

To my father who instilled in me the love of reading and language

FROM DECLINE TO PROGRESS:
OTTOMAN CONCEPTS OF REFORM 1600-1876

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Ihsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

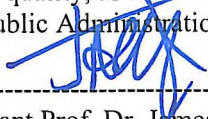
ALP EREN TOPAL

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
IHSAN DOĞRAMACI BILKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA
June 2017

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science and Public Administration.



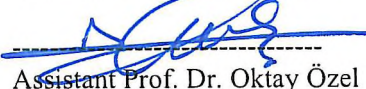
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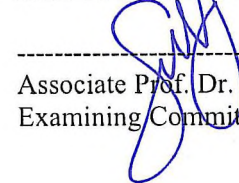
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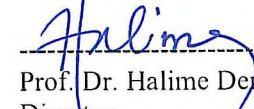
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ABSTRACT

FROM DECLINE TO PROGRESS: OTTOMAN CONCEPTS OF REFORM 1600-1876

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This dissertation aims to analyse the transformation of Ottoman reform debates from the late sixteenth century to 1876 when the first Ottoman constitution was promulgated, by tracing various concepts of reform used in different periods of. In chronological order these concepts are *islah* (reform) in seventeenth century, *tecdîd* (renewal) at the turn of nineteenth century, *tanzîmât* (reordering) in the period leading up to the Tanzimat and *terakkî* (progress) during the late Tanzimat. Using the political writing produced by Ottoman bureaucrats (memoranda, treatises, chronicles, essays) and scribes, in each era I question how order is understood, how Ottoman decline is conceptualized, how tradition is reinvented and how innovation is justified. Through such questions, I seek to understand the logic of transformation in Ottoman political vocabulary accompanying the state transformation process and challenge some basic assumptions in the literature regarding Ottoman political language, Westernization and secularization. In my analysis I employ various revisionist approaches to the history of political thought mainly including Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history and contextualism of Cambridge School.

Keywords: Conceptual History, Order, Ottoman Political Thought, Reform, Tradition

ÖZET

İHTİLALDEN TERAKKİYE:

OSMANLI'DA ISLAHAT KAVRAMLARI 1600-1876

Topal, Alp Eren

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

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Bu çalışma çerçevesinde, on altıncı yüzyılın sonlarından 1876'da ilk anayasanın ilanına kadar Osmanlı'da reform tartışmalarının dönüşümü, farklı dönemlerde kullanılan reforma dair kavramlar üzerinden analiz edilmektedir. Kronolojik sırayla bu kavramlar, on yedinci yüzyılda *islâh*, Nizam-ı Cedid döneminde *tecdîd*, *Tanzîmat* ve son olarak da *terakkî* kavramlarıdır. Özellikle Osmanlı bürokrat ve katipleri tarafından yazılan siyasi metinleri (risaleler, layihalar, kronikler ve makaleler) kullanarak, her dönemde, nizamın nasıl anlaşıldığı, çözülmenin ve çöküşün nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığı, geleneğin ne şekilde yeniden üretildiği ve yeniliğin nasıl meşrulaştırıldığı sorgulanmaktadır. Bu sorular aracılığıyla devletin dönüşüm sürecinde Osmanlı siyasi dilinin dönüşümünün nasıl bir mantık takip ettiğini anlamaya çalışırken bir yandan da Osmanlı siyasi kavramlarına, Batılılaşmaya ve sekülerleşmeye dair literatürdeki bazı temel varsayımları masaya yatırıyorum. Bu çalışma çerçevesinde yöntemsel olarak Reinhart Koselleck ve Cambridge ekolünün siyasi düşünce tarihine revizyonist yaklaşımlarından ilham alıyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gelenek, Kavramlar Tarihi, Nizam, Osmanlı Siyasi Düşüncesi, Reform

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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I seek an answer the question of how Ottoman bureaucrats debated, conceptualized and justified reform in the various stages of the Empire's transformation from the late sixteenth century to the late Tanzimat. By analysing these debates, I also seek to analyze the different patterns of engagement with tradition in political argumentation. Through this analysis I question some of the prevalent assumptions regarding Ottoman-Islamic tradition, influence of Western ideas, secularization, modernization, teleology and the overall logic of change in Ottoman political thought.

As the dominant paradigm in Ottoman and Turkish history for almost a century, modernization theory proposed varying teleological narratives of Ottoman decline, reform attempts, their failure and eventual collapse of the Empire, all building up to the foundation of the Turkish republic. Parallel to the historiographical category of modernization we used to encounter overarching explanatory frameworks of imperial decline and fall, secularization, Westernization and nation building. Niyazi Berkes's *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*¹, and Bernard Lewis's *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*² were typical examples of such accounts which ignored contingency and reduced Ottoman-Turkish history to linear processes whose blueprints were to be found in the West.

Following the global challenge to modernization theories and linear historiography, in the recent decades, Ottoman-Turkish historiography has also gone through some revision and these teleological accounts have been challenged. The narrative of

¹ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, Reissue edition (New York: Routledge, 1999)

² Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey 3rd ed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

imperial decline has been replaced with accounts of crisis and adaptive transformation, emphasizing the global dimension of the administrative and financial problems that the empire was facing. The late eighteenth century crisis was situated within the age of revolutions; state formation, land reform, centralization and bureaucratic transformation were highlighted. The long nineteenth century was no longer seen as a prelude to the Turkish Republic and contingent dynamics that led to the Empire's collapse were discussed. Novel attempts at periodization have emerged emphasizing these aspects accordingly.

While the revisionist economic and political history writing has been well on its way and become the norm in the field, intellectual history writing has relatively lagged behind and intellectual dynamics of the Ottoman transformation has remained largely unexplored. Şerif Mardin was and still is the scholar who singlehandedly produced more than any other historian combined on the intellectual dynamics of late Ottoman transformation. Although he did not go further back than 1800 and focused most of his energies on the later decades of the nineteenth century, he had observed as early as 1960 the problem of seeing Ottoman reform as a linear process. He argued that reform was by no means a “single, unitary policy... motivated by the same views throughout the successive stages of modernization of the Empire.”³ Taking this observation as a starting point and venturing beyond historiographical categories and periodizations, I seek to answer the question of how the Ottoman elite conceptualized their political transformation from the late sixteenth century to the late Tanzimat. Following a broad set of revisionist approaches to intellectual history, I trace a series of concepts each of which mark different stages of the Ottoman state transformation and reform.

In the bureaucratic language reform (*islâh*) is a very inconspicuous word. From the late sixteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century it is used in the most basic sense as correction of “malfunctioning” institutions, a very ordinary word. And from the late sixteenth to late eighteenth century, it is common to come across reform treatises in which the word *islâh* is not even used. Even when it is used, on its own, it

³ Sherif Mardin, “The Mind of the Turkish Reformer 1700-1900,” *Western Humanities Review* 14 (1960): 413.

does say very little on what reform is about; its argumentative content becomes apparent in relation to other concepts which define the past and future of reform. Hence, beginning with the late sixteenth century we see Ottoman bureaucratic authors writing about the administrative, military and economic problems of the Empire as “dissolution of order” (*nizâm-ı âleme hâlel gelmesi* or *ihtilâl-i nizâm*) and suggest reform/correction (*islâh*). In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, during the New Order era, the central concept that defines the motivation for reform becomes “renewal of order” (*tecdîd-i nizâm*). The period following the abolishment of the janissary corps (1826) and the declaration of the Imperial Edict of Gülhane (1839) to the first Ottoman constitution (1876) is known by the concept “re-orderings” (*tanzîmât*). All three concepts reveal a thematic continuity in domestic concern with order (*nizâm*); first its dissolution, then its renewal, and finally its re-institution. *Islâh* becomes a quite common and central concept by the mid nineteenth century and part of my argument is that it is then that history of the Empire’s last two centuries is written as a history of “successive reforms” (*islâhât*). Even in the late Tanzimat, however, reform is still used mainly with individual policy items and its overall meaning becomes apparent in relation to how decline is interpreted and how progress (*terakkî, ilerileme*) is imagined.

Progress is a concept which is introduced to Ottoman political vocabulary through translation, following the increased diplomatic and cultural interaction with Europe and the effort of the Ottoman Empire to become part of the international order led by European states. Emergence of the concept of progress in the modern Western vocabulary was concurrent with European modernization, the emergence of capitalism and the modern nation state. While progress was the name of the new historical consciousness marked by a radical future orientedness in contrast to the traditionalism and cyclicism of the pre-modern cultures, civilization referred to the level of cultural development achieved by the European nations. Obviously, in Ottoman political vocabulary this word acquired different meanings throughout the nineteenth century and became part of the larger political discussion about social and political reform, history, economic development, moral regeneration and Westernization.

These different concepts, however, do not simply replace each other. The concept of “dissolution” (*halel*) gradually evolves into a comprehensive and abstract concept of decline (*ihtilâl*, *tedennî*) incorporating the interpretations of each era, and continues to be a central political problem up until the collapse of the Empire. “Renewal” (*tecdîd*) survives until the collapse of the empire as a broad concept of revival. Older meanings of concepts partly survive beneath the newer layers, allowing recycling of arguments or concepts.

As such, in this dissertation I follow first the historical development of the Ottoman indigenous concepts of decline and renewal, and later the emergence of translated concepts and their appropriation into Ottoman historical narrative and political vision, all in relation to reform. By analysing reform debates, I pursue an inquiry into how the past is constructed, how “tradition” is conceptualized, and how innovation is justified in each era. Hence, I also focus on the development of the historical narrative of decline and reform, and the competing conceptualizations of Islamic and/or Ottoman tradition in the reform literature. My original contribution lies not in introducing novel sources, although I occasionally do so. Rather, by bring together four different periods of Ottoman history and hence, overcoming the myopia resulting from focusing on one period only, I provide an alternative and more comprehensive picture of Ottoman reform debates which will help better understand and describe the transformation of Ottoman political vocabulary.

0.1 The Problem of Continuity in the Study of Ottoman Political Thought

The thematic continuity of these concepts have attracted little to no attention in the literature on Ottoman history of political thought. Only Niyazi Berkes mentions this conceptual continuity in passing in his economic history. Yet, he presents this concern for order as primarily an index of the economic problem, particularly the problem of land reform, and later, of economic development.⁴ However, Ottoman moral, economic and political vocabulary did not constitute separate and autonomous categories until the late nineteenth century. They all, as a whole, constituted the moral science of government following an amalgam of Greek ethics, ancient

⁴ Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi* (Istanbul: YKY, 2013), 381-82.

Mesopotamian and Islamic traditions of reflection on politics. Also, although financial problems, taxation and land reform was a constant and major problem in the agenda, Ottoman reform attempts never solely focused on one item, be it military, economy or administrative bureaucracy; rather they were presented as comprehensive programs under the project of restoration of a dissolving order.

I attribute this lack of recognition of thematic continuity to a myopia resulting from limitations of method and approach as well as particular difficulties of studying Ottoman history. Up until recently Ottoman intellectual history was highly fragmented due to the restriction of its method to the genre of “life and works.” The amount of effort needed to decipher and make sense of Ottoman manuscripts made it immensely difficult to go beyond classical philological studies focusing on one text or the corpus of one author. With the renewed international popularity of Ottoman studies and the revisionist wave, there has emerged a renewed interest in Ottoman political writing as well. Especially the sixteenth century scribal works and the seventeenth century literature of “decline” has received a lot of attention and highly informative and illuminating studies have been published. The late eighteenth century writing has very recently seen several studies parallel to the renewed interest in the history of military reform. Yet, the monograph has remained the dominant form of scholarly production. The fact that a book length survey of Ottoman political literature from its inception to the Tanzimat, Marinos Sariyannis’ *Ottoman Political Thought up to the Tanzimat* has been published only in late 2015 says much about the state of the art.⁵

Curiously though, intellectual history of the nineteenth century, the so called longest century of the Empire, has remained almost the way it has been since the publication of Şerif Mardin’s *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*.⁶ The early twentieth century political writing has become enormously popular due to the works of scholars such as Şükrü Hanioglu⁷ and Ismail Kara⁸. The intellectual debates of the

⁵ Marinos Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought up to the Tanzimat: A Concise History* (Rethymno: Institute for Mediterranean Studies, 2015)

⁶ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000)

⁷ See for instance Şükrü Hanioglu, “Garbecılar: Their Attitudes toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic,” *Studia Islamica* 86 (1997): 133-58 and “Blueprints for

second constitutional period have attracted a lot of attention since they were considered as central to the collapse of the Empire and emergence of the Turkish nation. However, somehow Mardin's work failed to motivate follow up studies on the nineteenth century literature comparable to what Albert Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* has achieved in the Nahda scholarship.⁹ The nineteenth century political thought is still reduced to several outstanding names who are mostly praised for their novelty in appropriating Western ideas into their works. Mardin's work attempted to establish the continuity between the Young Ottomans and classical Ottoman-Islamic works, yet it managed this simply by drawing a direct line contrasting pre-seventeenth century ethical-political literature –for instance Kınalızade Ali Efendi- and the Young Ottomans. When one considers the specialization tendency in Ottoman studies which forces scholars to focus on one period –usually one or two centuries- what happened to Ottoman political language in between two points is still a story that needs to be put together.

