities, coupled with an underlying commitment to Islam and its historic institutions, particularly the *ulema* and the sultanate, as safeguards of divine justice. Despite his association with the Young Ottoman Society, Suavi did not absorb its constitutionalist dogmas, but remained faithful to a different vision of justice grounded in these Islamic institutions.

As I argued in Chapter 1, the Young Ottoman movement is best conceived not as a liberal movement defined by its pursuit of constitutionalism and parliamentary representation; instead, it sought to vest the Ottoman nation with the sovereignty once accorded to its sultan and his court. Suavi defended the sultanate as the seat of sovereignty and rejected the notion of “popular sovereignty,” yet he saw a crucial role for people in upholding Islamic principles of justice, fighting tyranny, and defending the sultanate—sometimes from the sultan himself. His suspicion of liberal institutions was paired with an enthusiasm for the concept of nationhood as a tool for securing Islamic justice. In this

sense, Suavi's loyalty to the Ottoman state was superseded by his allegiance to Islamic justice as a transcendent ideal. Restoring the strength of the Ottoman state was only a means to that greater end. While Namik Kemal thrilled to the prospect of restoring the Ottoman state's historic place as the unchallenged leader of Islam and protector of the Christian peoples under its rule, and Teodor Kasap delighted in the cultural unity produced by centuries of relative political stability in the Ottoman domains and the prospect for collective multi-ethnic self-liberation through a radically democratized state and culture, Suavi viewed a strengthened and unified Ottoman state as a mere vessel for defeating oppression on both a local and a global scale.

Suavi is set apart from his fellow Young Ottomans not only by the depth of his engagement with the Islamic scholarly tradition but by his interest in the material underpinnings of global politics, an interest amplified by the intellectual and strategic connections he forged with European conservatives during his time abroad. He exemplifies the beginnings of a pattern of ideological alignment between Islamist movements and the European right that continues throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

As colonialism exacerbated the gaps between Muslim and non-Muslim countries, Islamic thought took on a more explicitly counter-hegemonic bent, and Suavi's dissenting Islamism began to appear more prescient than the optimistic Islamic internationalism of Namik Kemal. In fact, Suavi's critique of liberalism anticipated the Islamist political thinkers of the 20th century, particularly Rashid Rida, Said Nursi, and Sayid al-Qutb. While the varieties of Islamist thought multiplied in the early 20th century, they share a common critique of liberal pieties, like secularism and universal suffrage as a panacea for injustice. Suavi was one of the first thinkers to publish a critique of these principles from an explicitly Islamic standpoint. In place of the pieties of constitutionalism and representative government, Suavi put forth competing pieties of his own. Among these were a vision of Islam as a transcendent source of universal justice and a belief in its power as a counterhegemonic force in a newly European-dominated global order.

Among the contributions Ali Suavi made to the Young Ottoman movement is his particular strain of Islamist rhetoric, which matched and amplified the group's perception as a Muslim entity, helping to establish what the group signified in an international context. This rhetoric turned out to anticipate an important shift in the thinking of Namık Kemal and other leading Young Ottomans, whose own writings would eventually reflect a new and growing interest in the theme of "Islamic unification."²⁰⁹ His writings anticipate currents in twentieth-century Islamist thought, particularly in his distrust of elites, his suspicion of the institution of the modern nation-state, and his faith in the transcendent power of Islamic ideals and institutions as a corrective source of social justice. Suavi presents us with an early example of the anti-liberal strain of Islamism that runs parallel to a liberal strain. Suavi is also an important early forebear of Islamist thought, and serves as the crux of the link between the Young Ottoman movement and modern Islamism.