Obviously, I do not aspire to cover the transformation of the entirety of the Ottoman political thought. However, focusing on concepts of reform allows me to have as comprehensive a perspective as possible on the transformation of Ottoman political vocabulary, since these concepts both define, evaluate and legitimize change while at the same time pointing to the kind of social and political order desired by the actors that use them. These concepts also employ different textual sources of the Ottoman-Islamic intellectual tradition, appropriate and reinterpret them in the process of making sense of the political environment. Hence, by studying these concepts we can come up with certain hypotheses regarding the continuity and change in the Ottoman political vocabulary and the dynamics of this change. Formation of a canon of texts, dominance of different textual traditions at different periods, selective use of

a future society: late Ottoman materialists on science, religion, and art,” in *Late Ottoman Society, The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (New York: Routledge, 2005), 27-116

⁸ See particularly Ismail Kara, *İslamcılarının Siyasi Görüşleri 2nd Ed* (Istanbul: Dergah, 2001)

⁹ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Both Mardin and Hourani's works were published originally in 1962. Notable exceptions are Christoph Neumann's *Araç Tarih Amaç Tanzimat: Tarih-i Cevdet'in Siyasi Anlamı* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999) and Nazan Çiçek's *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: Ib Tauris, 2010)

Western texts and their appropriation into tradition are all processes that become visible in a *long duree* study of political texts.

The fragmentary status of the scholarship fosters problematic assumptions regarding the reality of tradition as well. Especially the lack of studies bridging the early modern period and the nineteenth century create a false image of Ottoman intellectual tradition as static, stagnant and monolithic until the nineteenth century when the impact of modern Western political ideas incites “positive” change. As Maurus Reinkowski acutely observes, not only in the Ottoman context but also in the Arab context, particularly owing to the highly circulated Orientalist scholarship produced by names such as Bernard Lewis and Ami Ayalon, political vocabulary appears as “a language that has to pass from a stagnant Islamic past to the European-inspired Elysian fields of modernity.”¹⁰ But Ottoman political concepts were already changing in relation to the process of state transformation similar to the one in European states. In Europe, state centralization and the demand for military discipline and administrative efficiency had come with a return to Stoicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and later republicanism in the eighteenth century.¹¹ In a parallel process, Ottoman bureaucratic authors also returned to their classical works on ethics and government in order to explain what they saw as dissolution of order and appropriated certain concepts to frame their reform projects.

This study, however, does not include a broad comparative dimension, rather it rejects the prevalent orientalist assumption which sees Muslim states and societies as unique and applies the experience acquired in European intellectual historiography to the study of Ottoman political thought, just as the revisionist historiography on the Ottoman economic and political transformation has been doing for the last few decades.

¹⁰ Maurus Reinkowski, “The State’s Security and the Subjects’ Prosperity: Notions of Order in Ottoman Bureaucratic Correspondence (19th Century),” in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, eds. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005) , 195-212.

¹¹ Gergard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge UP, 1982); and Richard Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution: An Intellectual History of Jean-Baptiste Say’s Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000)

Hence, an overarching argument of my research is that Ottoman-Islamic tradition of political thought was as dynamic and fluid as any other tradition of political reflection. It included a broad set of problems, arguments, binary oppositions, a shifting canon of texts and genres, all of which were employed by the political actors to frame and justify their actions and causes with a sensitivity to the social and political contexts. The semantic content of the concepts under scrutiny in this study, hence, change considerably over time from the late sixteenth century to the late nineteenth. Observed in diachronic perspective, such a concept of tradition challenges the idea of an intellectual (sometimes epistemic) rupture which is put forward in the study of the modern and especially the nineteenth century Islamic thought.

That Ottoman political ideas experienced a rupture is a common and prevalent assumption in the studies on the late Ottoman (and Middle East) intellectual history; in analysing particular thinkers and texts scholars generally assume a drastic shift in the way actors reflected on the state and society in contrast to a stagnant intellectual milieu which is assumed to have reigned until the encounter with European ideas. For instance, in his evaluation of the late Ottoman Islamists, Ismail Kara concludes that Islamist politicized Islam and subverted traditional concepts in order to face the modern crisis, an argument which imagines an apolitical Islam which was represented by an immutable selection of concepts.¹² Similar problematic conceptions are revealed in the frequent and injudicious use of the concept of tradition in the literature. The frequent reference to the particular act of legitimizing innovation with reference to tradition as “clothing in the garb of” the tradition¹³, “putting new wine into old bottles”¹⁴ implies neatly separated and holistic semantic traditions, ignoring the expansion of semantic horizons and entanglement of indigenous concepts with translated ones. It is true that some of the actors under scrutiny commit themselves and subscribe to such a concept of tradition in a conservative act of preserving the “integrity” of tradition in the face of modernity. However, such acts should not be taken at face value since they are reflections of a

¹² Ismail Kara, *İslamcıların Siyasi Görüşleri 2nd Ed* (Istanbul: Dergah, 2001), 11.

¹³ Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 180.

¹⁴ Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac; The Harvill Pr., 1950), 56.

modern attitude towards an Islamic past rather than a neutral account of how Islamic tradition works.¹⁵

I should note, however, that, in my criticism of the argument for “rupture”, I am not arguing for “radical” continuity in Ottoman political vocabulary myself. Rather, I attempt to demonstrate the continuity in the vocabulary of political rhetoric and semantic transformation without necessarily drawing a neat distinction between the two. Although political language has a rhetorical dimension, it does not take place in a vacuum; rather it is dialogical, involving a multiplicity of actors. Hence, an analysis of Ottoman political vocabulary should take into account the fact that reform debates involve different camps each of which rely on existing vocabulary and sources of a shared tradition. From the early nineteenth century onwards particularly, European political thought also enters into the equation and Ottoman political vocabulary becomes a medium in which both European semantics and the semantics of the Ottoman political subjects are mediated. In this multi-faceted rhetoric of reform, words and concepts are contested, they acquire new meanings at the same time retaining part of their former meaning.

0.2 Westernization and Secularization: Conceptualizing Reform

One major problem with the teleological modernization theories, as mentioned above, was that they projected a linear path of reform to modernization which involved secularization and Westernization. Within this narrative Ottoman political actors were also classified into binaries such as enlightened reformers vs. conservatives, progressives vs. reactionaries, or secularizers vs. orthodox Islamists, fitting for a linear historiography. In the republican historiography, such labels served the needs of national identity building process by creating heroes and villains. Yet, these labels and classifications also relied on Ottoman historical literature as well, drawing from the accounts in the chronicles and other political writing.¹⁶

¹⁵ Particularly on the crystallization of the legal tradition in the modern Islamic thought see Johnathan Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* (London: One World, 2014)

¹⁶ For the evolution of Turkish romantic national historiography see Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation, 1869–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Hence, self-presentation of official Ottoman narratives and modern historiographical categories intertwined, thus comprising a powerful narrative.

Westernization could be the most pervasive of the concepts that have been used to describe the transformation of Ottoman society, politics and ideas. Particularly gaining currency after the foundation of the republic, Westernization has been a dominant concept in Ottoman historiography which explained the period between the late eighteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁷ Even after the wave of revisionist historiography, quite frequently scholarly works with reference to westernization in their titles appear.¹⁸ The common problem in these works, beside their teleological frameworks, is the lack of a reflective distinction between Westernization as a process in the Empire and Westernization as a motivation of the actors in question. For instance, even Marinos Sariyannis's recent survey divides the late eighteenth century reformers as westernizers and traditionalist, although he recognizes that the difference between the two is less than commonly believed.¹⁹

My approach, in response, is that we need to distinguish between our historiographical categories and those used by the Ottoman political actors to define what they were doing. Such an approach does not rule out the fact that Westernization was used by certain actors, for instance, as an accusation towards other actors. What is needed is to distinguish between Westernization or secularization as a phenomenon, Westernization or secularization as a political accusation by the opponents of the reform process, and how the Ottoman reformer conceptualizes his policies. Recovering the original categories used by the actors would potentially lead us to better understand different dimensions of the political struggle going on during the periods in question. In turn we may come up with concepts which describe these processes more comprehensively.

¹⁷ In addition to aforementioned works of Berkes and Lewis see for instance Enver Ziya Karal, *Tanzimat'tan Evvel Garplılařma Hareketleri* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940) and Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'nin Siyasi Hayatında Batılılařma Hareketleri* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2004)

¹⁸ See for instance a recent work which received a TUBA award; Ali Budak's *Batılılařma ve Türk Edebiyatı: Lale Devrinden Tanzimat'a Yenileřme* (Istanbul: Bilge Kùltür Sanat, 2013).

¹⁹ Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 154-174.

A similar problem exists with the narrative of secularization. Like the European example, Ottoman Empire was argued to have gone through a gradual and linear secularization following the transfer of scientific knowledge from Europe and emulation of modern institutions. Linear and progressive accounts of secularization in Western world have long been challenged and the public role of religion in the modern world has been re-evaluated.²⁰ The role of religio-moral discourse in the process of state centralization during the eighteenth century was highlighted in cases such as *pietism*.²¹ This re-evaluation, while recognizing a general decrease in religious affiliation and restriction of the role of religion in public discourse has highlighted the different ways through which religion influenced politics. Comparably, in the Ottoman historiography, pointing out the religious and moral language accompanying the reform process as well as the support from various religious groups to the reform attempts, recent studies have emphasized the role of religious discourse in legitimizing and reinforcing the reform process and terms such as “Islamic modernization,” “Islamization” or “politicization of Islam” have been suggested instead of secularization.²²

A discussion of social and political transformation of the role of religion is beyond the scope of this study, yet conceptualizing the role of religious vocabulary still presents a problem. How are we to understand Islamization or Islamic modernization? Islam was always the religion of the Empire or to put it differently it was an Islamic Empire, yet constitutive role of Islam in the Empire has been a constant subject of debate.²³ The role of the ideology of religious conquest (*gaza*) in the emergence of the empire has been a matter of controversy and the syncretic

²⁰ See Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)

²¹ See for instance Richard L. Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth Century Prussia* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge UP, 1993); Jonathan Strom et al eds, *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009); and F. A. van Lieburg and Daniel Lindmark eds., *Pietism, Revivalism, and Modernity 1650-1850* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2008).

²² See Kahraman Şakul, “Nizâm-ı Cedid Düşüncesinde Batılılaşma ve İslami Modernleşme,” *Divan* 19 (2005/2): 117-150; and Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

²³ See Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980)

nature of early Ottoman religious identity has been highlighted.²⁴ Emergence of the ulema as the institutionalized guardians of legal tradition occurred only through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as part of the centralization and imperial policies.²⁵ The existence of a formal religious institution beside the state, itself, created a conceptual problem. For instance, legislative acts of the sultan beyond Sharia has been interpreted by some as a form of secular law. Or on another note, the studies on the early modern period have for some time been arguing for what could be called, with inspiration from European history, “confessionalization”, that is, the gradual emergence of Sunni Islam as a shared identity between the ruler and the ruled, from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth centuries.²⁶ The gist of all this is that conceptualizing religion in the history of the Empire has been a recurrent problem in the modern scholarship.

This difficulty is by no means exclusive to Ottoman Empire. As demonstrated extensively by Shahab Ahmed, conceptualizing the historical phenomenon that is Islam in all its diversity has been a core problem of Islamic studies.²⁷ And the clearest manifestation of this problem is the tendency to equate Islam with its more literal and legalistic interpretations and labelling others –particularly various forms of Sufism and philosophy- as gradually less “Islamic” based on their distance to this centre. As a response to this Ahmed conceptualizes various strands of Islamic tradition as different ways of making sense of the core texts of religion, all of which have competing truth claims.

In this study, I also follow this conceptualization and propose the transformation of Ottoman political vocabulary as not Islamization or secularization but simply as the transformation of the broader discursive tradition that is Islam. The concepts under

²⁴ See Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (University of California Press, 1996)

²⁵ See Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

²⁶ See Tijana Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Derin Terzioğlu, “Where ‘İlm-i hāl Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Past&Present* 220 (2013): 79-114.

²⁷ See Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.)

scrutiny in this study are particularly revealing in that context since the actors drew on different texts of the grand corpus of Islamic tradition in an effort to gain the upper hand in the debates on the reasons for the past decline of the Empire and subsequently, the ways to save its future. The debate between the actors involved in the reform process was a debate on what tradition is and what it allows and frequently this turned into an explicit struggle over defining what “true” Islam is. Again, as in the case of Westernization, the public role of religion in the Empire actually goes through a transformation and further research could show that this might as well be a variant of secularization. Again, however, we need to distinguish between the political discourse and the actual transformation, relating them to each other without reducing one to the other.

0.3 Method and Approach

I do not subscribe to a strict methodological framework in this study. However, I benefit from a range of revisionist approaches to historiography of ideas and particularly to the history of political thought and concepts: German school of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) developed by Reinhart Koselleck and contextualist approach of Cambridge school associated with names such as Quentin Skinner, John Dunn and J.G.A. Pocock.

As the leading theoretician of conceptual history, Reinhart Koselleck argued for the benefits of tracing the transformation of the semantic content of certain key social and political concepts concurrent with social and political change.²⁸ Challenging the existing approaches, such as the history of ideas associated by Arthur Lovejoy, Koselleck proposed concepts as a better unit of analysis compared to ideas and emphasized the context-specificity of thought in general. He also criticized the reduction of thought to social and economic processes prevalent in Marxist historiography and argued that semantic change and social change could be asynchronous. While social and political concepts could be more or less synchronous

²⁸ See particularly Reinhart Koselleck, "Linguistic Change and History of Events" *Journal of Modern History* 61 (1989): 649-666 and his collection of essays in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). For a textbook introduction see Melvin Richter, *The History of Social and Political Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)

with social and political change as was the case in pre-modern times, they could also follow different rhythms and paces as was the case with modernity during which conservative interpretation of concepts would resist change and utopian political projects would attempt to speed up the pace of change through revolutions. Such a framework for relating social change to conceptual transformation is particularly suited for analysing concepts of reform which are basically reflections on social change.

Parallel to Koselleck's approach, Cambridge School scholars led by Quentin Skinner criticized the liberal teleological reading of history of ideas in the West and argued for a more context conscious analysis of the classics of political thought as political polemics in their own times rather than abstract and timeless reflections on the art and craft of politics.²⁹ Different from Koselleck who focused on a diachronic study of concepts, however, they engaged with synchronic analysis of texts sharing the same milieu, uncovering polemics and political argumentation strategies. In this study, I benefit from both approaches: on the one hand I trace changing concepts of reform across periods and on the other, for each era under scrutiny I attempt to demonstrate the polemics and conflicts that lead to particular conceptual formations.

The benefits of employing such approaches to Ottoman history has been briefly explored or hinted at by other scholars as well. In his latest essay Şerif Mardin suggests conceptual history as an approach which could potentially unravel the semantic puzzle of the formation of modern Turkish political concepts and uncovering the multiple layers of meaning.³⁰ Marinos Sariyannis, on the other hand, benefited from Skinner's approach in his survey of Ottoman political thought and his study on the Ottoman concept of state.³¹ Finally, quite recently Einar Wigen analysed several concepts translated from the European languages to Ottoman Turkish (empire, civilization, democracy and citizenship) and their semantic

²⁹ See particularly Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8:1 (1969): 3-53; "Language and Political Change," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, eds. Terrence Ball et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 6-23.

³⁰ Şerif Mardin, "Conceptual Fracture," in *Transnational Concepts, Transfers and the Challenge of the Peripheries*, ed. Gürçan Koçan (Istanbul: ITU Press, 2008), 4-18.

³¹ See Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*; and "Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought," *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013): 83-117.

transformation from the mid nineteenth century to the late twentieth, demonstrating the entanglement between indigenous concepts and translated ones.³²

Also, beyond these inspirations in method, I adopt a variety of revisionist approaches to history of Islam which criticize the reductionist conceptualization of Islamic tradition as static and monolithic. The most comprehensive treatment of this problem and a criticism of prevalent conceptualizations from Marshall Hodgson to Wilfred Cantwell Smith can be found in Shahab Ahmed's *What is Islam?* cited above. Particularly focusing on the post-classical era of Islam (roughly between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries AD), Ahmed argues that historical and geographical diversity of Islam demands a more comprehensive conceptualization of its variation without foregoing the unity of Islamic tradition. Shahab demonstrates that with different understanding of Islam, such as those of Sufis, philosophers and legal scholars, we can observe competing claims to the truth of Islam. These claims involve a "hermeneutical engagement" with the revelation of God (the Text), with different ontological assumptions regarding the world which makes the "Text" possible (the Pre-Text) and with the variety accumulated interpretations available to them at a given time (the con-Text) in order to make "meaning for the actor."³³ Hence, a legal scholar may take a literal interpretation of the text and accumulated legal interpretations in his hermeneutical engagement, a Sufi might imagine a metaphysics of love that makes the revelation possible and come up with an alternative Islam, whereas a scribe basing his understanding of politics on the ethical and political writing inherited from the Greeks is simply considering politics as the rational exercise of power in accordance with Sharia. Claiming that any of these hermeneutical engagements to be more valid than others is a conceptual fallacy, albeit one that is most prevalent in extant historiography.

³² See Einar Wigen, "Interlingual and International Relations: A History of Conceptual Entanglements between Europe and Turkey," (PhD Diss., University of Oslo, 2014) which is being prepared for publication as *State of Translation: Turkey in Interlingual Relations* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

³³ Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 345-63.

Such an approach to Islam recognizes the multi-vocality, fluidity, and context-specificity of Islam, avoiding an essentialized and fixed concept of tradition.³⁴ As Maurus Reinkowski puts it in the context of Tanzimat, the question is not to what extent the Tanzimat drew on Ottoman traditions, “but to what extent the Tanzimat rhetoric remodeled these terms and reinterpreted their meaning.”³⁵ Hence, my analysis of competing concepts of reform is also an analysis of the competing claims to tradition and legitimacy each of which rely on a constellation of sources, reinterpreting them again and again. I should note however that I use the word tradition also in a limited sense to refer to different interpretations and competing canons within the larger category of Islamic tradition, such as Sufi tradition, legal tradition and philosophical tradition.

0.4 Limitations and Sources

For the purposes of this study, I limit myself to mainly what I call the Ottoman scribal literature. This corpus mainly includes treatises on decline and reform, advice and petitions to the sultans and grand viziers, memoranda, chronicles, and travel narratives to Europe written by the members of Ottoman scribal service.³⁶ During the Tanzimat, newspaper articles and essays are also added to these sources. While I occasionally refer to other sources produced by religious scholars and Sufi figures, these are meant to provide points of comparison and contrast in order to highlight the limits and contours of the bureaucratic concepts of decline and reform. As a collection of the most accessible reflections on Ottoman statecraft and politics, bureaucratic writing frequently allows a glimpse at the arguments of other parties for or against reform, which makes this corpus particularly valuable for conceptual historical research.

³⁴ For such an approach in Ottoman-Turkish context see Brian Silverstein, *Islam and Modernity in Turkey* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1-28.

³⁵ Reinkowski, 198-99.

³⁶ For the most comprehensive research on Ottoman scribal service see Carter Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989); and *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte 1789-1922* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980).

The members of Ottoman scribal service produced some of the most illuminating pieces of literature on the transformation of the Ottoman state and society. They were educated in traditional sciences of government and morality, they were familiar to the tradition of court culture from previous Islamic states, and many of them were well-versed in Arabic and Persian besides Ottoman Turkish. They shared a common vocabulary and a prose style developed specifically to be used in bureaucratic correspondence. And above all, they were privy to sensitive information regarding the state of the Empire and could access the official archives. As a result they were quite sensitive to the changes in the social and political structure of the Empire, and being a part of the Ottoman government which was never devoid of factionalism, nepotism and power struggles they adopted various attitudes towards decline and reform which often led to their fall from favour and even demise.³⁷

Ottoman bureaucratic writing on politics demonstrate both a gradual transformation in genre and style, and a continuity in vocabulary and argumentation. The first bureaucratic accounts of decline in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century followed a variant of the mirror-for-princes literature drawing on the Greek ethics as appropriated by Arab and Persian Muslim authors. By the mid seventeenth century Ibn Khaldun's *Mukaddime* was introduced to scribal culture by Katip Çelebi and this impressive work was appropriated in each age by different scribes until the early twentieth century. With Mustafa Naima, who was the first official chronicler of the Empire, we see the merging of Khaldunian schema of rise and decline with the rise and stasis of the Empire's history. The late eighteenth century reformist employed a simpler style compared to earlier centuries and got rid of virtually all genre conventions in favour of a direct memoranda format, but they still drew on earlier accounts of decline reinterpreting them in the light of Empire's crisis. While Tanzimat bureaucrats gradually absorbed Western practices and ideas, they also

³⁷ There are excellent studies on the life and works of individual Ottoman bureaucrats which reveal much about the scribal culture in different periods. For the portrait of a sixteenth century scribe see Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986). For the seventeenth century polymath Katip Çelebi whose penname carried the mark of the scribal service see Gottfried Hagen, *Bir Osmanlı Coğrafyacısı İşbaşında: Katib Çelebi'nin Cihannüma'sı ve Düşünce Dünyası* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2016); and for the career of an eighteenth century scribe see Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi 1700-1783* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

relied on earlier works, which by that time had become classics. Up until 1850s however, bureaucratic writing addressed the members of the Ottoman government as its audience and was not intended for general public consumption. When the Young Ottomans challenged the central bureaucracy with their own agenda of reform in the late Tanzimat, they adopted European essayistic style in their newspapers which allowed them to develop their arguments in a way that could address both their opponents and the greater public. Yet, their case still emerged as a debate on how Ottoman decline should be interpreted and narrated in the light of Ottoman classics and novel European political ideas. Hence, Ottoman bureaucrats were the main adopters and carriers of the concepts of decline and reform as part of Ottoman government.

One might object to inclusion of Young Ottomans in this research considering they were not simply bureaucrats. However, it should be remembered that they socialized within Ottoman bureaucratic culture, being a part of the scribal service at different times in their lives. Moreover, although they addressed a “public opinion” part imagined and part constituted by them, their main interlocutors were still the growing number of Ottoman bureaucrats.

0.5 Chapter Plan

The dissertation consists of four main chapters each focusing on one period and the concept associated with that period.

In the first chapter I cover the evolution of concepts of “dissolution of order” (*nizâm-ı aleme hâlel gelmesi*) and “reform” (*islâh*) in what is called the “decline literature” in scholarship from the late sixteenth century to early eighteenth century. I start with an introduction to how politics were conceptualized in classical works on ethics and argue that the first complaints of “dissolution of order” relied on these concepts and reform suggestions followed accordingly. In the second half I demonstrate the evolution of “dissolution of order” into a more comprehensive account of decline which integrates Ibn Khaldun’s theory of state transformation. This chapter does not introduce novel sources and is intended to summarize the literature and hence provide a point of reference for the later chapters.

In the second chapter I focus on the reform debates around the New Order starting with the late eighteenth century debates on war and reform. Later, I focus on the concept of “renewal” (*tecdid*) which defines reform during the era and demonstrate a fierce debate between opponents and proponents of reform on limits of tradition and innovation. Ottoman reformist bureaucrats come up with a combination of concepts from the philosophical tradition and Islamic legal tradition in defence of restoration of power, moral regeneration and religious revival. This chapter is a novel contribution to the literature and offers a fresh understanding of New Order debates beyond importation of military technology from Europe.

In the third chapter I focus on the reform debates leading up to Tanzimat and the Tanzimat Edict itself. I demonstrate the shift of emphasis in the concept of reform towards reinstitution of ruler-subject relations after Mahmud II’s restoration of power to the palace. While this period is scarce in texts, I propose a re-evaluation of what Tanzimat meant in the history of reform by analysing particularly the writings of Keçecizade İzzet Molla and Sadık Rıfat Paşa. I provide the most comprehensive analysis of Tanzimat political thought up-to-date and propose a reassessment of to what degree European political ideas had influenced Ottoman concepts.

In the final chapter, I deal with the emergence of the Young Ottoman case for constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and their novel interpretation of the Empire’s history with inspiration from the Enlightenment ideas. By comparing and contrasting the Young Ottoman thought with that of the members of the central bureaucracy, I demonstrate how conservative and radical political visions relied on diverging concepts of tradition. I introduce a number of Young Ottoman political articles, particularly from the newspaper *Hürriyet*, which had hitherto been neglected. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the depth and degree of the engagement with tradition in both conservative and radical camps.

CHAPTER I

***İSLÂH*: ORDER, DISSOLUTION AND REFORM**

This chapter focuses on the concepts of “dissolution of order” (*nizâm-ı âleme hâlel gelmesi*) and “reform/correction” (*islâh*) in the Ottoman elite political writing from the late 16th to the mid-18th centuries and their transformation. After a brief introduction to Ottoman political concepts in the classical period, first, I focus on the emergence of the concept and argue that the first complaints of dissolution of order in the late 16th and early 17th century were reactions to the changing structure of Ottoman politics by a relatively small number of educated scribal officials who reflected on this transformation through the lenses of the classical concepts inherited through a particular philosophical tradition within Islamic letters. Taking a classical formulation of social stratification, namely “the circle of justice,” and a particular conception of political authority as given and calling it “the ancient law” (*kānûn-ı kadîm*) these authors complain about the blurring and dissolution of boundaries separating the ruler and the ruled and the dissolution of political authority. Later in the 17th century this concept of dissolution of social order leaves its place to a more state-centric and structural conception of decline based on the dismal condition of Ottoman finances, bureaucracy and military. This later concept also incorporates Ibn Khaldun’s theory of dynastic cycles and eventually grows into a broader narrative of Ottoman decline vis-à-vis the Empire’s rivals. Yet, this evolving bureaucratic account was by no means the only one in circulation and I demonstrate by comparative reading of some select texts that there were alternative conceptions of order and dissolution and hence different understandings of reform depending on the social and political positions of the authors. Hence, concepts of order, dissolution and reform are differentiated both synchronically and diachronically from the late 16th to early 18th century.