Ali Suavi is one of the first proponents of a properly global Islamist politics. He was instrumental in formulating a vision of Islam as a counterhegemonic force in a world order increasingly dominated by Christian powers, and given the breadth of the subjects he published on and the range of languages he published in (Turkish, Arabic, French and English), it's fair to say he played a role in galvanizing a sense of global consciousness among Muslims. His thinking combined a keenly international-minded materialist outlook with an eschatological bent, and thus anticipated the socialist turn of twentieth-century Islamist movements. So long as the historiography of Ottoman political thought insists on dividing its subjects into reformers and reactionaries, there's little room in it for Suavi and

²⁰⁹ Namık Kemal, "İttihad-i İslam," *İbret*, no. 11 (June 27, 1872).

those like him, who sought reform on terms outside the liberal consensus for which the Young Ottomans are remembered. The widespread confusion about what Suavi stood for—was he for Europe or against it?—reflects a broader confusion about the diverse ideological components that made up Ottomanism. Any serious engagement with Young Ottoman thought must grapple with the anti-liberal strain of Islamist thought it contains.

Conclusion

Benedict Anderson opened his *Imagined Communities* by presenting nationalism as a paradox. “Nation-ness,” he writes, has become “the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time,” and yet it is characterized by “philosophical poverty and even incoherence.” Writing in response to outbreaks of nationalist-inspired violence in Southeast Asia in the 1970s, Anderson viewed nationalism as a tragedy of over-investment, and assumed his reader would too: “What makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history (scarcely more than two centuries) generate such colossal sacrifices?” he asked.²¹⁰

In the preceding chapters, I have sought to explore some tentative answers to this question. By reconstructing the “problem-space” inhabited by three figures who helped lead the Young Ottoman movement, and by attending to both the circumstantial specificity and the broader resonances of their writings, I have tried to draw out the philosophical stakes of Ottoman-ness for these three figures. In examining the strategies that each pursued for national cohesion and international recognition, I have underlined the degree to which these strategies reflect a shared populist tendency that reflects a preoccupation with collective political agency. I have also tried to show how the political ideologies and tactics they proposed were shaped by the imperative to strengthen Ottoman sovereignty. By the nineteenth century, sovereignty had become a prerequisite for the pursuit of liberty, justice, and participation in the broader human community. As Anderson reminds us, “nations dream of being free...The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.”

²¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 3–7.

By highlighting the demographic and ideological diversity of the Young Ottoman movement, I have sought to underscore not only Ottomanism's breadth, but its depth as an animating force in late Ottoman political life. The fact that the dream of a sovereign liberal Ottoman state captured the imaginations of so many—not only Turkish-speaking members of the *millet-i hakime*, but Orthodox Greeks and Bulgarians, Arabs, Kurds, Albanians, Armenians, and Jews, as well as Englishmen, Poles, Hungarians, Italians, and Indians—is a testament to its richness and potency. And by highlighting the Young Ottomans' connections to the broader ideological currents of nineteenth-century Europe, as well as the universal scope of their moral aspirations, I hope to have shown that there was nothing “shrunkened” in their imaginings. Instead, I see the Ottomanist project they inaugurated as an imaginative leap toward collective self-realization, a response to a decline in imperial prestige that sought to build a new refuge for sovereignty in a shared history of cohabitation and a cultural identification with Ottoman-ness, despite—or owing to—the diverse range of meanings it encompassed.

Whether this shared heritage would have proved sufficiently robust to form the basis of a democratic political culture is impossible to know. As it happened, Ottoman society never got a chance to find out. The Russo-Ottoman War and the resulting loss of several core Balkan provinces proved itself to be the kind of political trauma that helped justify the suppression of dissident activity and the shrinking of the public political culture that the Young Ottomans had helped create. In the coming decades, Young Ottoman ideas would be taken up and put to political use by both Sultan Abdülhamid II and his chief opponents, the Young Turks; they would also make their way into political ideas of Muslim

political groups outside the empire, becoming part of the genealogy of Islamic internationalism in the twentieth century. Yet the circumstances that occasioned this singular moment of optimism and its impulse toward a religiously and ethnically multiple Ottoman sovereignty that arose in the 1860s and 1870s, were never to return.

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