1.1 Early Modern Ottoman Politics and the “Decline” Literature

In the historiography of the Ottoman Empire through the twentieth century, no category has been as influential as that of “decline” in the narration of post-Suleimanic era. The pervasive schema of rise-decline-and-fall has been the standard periodization of the history of the Empire for a long time. Focusing mainly on the military prowess and receding borders of the Empire, the age of decline has been divided into three stages in itself: “age of stasis”, the period from the death of the grand vizier Sokullu Mehmed Paşa in 1579 to the Karlowitz treaty of 1699, “age of decline”, which lasted until the Treaty of Jassy in 1792, and “age of collapse” until the end of the first World War. Starting in the late 1970s this periodization has been gradually challenged by a group of scholars whose work focused on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the Empire.³⁸ Adopting a comparative perspective, these scholars have pointed out that the administrative and economic problems faced by the Ottoman Empire were shared by virtually all of the governments of the old world and hence by no means unique to the Empire. Though “decline” of the empire was not categorically rejected as a possible explanation, teleological narratives were criticized and the changes in the politics and administration and economy of the Empire were re-evaluated as a series of creative and adaptive transformations.

What had changed in the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the sixteenth century which had led to the regicide of Osman II in 1622, a major political crisis even by Ottoman standards? One major transformation was the gradual rise to prominence of the Ottoman government which consisted of a cadre of viziers led by the grand vizier; from the late sixteenth century onwards Ottoman sultans ruled only “in a limited sense,” leaving much of the administration to expert bureaucrats.³⁹ Parallel to this transformation Ottoman succession system was significantly altered to prevent

³⁸ By now there is an extensive revisionist literature on the period including but not limited to Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1977); Rifa’at Ali Abou-El-Hajj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries, 2nd Edition* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman eds., *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire* (New York: Cambridge, 2007); Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge, 2008); and Ariel Salzman, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to Modern State* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2004).

³⁹ Abou-el-Hajj, *Formation*, 5.

succession wars. During the reign of Ahmed II, the infamous “cage” system was introduced; princes were no longer sent to provinces for administrative experience, and succession was regulated to allow only the oldest and most mature male of the dynasty family to succeed to throne. Also around the turn of the century we observe the gradual withering of the *timar* (fief based) system and introduction of *iltizam* (tax-farming) which allowed to state to raise revenue faster in the face of prolonged military campaigns and reduced customs tax due to shifting trade routes. This system would allow intermediaries between the centre and the provinces who would accumulate large amounts of capital. Another major transformation was the gradual involvement of the janissaries in the civil life of major urban centres and increasing penetration of civilian subject to military-administrative positions through Janissary licences which could be bought and sold. Defined by one scholar as the “civilianization of the military and militarization of the civilians”⁴⁰, this amounted to the blurring of the boundaries between the rulers and the ruled, which was paramount for old Empires. Baki Tezcan argues that these political transformations were actually a symptom of the broader transformation of Ottoman Empire gradually from a patrimonial and feudal society to market-oriented society in which Islamic law and the *ulema* gained high status as regulators of the economic and social life, and political power and influence was diffused, being shared by a wider group of actors.⁴¹ Also worth noting is the influence of the “little ice age” which, coupled with the considerable rise in Ottoman population towards the end of the sixteenth century, lead to large scale popular revolts in Anatolia, the so called *Celali* Revolts, with devastating effects.⁴² Coupled with the crisis in Ottoman administration and finance human geography of Anatolia was drastically changed in a matter of decades in the first half of the seventeenth century.⁴³

⁴⁰ Gölçay Yılmaz, “Blurred Boundaries between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth Century Istanbul,” in *Bread from the Lion's Mounth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 175-93; see also Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 175-190.

⁴¹ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 10.

⁴² For the effect of climate change to Ottoman economy and politics see Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

⁴³ For most up to date study of these revolts see Oktay Özel, *The Collapse of Rural Order in Anatolia* (Leiden: Brill, 2016),

The debate on how the transformation of the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries should be framed and what kind of alternative periodizations can be offered still continues and will probably not be resolved in the near future. What is of interest to us here, however, is that the narrative of “decline” was older than modern scholarship and find its first formulations in the writings of various Ottoman authors starting from the late sixteenth century.⁴⁴ Starting with Lütî Paşa’s *Asafnâme* completed in 1542⁴⁵, during the “peak” of the Empire’s power and grandeur, consecutive authors took to writing about “dissolution of order” they observed in the affairs of the state and society.⁴⁶ Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli in 1581⁴⁷, Hasan Kafi Akhisârî in 1596⁴⁸, Ayn Ali in 1609⁴⁹, Koçi Beg in 1631 and again in 1640⁵⁰, Katip Çelebi in 1653⁵¹, and Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi in 1669⁵², each wrote treatises quite similar in content complaining about various ills pertaining to administration and organization of the Empire and calling for correctional action. Douglas Howard notes the verbatim repetition of this narrative by successive European sources such as Paul Rycaut in 1665, Dimitrie Cantemir in 1734, Mouradgêa d’Ohsson in 1788-89 and Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, each of whom relied extensively on the data and observations regarding the state of the Empire recorded in these treatises by Ottoman scribal authors.⁵³ Gradually thus was established the grand narrative of Ottoman decline and fall, and was infinitely

⁴⁴ Douglas Howard, “Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of “Decline” of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” in *Islamic Political Thought and Governance Vol. 4*, ed. Abdullah Saeed (New York: Routledge, 2011): 3-4; originally published in *Journal of Asian History* 22 (1988): 52-77.

⁴⁵ Mübahat S. Kütkoğlu, *Lütî Paşa Asafnamesi* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1981)

⁴⁶ On decline literature see also Pal Fodor, “State and Society, Crisis and Reform, in 15th-17th Century Ottoman Mirror for Princes” *Acta Orientalia Scientiarum Hungaricae* 40 (1986): 217-240; Anthony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought 2nd Ed* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 256-280; and Akif Kirecci, “Decline Discourse and Self-Orientalization in the Writings of Al-Tahtawi, Taha Husayn and Ziya Gökalp” (PhD Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 78-99.

⁴⁷ Andreas Tietze. *Mustafa Âli’s Counsel for Sultans of 1581* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979).

⁴⁸ Mehmet Ipşirli, “Hasan Kafi el-Akhisari ve Devlet Düzenine Ait Eseri: Usulü’l-Hikem fi Nizami’l-Alem,” *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 10-11 (1979-80), 239-278.

⁴⁹ For Ottoman print edition of the original manuscript see Ayn Ali, *Kavânin-i Al-i Osman der hülâsa-i mezâmin-i defter-i divân* (Istanbul: 1864) and for the facsimile of the print edition together with an introduction see Ayn Ali, *Kavanin-i Al-i Osman der hulasa-i mezamin-i defter-i divan*, Tayyib Gökbilgin ed. (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1979).

⁵⁰ Seda Çakmakçioğlu. *Koçi Bey Risaleleri* (Istanbul: Kabalcı, 2008)

⁵¹ Katip Çelebi, *Siyaset Nazariyesi: Düsturü’l-Amel li Islahi’l-Halel*, ed. Ensar Köse (Istanbul: Büyüyen Ay, 2016)

⁵² Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi. *Telhîsü’l-Beyân fi Kavânin-i Âl-i Osman*. ed. Sevim Ilgürel (Ankara: TTK, 1998)

⁵³ Howard, “Ottoman Historiography”, 14-15.

reproduced through the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries by both Western and Ottoman sources. Most examples of the “decline” literature have been published in print during the Tanzimat, which indicates a renewed interest in these works and at the same time establishes their canonical status for Ottoman politico-historical consciousness.

While the argument for decline advocated in the “decline literature” was distinctive and novel, as will be demonstrated further in the chapter, the genre did not emerge in a literary vacuum. The decline treatise inherited certain genre conventions and concepts from previous Ottoman political writing and employed them in the service of a specific argument.

It is difficult to talk about a tradition of political thought that is distinctly and distinguishably Ottoman. The fact that Marinos Sariyannis’ *Ottoman Political Thought up to Tanzimat*⁵⁴, the only work with such a title in existence, has been published in 2015 is an evidence of this difficulty besides pointing to a general lack of systematic approach to the topic. The usual practice in scholarship is to allocate a brief chapter to Ottoman political ideas in volumes dedicated to Islamic political thought.⁵⁵ This is not simply a misguided attempt to frame an otherwise distinct tradition within “Islamic” boundaries. Setting aside the problems of talking about a distinctly “Islamic” political thought⁵⁶, Ottoman political literature mostly inherited the genre conventions, substance and concepts of the Islamic political writing, and through that, of the Greek and Mesopotamian traditions, at the same time infusing them with the political tradition of the Asian steppes.

The central problem of Islamic political writing is good government which is considered a sub-problem of moral philosophy. Politics is what the monarch does in exercise of his powers, and the measure of a virtuous monarch is the execution of this power in line with the moral laws. As such literature on good government either

⁵⁴ Marinos Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought up to the Tanzimat: A Concise History* (Rethymno: Institute for Mediterranean Studies, 2015)

⁵⁵ See for instance Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*.

⁵⁶ For a recent discussion of the problem of defining Islamic philosophy, art and thought see Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

takes the form of advice literature for the Sultan (or sometimes the prince or the grand vizier) or a separate chapter in works on morals. While advice literature are closer to manuals on government and righteous exercise of royal power, and hence more context-bound, works on morals include philosophical reflections on the nature of morality, society, justice and government and attempt to partly justify the extant convictions on politics. Whereas, in the moral literature, we come across clear and lengthy definitions of concepts like justice, order, virtue, economy and society, in the advice literature one finds quite specific instructions on how to run the royal court, who to pick as advisor, how to relate to one's servants, how to hide secrets etc. usually backed up by aphorismatic wisdom derived from the moral literature and exemplary stories of the past kings and rulers.

Classical Ottoman political thought is not an exception to this. As Marinos Sariyannis observes, Ottoman bureaucratic political writing mainly followed these two primary genres: the *ahlak* (ethics) literature, the main form of moral philosophy which relied almost exclusively on Aristotelian ethics as it came down through Persian and Arabic sources, and the mirror for princes or *adab* literature, describing the proper conduct and handling of power for the rulers in the vein of applied ethics.⁵⁷ Grand Vizier Lütü Paşa's *Asafname* from 1542 is a typical example of the advice literature, where he lectures an imaginary grand vizier as to the necessities and requirement of courtly conduct. On the other hand, *Ahlâk-ı Alâ'i*⁵⁸, a famous 16th century work on morals by the Ottoman judge and scholar Kınalızâde Ali is an excellent example of the works on morals. Completed in 1565, a few decades before the proliferation of the complaints of dissolution of order, Kınalızâde's work is a compilation of and commentary on classical names of moral philosophy including

⁵⁷ Due to its unique and innovative characteristics, classifying the decline literature has been a matter of controversy. Agah Sırrı Levend makes a distinction between the classical advice-for-kings literature and the decline literature, which he calls reform petitions. While his distinction is not refined and there is no clear criteria for his inclusion of certain works in one or other category, he provides a comprehensive list of political literature from the mid-sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. See "Siyaset-nameler" *TDYA-Belâten* (1962): 167-194. As of now, there is still no consensus regarding the classification of Ottoman political literature. For recent reflections, see Mehmet Öz, *Osmanlı'da Çözüm ve Gelenekçi Yorumları* (İstanbul: Dergah, 1997), 14-18, and Coşkun Yılmaz, "Osmanlı Siyaset Düşüncesi Kaynakları ile İlgili Yeni Bir Kavramsallaştırma: İslahatnâmeler" *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 2 (2003): 299-338. I mainly follow Marinos Sariyannis who takes *adab* and *ahlak* literature as the two basic forms upon which, he argues, the Ottomans have innovated, see Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 29, 67.

⁵⁸ Kınalızâde Ali Çelebi, *Ahlâk-ı Alâ'i*, ed. Mustafa Koç (İstanbul: Klasik, 2007)

but not limited to Aristo, Plato, Farabi, Ghazali, Celaleddin Devvânî and Nasreddin Tûsî.

As recognized by Douglas Howard, the genre of advice literature was in constant transformation and Ottoman writers were not lacking in innovations creating what could be identified as an “Ottoman version” of the genre.⁵⁹ Indeed, a chronological reading of the texts reveals both continuity in argumentation and a gradual expansion of the conventions of the genre. Hence, the earliest example, Lûtfî Paşa’s *Âsafnâme*, is quite close to the classical examples of the genre, with only a brief expression of motive as his discontent with the grand vizierial institution followed by classical advice on how to handle and delegate power properly.⁶⁰ ‘Ayn Ali’s *Kavanin*, on the other hand, includes detailed tables and reports on the *timar* system and Katip Çelebi’s *Düstur* includes a combination of the descriptions of ideal order and observations on the changing state of the Empire. While classical examples of advice literature still appeared in later periods, either authored by an Ottoman or translated from Arabic, the decline treatise became a distinct genre on its own, and later, as will be explored further in this chapter, even fused with the chronicling of history, bringing together a framework of change and recording of the progression of events.

Early commentators, such as Bernard Lewis, took the decline treatise at mostly face value. Lewis admired the “percipience” and the ability of these authors to “relate cause and effect in the historical process” of which they were a part, the “astonishing frankness”, the “clarity” of their perception and the “lucidity” of their expression in facing and challenging material and moral decline of the Empire.⁶¹ Though he noted that they were confusing the symptoms of decline for actual causes behind them, seeing corruption but failing to see the vaster socio-economic changes, problems of the empire, he did not suspect that they were anything other than “earnest reformers.”⁶² This perspective was quite pervasive and quite often repeated in

⁵⁹ Douglas A. Howard, “Genre and myth in the Ottoman advice for kings literature,” in *The Early Modern ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge University Press, 2007): 140-41.

⁶⁰ Howard, “Ottoman Historiography”, 9.

⁶¹ Bernard Lewis, “Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline” *Islamic Studies* 1 (1962): 74, 75, 82.

⁶² *Ibid*, 83.

Turkish scholarship as well.⁶³ From 19th century on, some of these authors have been hailed as the visionary men who have seen the Empire's collapse before anyone else.

Later scholarship, however, following the revisionist historiography which replaced decline with transformation, highlighted the late 16th and 17th century context and personal motivations of the authors in order to explain the emergence of decline treatises. In his brilliant monograph on the life and works of Mustafa Ali the Historian, Cornell Fleischer focused on the relentless but futile struggle of this Ottoman scribe to further his career in the state bureaucracy in the face of state transformation, an increasingly competitive bureaucratic environment and a highly politicized patronage system.⁶⁴ Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, as well, in his work on the 17th century political transformation, relied extensively on the work of Mustafa Ali and Koçi Beg's work, framing them as symptomatic reactions to structural transformation of Ottoman politics⁶⁵ and "partisan and political tracts that reflect a struggle within the ruling elite."⁶⁶ A similar conclusion is drawn by Oktay Özel who attributes the proliferation of not only advice literature but also history writing and political complaints in other forms to the large scale social and political upheaval which created insecurities in the actors regarding their social standing.⁶⁷ Elsewhere, he also warns against the recent scepticism regarding the argument for decline in these works and highlights the fact that these works were also reactions to the large scale transformation which brought social upheavals, revolts and violence – particularly the *Celali* revolts- which drastically changed the human geography of Anatolia.⁶⁸

While these studies discuss the textual accounts of "decline" and the actual transformations going on in the Empire comparatively and say something about both, my concern is more with how "dissolution of order" and "reform" is conceptualized

⁶³ See for instance

⁶⁴ See Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 9, 71, 92-94.

⁶⁵ Abou-El-Haj, 12, 20-22.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 23; for an earlier article where Abou-El-Haj presented an earlier draft of his arguments see also "Review Article: Metin Kunt: The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government 1550-1650," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* VI (1986): 221-246.

⁶⁷ Oktay Özel, *Türkiye 1643: Goşa'nın Gözleri*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2013), 136-7.

⁶⁸ Özel, *The Collapse of Rural Order*, 12-19.

and how these conceptualizations change over time. I argue that the common element defining all bureaucratic accounts of decline is the dominance of classical conception of politics as a moral science of keeping the social elements in their place, within balance and equilibrium in relation to each other. This conception includes an absolutist model of politics, recognizing the sultan as the only legitimate political actor; any challenge to the hierarchical working of politics and to the balance of social elements are perceived as a deviation and sign of dissolution. As members of the scribal service, these authors look at the Ottoman society with a bird's eye view and in order to make sense of the structural transformation the Empire is going through they refer to the traditional sources and concepts. This movement between the classical texts and the present produces two temporal acts one of which idealizes the past of the Empire while the other denigrates the present and the future.

1.2 Politics and Order in the Philosophical Tradition

Relying on its canonical quality in Ottoman literature, here, I will take Kınalızade's *Ahlâk-ı Alâ'î* as a foundational text and use it to expose certain concepts central to Ottoman politics, most specifically order, justice and politics in their 16th century usages. While a quite similar, though shorter, work on ethics summarizing the Islamo-Persian literature, although relatively simpler and shorter, had been written before in the early fifteenth century by Ahmed Amâsi, and several other compilations were produced after Kınalızade, none reached the popularity of *Ahlâk-ı Alâ'î*.⁶⁹

The book follows the classical tri-partite structure of moral philosophy: science of morals (*ilm-i ahlâk*) focusing on individual morality and four cardinal virtues, science of economy (*ilm-i tedbîrî 'l-menzil*) explaining household management and science of the city (*ilm-i tedbîrî 'l-medîne*) explaining the measures of good

⁶⁹ For Amâsi's work see Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 30-33. *Ahlâk-ı Alâ'î* could with confidence be considered a foundational and canonical work for Ottoman moral-political literature. Similar comprehensive works on ethics had been either translated or authored in previous centuries as well, yet none achieved the same degree of circulation and popularity. Widely read and disseminated in its author's lifetime, the work has more than a hundred surviving manuscript copies. It was later printed in 1832 in Bulak. A compilation of a wide range of classical literature, the work would serve as an encyclopedic reference for scribes and religious scholars in education and it was presented to various princes and sultans to serve as a manual of good morals and government. For an alternative summary of Kınalızade's work and an overview of Ottoman philosophical ethics tradition see again Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 29-43.

government, justice and qualities required in a just ruler. The part on science of the city starts with justification of politics through necessity of collective habitation in cities (*temeddün*). Since man cannot provide for himself alone and hence survive, he needs to live together with his peers. But since people all have desires and these desires are bound to clash, collective life cannot be without conflict and sedition. Hence, a regime (*tedbîr*) is required so that both collective life becomes possible without sedition and disorder. That regime is called greater politics (*siyâset-i uz mâ*) and politics is only possible through three things: law of the Legislator (*nâmus-ı şâri*) which is God's Sharia, a preventive ruler (*hâkim-i mâni*) and usable currency (*dinar-ı nâfi*).⁷⁰ Since implementation of the law and control of the currency are the responsibility of the ruler, and he is the only active (and moral) agent, it is no wonder most of the literature focuses on the qualities a king should possess and the way he should exercise his executive power. And in this function he is compared to a physician whose duty is to preserve the balance of the order of the world (*i 'tidâl-i nizâm-ı âlem*) and restore it if it is lost⁷¹.

Using human body as an analogy for the state and society is the most common trope in medieval political writing. Social system is compared to human body and any disruption is understood as an illness, a malady. Recovery requires a physician and implementation of a correct regime. In fact, this comparison is more than a mere analogy; human body and social organism as well as the earth and the heavens (constellations) are believed to have similar governing principle, which is justice conceptualized as balance and proportion:

Then let us recount the conditions and foundations of justice and what laws a just sultan should observe: the first principle is that he keeps the estates in

⁷⁰ Kınalızâde, 406-7. "Çün zâhir oldu ki insan ictimâ' u temeddün etmeyince ma'aş edemez. ve ictimâ' u temeddün dahi mutlaka fesâdî dâfi' ve salâhu müştemil değildir, zirâ tabâyi' muhtelif ve ehviye mütebâyin. Ya'ni her kişinin bir matlûbu vü murâdı var ve nefis elbette murâdını her ne tarikle olursa olsun almak ister... Pes bir nesne iki kimesnenin murâdı olcak tenâzu' u tezâhum... cidâl ve fitne vü fesâd olsa gerek ve eşhâs birbirini ifnâ vü ihlâk... edip ma'aş mümkün ve ictimâ' müyesser olmasa gerek. Pes bir tedbîr gerek ki hem efrâd-ı insân mütemeddün ü müctemi' ve hem ol fesâd müntefi' ve mürtefi' olalar... ve bu, siyâset-i uz mâdır ki bununla ictimâ' mümkün ve fesâd mündefi' olur. ve bu siyâset hâsıl olmaz illa üç nesne ile, nitekim sâbikan işâret olunmuştur: Birisi nâmus-ı şâri', biri hâkim-i mâni', birisi dinâr-ı nâfi'dir."

⁷¹ Ibid, 410. "Ve bu hâkim tabîb-i mizâc-ı âlemdir ki i 'tidâl-i nizâm-ı âlemi -ki sıhhat andan ibâretir- hâsıl ise hıfz, zâyil ise i 'âde eder. Nitekim tabîb-i mizâc-ı insânî i 'tidâl-i mizâc-ı şahsı -ki sıhhat andan ibârettir- hıfz u i 'âde eder."

equal standing, for the estates of the world are comparable to the four elements [humors], for just as human disposition is not healthy when the elements are not in proportion and balanced, the same way disposition of the world falters and fails when the elements are not balanced.⁷²

Justice understood as a balance between two extremes and proportional distribution of elements is a principle not only for human soul but also for the body, the social world and the nature. The Galenic medical doctrine of humorism posits four elements that govern the disposition of human body: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. As long as these four elements are in balance and one of them is not in excess of others human body remains healthy. Above Kınalızade invokes these four humors, and when he lists the four estates he establishes an analogy with natural elements. Accordingly, the first estate is men of the pen (*ehl-i kalem*): ulema, judges, scribes, accountants, doctors and poets, who are comparable to water. The second estate is the men of the sword (*ehl-i seyf*): governors, generals and soldiers, who are comparable to fire. The third estate is merchants and artisans who are comparable to air, and the final estate is the peasantry who are comparable to the earth.⁷³ And the first principle for maintaining justice is that sultan keeps these four estates in balance. Second principle is to pay each of them the attention and oversight they deserve⁷⁴ and the third is to bestow upon them each the blessings they deserve⁷⁵, thus preserving the balance.

Politics (*siyaset*) thus emerges simply as the executive (and exclusive) power of the sultan. As eloquently expressed by Aziz al-Azmeh, *siyaset* is

“the management of natural disorder by the order of culture, and regal power is the ultimate state of culture in a natural world of men marked by a *bellum omnium contra omnes* which necessitates the establishment of power... [it] is

⁷² Kınalızade, 479, “*Pes adâletin şurût u erkâm ve pâdişâh-ı âdile ri ‘âyeti lâzım kavânîn nedir zikr edelim: şart-ı evvel budur ki cümle halâyık mütesâvî tuta zirâ halâyık âleme nisbet anâsır-ı erba‘a gibidir. Ademe nisbet çün anâsır mütesâvî vü mütekâff olmayınca mizâc-ı âdem sahîh ü mülte ‘im olmaz. Kezâlik efrâd mütesâvî tutulmasa mizâc-ı âlem sahîh ü muntazım olmaz. Pes anâsır-ı beden-i âlem dahi anâsır-ı beden-i âdem gibi dörttür.*”

⁷³ Kınalızade, 479.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 480. “*Şart-ı sâni odur ki... ehl-i medineye umûmen nazar edip her biri istihkâk u isti‘dâd kadar ri ‘âyet oluna.*”

⁷⁵ Ibid, 486. “*Şart-ı sâlis oldur ki... kismet-i hayrât ve îsâr-ı müberrât etmekte her birinin istihkâk u isti‘dâdın ri ‘âyet eyleye.*”

therefore not the field where power is contested and arrived at: *siyâsa* presupposes the power of which it is a modus operandi.”⁷⁶

Azmeh’s allusion to Hobbes is well placed. What Islamic moral philosophy assumes to be human nature might not be exactly the same as Hobbes’; but it produces similar conceptions of the state of nature.⁷⁷ Indeed as quoted above, left to their own devices men will fall into chaos due to conflicting desires, just like the natural/physical world which is in constant creation and decay (*kevn ü fesad*). In line with this assumption about human nature, causes of dissolution of order in the “decline” literature are frequently attributed to the selfish and immoral behavior of the actors, an argument to be repeated endlessly in the next two centuries. Order is incumbent on the moral behavior of the actors and it has no alternative save disorder and chaos.⁷⁸ Literature puts forward different types of politics; but these are simply different ways of exercising power, not different types of orders.⁷⁹ For instance Kınalızade distinguishes between two types of politics: virtuous politics (*siyâset-i fâzıla*) and non-virtuous politics (*siyâset-i gayr-i fâzıla*) which is marked by oppressive use of force (*tegallüb*).⁸⁰ Parallel to this, the end goal of politics is the virtuous city (*medîne-i fâzıla*) whose purpose is good deeds and the alternative is simply non-virtuous city (*medîne-i gayr-i fâzıla*) whose purpose becomes enormity and bad deeds.⁸¹ Politics is none other than the way to a virtuous arrangement of the city, just as morals is key to a virtuous character for a person. Hence, within the Ottoman discourse which simply subordinates politics to ethics rather than separating them, order, too, always manifests as a primarily moral problem.

Order (*nizâm*) is a conspicuous yet elusive concept. It is not immediately apparent what it includes or excludes. As Al-Azmeh emphasizes it is not natural; on the

⁷⁶ Aziz al-Azmeh, “Utopia and Islamic Political Thought” in *Islams and Modernities 3rd Ed* (New York: Verso, 2009), 144-5.

⁷⁷ Conception of human nature and politics derived from this conception is indeed quite similar to that of Western tradition. Marshall Sahlins’ many observations regarding conception of human nature and politics could as well be repeated for Ottoman political thought; see Marshall Sahlins, *The Western Illusion of Human Nature* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2008)

⁷⁸ Gottfried Hagen, “Legitimacy and World Order” in *Legitimizing the Order: Ottoman Rhetoric and State Power*, eds. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005)

⁷⁹ The usual typology is threefold, politics based on religion, on reason and on caprice. See Al-Azmeh, “Utopia and Islamic Political Thought”, 145

⁸⁰ Kınalızade, 455.

⁸¹ Ibid, 445 “*Medîne-i fâzıla oldur ki anda olan temeddün ü ictimâ’ın sebebi hayrât u mesâlih ola ve medîne-i gayr-i fâzıla oldur ki sebeb-i temeddün şürûr ü mefâsid ola.*”

contrary it is the opposite of natural, it is cultivated, a construct which requires constant human attention. Used in possessive constructions such as order of the world (*nizâm-ı alem*), order of the state (*nizâm-ı devlet*) and order of society (*nizâm-ı cemiyet*) order denotes that realms of existence which is ontologically within the control of human agency, will and control, and hence within his responsibility.⁸² The clearest and most concrete representation of order in Ottoman (and Islamic) literature is the circle of justice (*dâire-i adâlet*), a syllogism which demonstrates the circularity and reciprocity of relations in agrarian monarchies.⁸³ One of the most recurrent tropes of Middle Eastern moral and political literature, it is usually expressed in short verse, sometimes written around an actual circle. The Ottoman form as cited in Kınalızade is:

“Justice leads to rightness of the world; the world is a garden, its walls are the state; the state is ordered by the shari'a; the shari'a is not guarded except by the king; the king cannot rule except through an army; the army is summoned only by wealth; wealth is accumulated by the subjects; the subjects are made servants of the ruler by justice.”⁸⁴

Justice being a matter of everything being in their proper place, circle of justice proposes a summary of the logic behind the agrarian social relations. In Ottoman historiography, it was generally agreed that circle of justice was a trope appropriated from Persian literature but Linda Darling has recently argued it is a much older Mesopotamian construct traceable back to 3000 BC.⁸⁵ Kınalızade, himself, presents it as Aristotle's will to Alexander the Great.

The relationship of circle of justice with the Ottoman concept of order might not be immediately apparent. However, Kınalızade proposes the interconnectedness of the circle as the cause of the order of the world, and in fact the essence and summary of

⁸² Tahsin Görgün, “Osmanlı'da Nizam-ı Alem Fikri ve Kaynakları Üzerine Bazı Notlar” *İslami Araştırmalar* 13 (2000), 183-84. Focusing on the concept of “world order”, Görgün argues for a distinction between the natural, physical world and the social world.

⁸³ For the most up-to-date and exhaustive treatment of circle of justice and its history see Linda Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2013)

⁸⁴ Kınalızade, 532, “Adldır mûcib-i salâh-ı cihân; cihân bir bâğdır divârı devlet; devletin nâzımı şeri'attir; şeri'ate olamaz hiç hâris illâ melik; melik zabt eylemez illâ leşker; leşkeri cem' edemez illâ mâl; mâlî kesb eyleyen ra'iyettir; ra'iyeti kul eder pâdişâh-ı âleme adl.” Translation belongs to Hagen, see “Legitimacy and World Order”, 65. See also Şerif Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 100.

⁸⁵ Darling, --.

his whole book.⁸⁶ As such, order is about justice which is, in turn, about keeping everyone in place and preserving the circularity of the relations as well as maintaining the satisfaction of the peasantry. Also, as emphasized by Gottfried Hagen, this order is not a timeless ideal uniformly revered by all political actors either; rather, it “stands for theoretical concepts which follow historically contingent socio-political dynamics.”⁸⁷ Hence while the duties and relations expressed in the circle are part and parcel of life in an agrarian society, an actor’s conception of them would be limited to his own position within the web of relation. As such, a peasant petition would simply be concerned with oppressive governors and reasonable taxation, a janissary would rise up for his salary and a judge would see adherence to and execution of Sharia law as the key to the moral order. Only a limited number of people, by virtue of their proximity and access to the centre of political power and exceptionally high level of education, would conceive, and indeed be aware of, the order in its full circularity and emphasize its protection as key to the wellbeing of the state.

As was the case with the classical Greek, Byzantium and medieval European traditions, Ottoman elite political thought was marked by an almost perfect equilibrium of space of experience and horizon of expectation in the words of Reinhart Koselleck. A progressive concept of history was not even entertained or imagined as a possibility; future could bring to life nothing what was not written. Political and social sphere followed the circular course of nature and organic life, through birth, growth and decay. A corollary of this, was the inevitable sense of dissolution and corruption any observation of change in a society at its prime would bring. This did not imply a totally deterministic patter; after all the natural chaos of social life could be cultivated and managed through exercise of political power. But, frequently compared to a gardener in the classical writing, indeed, the extent of a sultan’s agency was not imagined beyond that of keeping the garden in order for an indefinite period, by weeding out the wild grass and thus not letting nature takes its course. As will be explored further in the chapter, the concept of political reform

⁸⁶ Kınalızade, 532. “*Esbâb-ı nizâm-ı âlemin birbirine irtibâtını bir dââyrede vaz ‘eyledim ki ol esbâbın tevâlî vü teşâbükü mahsûs u müşâhed ola. Ve bu kitâbın zübdesi ve metâlibin hülâsası bu dââyredir. Eğer bu dââyreden gayrı nesne göndermesem kâfi vü vâfi idi.*”

⁸⁷ Hagen, “Legitimacy and World Order”, 57.

(*ıslâh*) usually denotes an effort against the current. Once the undergrowth starts taking over, there is little one can do save bringing out the biggest scythe at hand and start a bloody harvest.

1.3 Dissolution of Order and Reform

There is no shortage of Ottoman vocabulary for change and transformation. A superficial scan of literature and dictionaries would bring up *tahavvül*, *tagallüb*, *tegayyür*, *tebeddül*, *televvün*, *inkılâb*, and *inkırâz*, all of which are frequently used to note the change in the general affairs of the world and state in varying degrees of negativity. However, the most frequently used word to specifically describe the social dissolution during the early modern period is *halel* or *ihtilâl*, from the Arabic verb root *h.l.l.* which, in its Ottoman use, could be translated as disruption or disturbance. The most common expression was *nizâm-ı âleme halel geldi*, translatable as “the order of the world has been dissolved.” For the concept of reform, however, we do not see a particular word unanimously used in all texts; while the “reform” literature of the period is pervasively associated with *ıslâh*, some of these texts do not even have the word *ıslâh* in them. And when it is used in other texts, for instance in Mustafa Âli’s *Counsel*, it is never a conspicuous word; it is simply used to denote correction of one or more items in the policy agenda. It is not until Katip Çelebi’s memorandum in 1650s that we see the word *ıslâh* explicitly in the title. Of course, lack or scarcity of the word does not mean the lack of the concept, all the texts propose different suggestions and measures mirroring their complaints, just not expressed with the word *ıslâh* all the time. The pervasive association of the period with the word *ıslâh* and the labelling of the literature as *ıslâhât* texts is partly due to the emergence, in the second half of the nineteenth century, of a grand narrative of the history of reform in the Empire (See Ch. 5).

The first instance of the expression of “dissolution of order” we observe is in Lütî Paşa’s *Asafname*⁸⁸, which he wrote in 1546, after he was dismissed from his post as

⁸⁸ Having served as grand vizier for Sultan Suleiman, Lütî Paşa is the highest ranking bureaucrat among the authors of decline literature. While Douglas Howard is reluctant to include Lütî Paşa’s work in the decline literature due to its being an example of advice literature in the classical form of

grand vizier (1539-1541), in order to teach the later grand viziers the proper way of government. He cites his motivation as the ruinous state in which he found the Ottoman Court when he became a vizier⁸⁹ and among the dozens of generic advice on who to trust in government affairs, what to do in military campaigns and how to protect the treasury, he also makes actual observations regarding the state of the Empire. For instance, noting that income and expenses of the treasury were balanced when Suleiman ascended to throne, he cites this as a cause of disruption (*sebeb-i ihtilâl*); income shall always be higher than the expenses, he concludes.⁹⁰ To keep the income always higher than the expenses is virtually the only financial precept one encounters in not only Lütî Paşa but also in the later political advice and decline literature as well. The other contemporary issues Lütî Paşa points out are almost all related to keeping the social estates in balance and proportion. Hence, he advises the grand vizier to keep the number of sultan's servants (*kul*), meaning the soldiers of the standing army, low and their records straight,⁹¹ preventing the subjects (*re'âyâ*) from attaining the status of cavalymen (*sipâhi*), and keeping the subjects from donning the garb and posture of the military-administrative classes even if they maybe allowed to be prosperous⁹².

As such, Lütî Paşa voices his concern over the dissolution of social boundaries as early as 1540s, during the reign of Suleiman, the age to be idolized by some when similar concerns were expressed with higher emphasis in the face of growing social and economic problems after 1570s.⁹³ For instance, Hasan Kâfi Akhisari, the author of *Usûlü'l-Hikem fî Nizâmi'l-Âlem*, writing in 1004 AH (1595/96 AD), dates the beginning of the disruptions to 980 AH (1572/73 AD) without any reference glorifying the reign of Suleiman.⁹⁴ Anonymous author of the *Kitâb-ı Müstetab* dates

the genre, the concept of decline is not limited to one specific genre. See Howard, "Ottoman Historiography", 9. For a summary of *Asafname* see Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 55-58.

⁸⁹ Kütükoğlu, *Lütî Paşa*, 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 34-35.

⁹¹ Ibid, 35.

⁹² Ibid, 40.

⁹³ For a discussion of the golden age in decline literature see Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 80-85.

⁹⁴ İpşirli, 249, "Şol vaktde ki, hicret-i Nebeviyye târîhinün bin dördüncü yılında âlemuin nizâmında fesâd ve bozgunluk müşâhede eyledim, dahi Âdem oğlanlarının halleri intizâmında bozgunluk müşâhede itdim, husûsâ ki dâr-ı İslâm'da, ya'nî memâlik-i Islâmiyye'de."

the disruptions back to the early years of Murad III's reign,⁹⁵ whereas Koçi Beğ, provides different dates for different categories of problems ranging from 982 AH to 1003 AH and traces some of the disruptions to the reign of Suleiman.⁹⁶

Tracing of the inception of dissolution of order to specific dates quite close to the Hijri millennium brings to mind the millenarian and apocalyptic visions prevalent at the time not only in the Ottoman Empire but also around the Mediterranean; yet Ottoman authors did not succumb to such prophetic visions as evidenced by total lack of any such ideas in the decline literature.⁹⁷ Whereas, there may have been some mystical aura surrounding the reports all of which trace similar observations to within a few years of the end of first millennium, concurrent with widespread popular unrest and socioeconomic problems, the relationship between social order and the natural order is usually established in reverse: "as long as mankind lasts, the world at large will last, is decreed by God" notes Akhisari, when he explains the world order as the preservation of the balance of the four estates explained above.⁹⁸ He continues at length to reassert the circle of justice by attributing to the Sassanid King Ardashir and emphasizes the necessity of everyone belonging to one of the four classes, and everyone behaving in a way appropriate to their ascribed class, how it is the duty of the sultan to make sure they do so, and how since the inception of disruptions major government business was delegated to the people who had no desert.⁹⁹

While Akhisari is, like Lûtfî Paşa, mostly silent about what is actually going on in the Empire and suffices with reminding where everything should be and how

⁹⁵ Yaşar Yücel, *Osmanlı Devlet Düzenine Ait Metinler I: Kitab-ı Müstetab* (Ankara: 1983), 2, "Sultân Murâd Hân ibn-i Sultân Selîm Hân hazretlerinin evâ'illerine gelinceye değin her sadra gelenler ve hükkâm nâmında olanlar dâ'ima işleri adâlet tarîkine sa'î ve sâlik... ol asrlarda ahvâl-i âlem dâ'imâ nizâm ve intizâmdan hâlî olmayıb..."

⁹⁶ Koçi Beğ, *Koçi Beğ Risâlesi* (Kostantiniyye: Matbaa-yı Ebuzziya, 1303 [1885/6]), 30, 40, 96. For a simplified edition and facsimile see also Seda Çakmakcioğlu, *Koçi Bey Risaleleri* (Istanbul: Kabalıcı, 2008).

⁹⁷ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 133-34 and Cornell Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân," in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps*, ed. G. Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), 161.

⁹⁸ İpşirli, 251, "...Allâh hazretleri çünkü âlemin bâkî olmasını nev'-i insânun bakî olmasıyla takdîr eyledi, ya'nî, mâdâme ki nev'-i insân baki ola, âlem dahi ma'lûm olan vakte değin, ki yevm-i kıyâmetdür, bâkî ola diyü takdîr eyledi..."

⁹⁹ Ibid, 252-55.

everyone should behave, the anonymous author of *Kitâb-ı Müstetab* is quite vocal and to the point about the causes of dissolution of order:

Since the reign of Sultan Murad, there came to be injustice and malpractice in the business of the judges and viziers, they have neglected the affairs of the Exalted State and have taken paths in violation of the ancient law, and hence towns and villages of the Protected Domains have fallen to ruins, subjects have fallen apart and the income of the central treasury have fallen behind the expenses and the aliens have intruded into the servant folk and such disruptions...¹⁰⁰

Throughout the rest of the text, the author explains the cause of intrusion of alien elements (*ecnebi*) as the buying and selling of ranks among the servants of the sultan, particularly janissaries and the cavalymen whose membership and promotions were previously subject to strict control via what he calls the ancient law (*kānûn-ı kadîm*).¹⁰¹ This allows free subjects, who are referred to as aliens due to their exclusion from servanthood (*kulluk*) to the Sultan, to buy their way into government service, which leads to the dissolution of boundaries separating the ruler and the ruled.

Koçi Beg's memorandum to Murad IV, written ten years later in 1631, repeats the similar concerns almost verbatim, complaining about alien people intruding into the ranks of the janissaries, cavalymen, timariots and even palace servants, their numbers gradually increasing, traditional levy system being ignored and how this is in violation of the law and cause of dissolution of order and dwindling of resources.¹⁰² Koçi Beg also invokes the circle of justice without naming it¹⁰³ and causally explains how the intrusion of aliens among the servants bears heavy on

¹⁰⁰ Yücel, *Kitab-ı Müstetab*, 2, "Sultân Murâd Han... zamân-ı sa'âdetlerinden beru olan hükkâm ve vîkelâ-i devletin adâletliklerinde kusûr ve işlerinde sù-i tedbîr ve Devlet-i Aliyye umûrunda nice ve nice ihmâlleri olub dâ'imâ kânûn-ı kadîme muhâlîf mesleke sâlik oldukları eclden Memâlik-i Mahrûsada olan kurâ ve mezârî 'harâba yüz tutub re'âyâ ve berâyâ perâkende olub ve Hazîne-i Âmirenin îrâdî masrafa kifâyet itmez olub ve kul tâ'îfesinin mâbeynlerine dahi ecnebi girmekle ihtilâl..."

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 4, 5, 7, 13.

¹⁰² Koçi Beg, 12-13, 17, 20-21, 27, 35, 55, 61, 92.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 71, "saltanat-ı 'aliyyenin şevket ve kuvveti asker ile ve askerî bekâsı hazîne ile, ve hazînenin tahsili re'âyâ ile, ve re'âyânın bekâsı 'adl ü dâd ile."

treasury which, in turn, translates into heavier and oppressive taxes upon the subjects¹⁰⁴, thus disrupting the order and balance.

Mustafa Ali, the author of *Kitab-ı Müstetab* and Koçi Beg all frequently refer to an “ancient law/constitution” (*kānûn-ı kadîm*) which, they argue, was violated by their contemporaries. While there is no fixed meaning in Ottoman language for the concept of “ancient law” and it may refer to any established practice, not necessarily older than one or two decades, within the intellectual milieu of the bureaucratic authors, as observed by Fleischer, it came to be conceptualized “as a body of customary practice and a legal spirit pervading Ottoman administrative procedure... as customary law defining the promotional hierarchy within the established governmental career tracks.”¹⁰⁵ None of the authors bother to stop and explain what the law entails, when it was specifically laid down or where it is to be found; it emerges as a concept which refers to and idealizes the administrative practices of the bygone sultans and includes the perfect opposite of everything that is “wrong” with the times.

As demonstrated by Baki Tezcan, even when the concept of “ancient law” was referred back to the law of Mehmed II in the sixteenth century texts, none of the authors mentioning it had read or seen it.¹⁰⁶ He also argues that in the second half of sixteenth century and first half of the seventeenth century ancient law had been used to refer to a tradition of rule, a kind of *sunna*, in order to garner legitimacy in political argumentation. Rather than a canonical text whose materiality was in agreement, it signified the totality of the classical principles regarding politics and administration, mostly to do with managing the boundaries between the estates and the ruler and the ruled. For instance, author of *Kitab-ı Müstetab* invokes the law to cite the “traditional” promotion practices and argues that order of the world was sustained through this law, again referring to the classical concept of order as stratification.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 65, “*ulûfeli kul tâ’îfesi ziyâde olub, kul ziyâde oldukça masraf ziyâde olub, masraf ziyâde oldukça teklîf ziyâde olub, teklîf ziyâde oldukça re’âyâya te’addî ziyâde olub ‘âlem harâb olmuşdur.*”

¹⁰⁵ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 113.

¹⁰⁶ Baki Tezcan, “The ‘Kanunname of Mehmed II’: A Different Perspective,” in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization Vol. 3*, eds. Kemal Çiçek et al. (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), 657-665.

¹⁰⁷ Yücel, *Kitab-ı Müstetab*, 6-7, “*Sahîh olan kul tâ’îfesi ne vechile hâsıl olduğu icmâlen beyân olunur ki her bölükte ve her ocakda olan kul tâ’îfesi mertebeden mertebeye tâ vezir oluncaya değin tarikleri*

However, in this form the concept of ancient law is not shared by many besides the bureaucratic observers of “decline,” as will be demonstrated further.

Besides the dissolution of social boundaries and increasing social mobility, the authors invoke other problems such as men of state succumbing to comfort and luxury¹⁰⁸, bribery¹⁰⁹, intrusion of Turks, Arabs, Kurds and various other tribal elements into servants of the sultan¹¹⁰, involvement of palace servants and women in government affairs¹¹¹ etc. These all boil down to two things: declining morality among the men of state and the sharing of political power, influence and material wealth with actors who have no “legitimate” right to it, which are causally related. The gist of these observations is that the authors cannot fathom what kind of logic there is behind all the transformation beyond self-interest which amounts to corruption. As the author of *Kitab-ı Müstetab* puts it:

No one questions and no one acts; this has become a world of buying and selling... the law of House of Osman was a path instituted with wisdom and the servant folk and all these realms were held in place with that law. Now, if that law is not restored and people stray from that path, no good will come of the servant folk and they will surely not be held in place.¹¹²

As evident from the phrase buying and selling, the increasing marketization of the political field of the early 17th century where one can buy his way into even the Ottoman court from quite humble beginnings created a loathing in these authors and a longing for a time where everything was regulated top down and held in place according to simple principles. The fact that state and elite patronage was the sole benefactors of these authors who belonged to the low to mid ranks of Ottoman bureaucracy, also needs to be considered. The lack of a status system based on birth and lineage seems to have made a swift overhaul of the existing social boundaries and distinctions, which in turn created a “conservative” reaction in certain people

ve olagelmış kânûnları budur ki... kânûn-ı kadîm minvâl-i meşrûh üzre olagelmışdır ve nizâm-ı âlem bu vechile intizâm bulmuş idi.”

¹⁰⁸ Koçi Beg, 21, 71, 96, and Ipsirli, 255.

¹⁰⁹ Yücel, *Kitab-ı Müstetab*, 2, 23, 28, 30, and Koçi Beg, 33, 90, 116.

¹¹⁰ Koçi Beg, 35, 61, and Yücel, *Kitab-ı Müstetab*, 26.

¹¹¹ Koçi Beg, 10-11, 30, 97-99.

¹¹² “Ne soran vardır ve ne tedbir ider vardır, hemân bir alış viriş dünyâsıdır... kânûn-ı âl-i Osmân hikmet ile vaz' olunmuş bir çizî idi ve kul tâ'îfesi ve bunca memâlik ol kânûn ile mazbût idi. İmdi girû ol kânûn mâdâm ki düzelmiye ve ol çiziden taşra hareket oluna ayruk kul tâ'îfesi Devlet-i Aliyye 'ye hayr-hâh olmazlar ve mazbût dahî olmazlar.”

who chose to idealize the past as a time when everyone was appointed on the principle of a particular type of class-bound meritocracy.

The conservatism is apparent in the suggested solutions as well. Since the causes of decline are traced to immoral and inappropriate behavior of the men of the state and the dissolution of boundaries, the advice focuses on restoring morality to the actors, putting everyone back in their place and monopolizing the power back with the sultan or his deputy, the grand vizier. Akhisari suggests that the military men should exercise temperance¹¹³ and the sultan should pick up counsel with old and wise people¹¹⁴ and must make sure that everyone stays within the limits of his own class and behave accordingly in order to restore the order¹¹⁵. Author of *Kitab-ı Müstetab* considers it a must for the sultan to attain knowledge of just and great sultans of the past,¹¹⁶ and since corruption starts from the top, he suggests appointing a just, righteous and steadfast grand vizier to oversee the restoration of law back to the state¹¹⁷. Koçi Beg holds the sultan responsible for everything and claims that this responsibility is not absolved just because the authority is delegated to viziers.¹¹⁸ He also argues that heavy handed punishment is the key to holding the humankind in check, not leniency and compassion.¹¹⁹ Pointing to the example of Iranian shah Abbas I (d. 1629), who he argues took his example from the Ottomans, he suggests banning luxury consumption.¹²⁰ Obviously, all the suggestions for correction (*ıslâh*) take the form of restoring the administration of the Empire to its last known “working” settings. The most central and pressing concern is restoring the political power and agency to one man, be it the sultan or grand vizier.

¹¹³ Ipşirli, 272.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 260, “Dindiki hâdis ve tâzeler ile mücâleset dînün fesâdudur, belki kadîmden olan dostlar ile ve pîrler ile ihtilât eyleye.”

¹¹⁵ Ipşirli, 253, “Mâdâme ki pâdişâhın muhâfazası tertîb-i kadîm üzre ola, ya ‘nî muktezâ-yı şer‘-i şerîf ile zabt idüp, her sınıf ehlini kendü ‘amelinde sâbit ve kâ‘im eyleye, mülk ve saltanatı nizâm cihetinden ziyâde olur.”

¹¹⁶ Yücel, *Kitab-ı Müstetab*, 23, “...pâdişâhlara lâzım olan ibâdet ve ta‘at budur ki selefde olan âdil mülûkin revişleri ve tevârih kitâbları tettebbu‘ itmekle adle mute‘allik umûr her ne ise ânı bilmeğe ve amel itmeğe sa‘y olunmaktadır.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 28-30, 32.

¹¹⁸ Koçi Beg, 67, “...bir memleketde zerre kadar bir ferde zulüm olsa rûz-ı cezâda mulûkden su‘âl olunur, vîkelâdan sorulmaz, ve anlara sipariş etdim demek huzûr-i rabbü‘l-‘âleminde cevâb olmaz.”

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 72-73, “...beni adem kahr ile zabt olunur, hilm ile olmaz.”

¹²⁰ Ibid, 86-88.

The reactionary conservative attitude observed in the noted literature should not be taken to mean that there were alternative and competing progressive conceptualizations of the Ottoman transformation. If we take the word of the author of *Kitab-ı Müstetab* as evidence, a common response to the allegations of dissolution of order and moral corruption among the servants seems to have been a complicit conformism and quietism aimed at preserving the status quo. In the words of the author these people are recognized by the expression “let us enjoy and accommodate the day, tomorrow is God’s business.”¹²¹ Some of the addressed adversaries take bribes, buy and sell ranks and plot against each other and hence benefit from the corruptions¹²² and then they lie to please the sultan and say that “servants and subjects are moving back to their deserved places and the world is finding its order back again.”¹²³

There is also evidence in the text that this political discussion occasionally took the form of a theological discussion on fate and men’s agency. The author condemns certain people who respond to his call for action by saying “this must be our fate, God has ordained as such; what, then, can we do?” and he accuses them with blasphemy; men has agency albeit limited and hence, he is responsible for what befalls him.¹²⁴ The polemic seems to have taken place between two kinds of conservatism: one that reacts to a transformative moment in history by rejecting the present and attempting to restore the state back to a previous arrangement, and the other content with the present and trying to preserve the status quo from which one benefits.¹²⁵ As will be explored in Chapter 3, such a debate on fate and limits of man’s agency also emerge at the end of 18th century during the New Order project reform attempts.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Yücel, *Kitab-ı Müstetab*, 2, 10, 18, “...hemân bugünü hoş görelim, irtenin ıssı vardır...”

¹²² Ibid, 2.

¹²³ Ibid, 5, “...re ‘âyâ ve berâyâ girü yerlû yerüne gelmeğe ve nizâm-ı âlem girü intizâm üzre başladı deyü sa ‘âdetlû pâdişâhımıza hoş âmedi cevâblar arz olunduğu ekserî hilâfdir.”

¹²⁴ Ibid, 28, “...bu bize mukadder imiş, Hakk Te ‘âlâ hazretleri bize böyle mukadder itmiş, bizim elimizde ne vardır” dimeğe kişi Islamdan çıkar...”

¹²⁵ For this analysis of conservatism as two fold reaction to a historical moment see James Alexander, “The Contradictions of Conservatism,” *Government and Opposition* 48 (2013): 594-615.

¹²⁶ See Ethan Menchinger, “Free Will, Predestination, and the Fate of the Ottoman Empire.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77:3 (2016): 445-466.

To sum up the discussion so far; the common elements of the first wave bureaucratic accounts of Ottoman decline were the reliance on concepts of politics, order and morality as understood in the philosophical tradition, an emphasis on social boundaries and the separation of the rulers from the ruled, a nostalgia for a bygone era which is idealized in the face of an unrecognizably chaotic and liberal Ottoman political arena and a reactionary impulse to restore a hierarchical order to Ottoman administration and to preserve the dissolving boundaries. While different authors may have had different motivations for complaining and different interests vested in the restoration, most central thing bringing the mainstream bureaucratic concept together was that they drew on politico-moral concepts of the philosophical tradition and they reflect these concepts on a concept of “ancient tradition” which they used to promote the legitimacy of their arguments.

1.4 Alternative Conceptualizations in the late 16th and early 17th Centuries

Early modern Ottoman political literature was by no means a monovocal literature; a basic comparison of known tracts shows varying conceptualizations of politics and decline within which the bureaucratic account is simply one strand. For instance, Ayn Ali’s *Kavânin-i Al-i Osman*, invariably cited together with the works of Akhisari, Mustafa Ali and Koçi Beg, presents a very limited concept of dissolution, compared to the other examples. Having served as the chief records keeper (*defter-i hâkânî emini*) for some time he recognizes the need for having all the timar lands recorded in one place so that it can be used as a reference source.¹²⁷ The work is a collection of tables of information on the timar lands and only in the conclusion he brings up the issue of disruption of land system where he cites two reasons for it: appointment of non-military administrators to timar management and lack of regular roll taking and record keeping for timar lands.¹²⁸ There are frequent conflicts due to timar lands being assigned to multiple persons at the same time and hence the solution is to simply keep regular and comprehensive records and take rolls during campaigns to see which timar owners are absent. As a records officer, he uses the

¹²⁷ Ayn Ali, 1-3.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 75-78.

concept of dissolution in a very limited sense, as an administrative problem with record keeping.

The most divergent discussion of decline and reform, however, can be observed in an anonymous treatise titled *Kitâbu Mesâlihi 'l-Müslimîn ve Menâfi 'il-Mü'minîn* from circa 1550¹²⁹ which presents a quite different portrait of Ottoman society in decline. Most probably written by a low-level government servant with a religious education, the treatise has a rough –almost colloquial- style and covers mostly social and economic issues in urban life, majority of which would be considered “mundane” in comparison to highly administrative and central problems noted in the majority of the decline literature. The author does not paint a society whose foundations are shaking or whose order is withering away; rather he observes moral issues in urban life, which he generally attributes to economic problems such as unemployment and provisions for Istanbul etc. While Sariyannis compares *Kitâbu Mesâlih* to Lütfi Paşa's *Âsafname* and concludes that it does it much better and in more detail, I argue that what we see in this work is completely different concept of social change.¹³⁰

Compared to other examples of the “decline” literature, we do not see the concern for the blurring of boundaries dividing the ruling class and the ruled, nor a conservative nostalgia for the *kānûn-ı kadîm* enforced by a strong sultan. On the contrary the author seems to be baffled by the insistence on preserving the ancient practices on some issues. Hence, regarding some matter concerning the regulation of appointment of *timar* lands he objects:

Even though this is law, it is illiterate men [laymen?] like Hersekoğlu or Karagöz Pasha who put this law into effect and why would the intelligent and wise judges of today be obliged to follow their path? Praise to be God, this matter is neither sunna nor fardh; it would not be a sin to ignore it.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Yaşar Yücel, *Osmanlı Devlet Düzenine Ait Metinler II: Kitabu Mesalihi'l-Müslimin ve Menafi'il-Mü'minin* (Ankara: 1974). Yücel estimated this anonymous treatise to have been written between 1639-1644 and most possibly by a low-mid level servant in the state service with madrasa education. However Baki Tezcan proposed an alternative dating to between 1550-55, see Tezcan, “The Kanunname.”

¹³⁰ Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 68-70.

¹³¹ Ibid, 111, “Eğerçi kânündür, lâkin bu asl kânûnu koyanlar ya Hersekoğludur ve yâhûd Karagöz Paşadur ki bir solp ümmî âdemler imiş, lâzım mıdır ki şimdiki zamânun âkil ve dâna hâkimleri muttasıl hemân anların yoluna gideler. Bi-hamdi'llâh bu husûs ne sünnetdür ve ne farzdur ki terk itmekle ulu günâh hâsıl ola.”

The author's confusion with the implied insistence on preserving the regulations made by the members of *askerî* class whom he considers lay persons actually betrays the well-known yet ambiguous tension between *kānûn*, secular law-making and *şer'*, religious law.¹³² However, this objection is not based on a steadfast adherence to principle of the matter; it involves a degree of pragmatism. The author himself suggests following the existing *kānûn* in an issue concerning taxation.¹³³ Nor does it involve a rejection of traditionalism on principle; the author shows reverence to some established methods (*uslûb-ı kadîm*) such as the training of scribal personnel from childhood by way of apprenticeship as opposed to appointing people from outside later on.

Considering that the same author sees the ulema as the pillars of the order of the world¹³⁴ -and not the military-administrative class- and most of his concerns over degeneration are about morality, economic justice and the blurring of the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims¹³⁵, we could conceptualize his position as a kind of a mild legal activism driven by religio-moral concerns as opposed to the reactionary political conservatism driven by a desire to return to absolutism observed in the other examples of "decline" literature. Hence, arguing for regulating the institution of market tax (*ihtisâb*) anew, the author argues:

It is not of any use to us to say that this is a custom from old times. Apparently there were no such frauds and thieves and no such tricks in the old times. Old customs will not do any good to contemporary folk; it is better to take action.¹³⁶

He agrees that the morality has declined but he considers return to old customs as a kind of useless nostalgia, and suggests innovative action instead. Besides an argument against the conservative political thinking observed in other literature, this argument also involves an objection to the "corrupt" middle men who refer to old

¹³² Insert some reference.

¹³³ Yücel, *Kitabu Mesalihi'l-Müslimin*, 107-8 " ...kadîm kânûn üzre hükmde yazıldıǵu üzre hemân her kişinin mevcûd olan koyundan resm alubub eski defterke kimseye zulm itmeseler... "

¹³⁴ Yücel, *Kitabu Mesalihi'l-Müslimin*, 91-92 "Mesâlih-i ulemâ-i izâm, ki nizâm-ı âlem bunlar ile dir... Pes nizâm-ı âlem bunların ile olıcak evel bunların ahvâllerin tedârük itmek gerek imiş ki müslümanlar huzûr ideler. "

¹³⁵ Ibid, 67, 117.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 115, "Evvel zamândan kalmış âdetdür dimek fâ'ide vermez. Evvel zamânda haramzâdeler ve bu asl hileler yoǵımış. Şimdiki zaman halkına eski âdet fâ'ide itmez, tedbîr itmek sevâbdur."

regulations in order to preserve a status quo and protect their profits, hence revealing another use of custom in conservative political argument.

Whatever his intended audience and opponents were, it is clear that the author had different concepts of law (*kānûn*), order (*nizâm*) and hence a different concept of “decline” compared to the aforementioned authors and texts. Whereas *kānûn-i kadîm* signifies different kinds of administrative and legal practices from tax collection to urban security with no inherent value attributed to their being ancient, *nizâm* is the general moral order of the society which is in decline because of rampant corruption and economic problems. While this schema is not necessarily in complete contrast with the more abstract concept of decline, it nonetheless demonstrates the multiplicity of reflections on the state of the empire depending on the author’s position in society. Obviously a low level servant –not in the scribal service as can be deduced from his style- with some degree of religious education, the author has none of the sense of urgency seen in the previous examples. The problem for him is not a political one, it is rather a legal-technical issue, which suggests a legal profession either as a low level judge or a judge’s scribe.

Noting the detailed accounts of economic and social problems from unruliness of the janissaries to the provision of Istanbul which is lacking in *Kitâb-ı Müstetab* and Koçi Beg’s memoranda, Yücel, like Sariyannis, praises the author for having seen the extent of problems better than other authors.¹³⁷ Yet, obviously the difference is not a matter of intellect or clarity of observational skills, but a matter of the author’s position in society which also determines what kind of intellectual resources are available to him. Whereas, the bureaucratic authors, looking from high above and having access to statistical information available in the archives, see like a state and hence paint a general political picture with a historical consciousness, the author of *Kitabu Mesâlih* is little more than a commoner –probably not even part of sultan’s servants- and his position as a low level actor brings him face to face with day to day dealings and economic and legal problems of the people of Istanbul. What is even more striking is the complete lack of the word *ihtilâl* or any other word that is remotely translatable as decline, which betrays the lack of historical depth and

¹³⁷ Yücel, *Kitabu Mesâlih-i'l-Müslimin*, 77.

consciousness that characterizes the scribal accounts of decline. An awareness of moral degeneration and corruption in urban space of Istanbul is there but it does not turn into an explanatory narrative that idolizes the previous century and causally links the problems to the political transformation and gradual decline of the power of the sultan. Nor is there any reference to mythical kings of the past like Ardashir or anecdotal stories and exempla from classical texts. The text also does not use the word *islâh*, simply mirroring his complaints in his proposed solutions: If there are moral and economic problems and mischief in society, this is due to laxity of those who are supposed to uphold law -not the law of sultan but simply Sharia-, and the solution is to uphold the law and care for those who are its bearers, the ulema.

This variation in perspective is also observed in the examples of a different kind of advice literature presented to Sultan Murad IV in the first half of the seventeenth century. Derin Terzioğlu cites several petitions submitted to Murad IV by whom she calls “sunna-minded Sufi preachers.”¹³⁸ The adjective “sunna-minded” is used to describe the gradual “Sunnitization” of the Sufis, a process by which they had “come to conform more closely to the social and cultural norms that were now being favored by the ruling elites, and even to act as agents of Sunnitization.”¹³⁹ Terzioğlu demonstrates that Sufi preachers and Kadızadeli’s¹⁴⁰ –the politically influential orthodox religious movement of the seventeenth century- were not as antagonistic against each other as they were formerly believed to be and that “Sunna and a puritanical outlook on Ottoman social and cultural life united the reform visions of both groups.”¹⁴¹ One of the petition-cum-advice letters written by a certain Hasan, one of those Sunna-minded Sufi preachers, presents a revealing contrast to the bureaucratic advice literature.

Written mostly in verse, with prose intervals to advise the sultan in a pleading language, the text complains about the destruction and the decline of the world (*âlem*

¹³⁸ Derin Terzioğlu, “Sunna-minded sufi preachers in service of the Ottoman state: the *naşihatnâme* of Hasan addressed to Murad IV,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 27 (2010): 241-312.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 250.

¹⁴⁰ For the Kadızadeli movement and analysis of their ideas see Madeliene Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)* (Mineapolis: Biblioteca Islamica, 1988), 129-182; and Ekin Tuşalp Atıyas, “The Sunna-Minded Trend,” in *Ottoman Political Thought up to Tanzimat*, 98-122.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 243.

harab oldu, tenezzül etti).¹⁴² Instead of the abstract expression “dissolution of the order of the world” in the bureaucratic literature, we see a more concrete and simpler one, the destruction of the world, which becomes meaningful when the author complains about the real problems of the subjects, and injustices in Anatolia. A brief list of his complaints would include hubris and ostentation which leads to oppression, frequent dismissal of official positions, judges and majors who oppress people, lack of respect for the elderly, proliferation of ignorance and sedition, indulgence in drinking and particularly tobacco which is cursed as an English invention, innovation (*bid'a*) of the scholars etc.¹⁴³

As also noted by Terzioğlu, we see a piety based morality and emphasis on Sharia, whereas *kāmun* is used only a few times and simply in reference to contemporary sultanic decrees, not to a tradition or custom.¹⁴⁴ Sharia, on the other hand, is presented as a force which binds even the Sultan if upheld and defended properly. This, however, does not turn to a challenge to the authority of the sultan, on the contrary, the sultan emerges as a ruler imagined like a mystical leader of the community, the only person to successfully uphold Sharia and oversee its implementation. Thus, although the author has a quite different conception of decline as moral corruption, lack of piety, oppression and indulgence compared to the bureaucratic authors, he joins them in expectation of iron rule from the sultan; for instance he recommends summary execution of fifty corrupt officials in one day as a warning to others.¹⁴⁵ Hence, the main cause of oppression appears as the corrupt middle men judges and majors (*kadılar ve begler*) who are supposed to be reformed (*ıslâh* and occasionally *tashîh*).¹⁴⁶ Unless this achieved, the author warns, the subjects (*reaya*) will wither away and sultan will have no source of income to fill his

¹⁴² Ibid, 290.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 289, 290, 291, 294.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 270.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 292, “*Günde ellisin katl itseñ ‘azil korkusu çeken begler, kâdılar ıslâh olup zulmi elden kômaz.*”

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 292, “*Bu ‘âlemi yıkmağa yâ yapmağa sebeb bir iki tã’ifedür. Biri zâlim kâdılardır. Biri zâlim beglerdür. Bu iki tã’ife ıslâh olduğdanşoñra ‘âlem ıslâh olmağ sehel seydür. Bu iki tã’ifenüñ ıslâhu emr-i hakķile hünkârımuñ kabza-i taşarrufındadır...*”

treasuries with.¹⁴⁷ Once again, we see the consciousness of one's place in circle of justice and its usage in political argumentation.

To conclude, parallel to the bureaucratic concepts of decline and correction/reform which draws on the particular elite tradition of philosophical ethics, we observe other concepts of decline in non-bureaucratic texts, which draw on other sources of morality, particularly tenets of Islamic legal tradition. Observing similar phenomena from different perspectives and having different bones to pick, we see bureaucratic authors and others drawing on different concepts of tradition to claim legitimacy to their political arguments. Accordingly, reform suggestions take different forms; while, for bureaucratic authors, preservation of the lines separating the ruling class from the ruled and keeping the estates distinct from each other, for the sunna-minded authors we see simpler solutions amounting the punishing the corrupt middle men and implementing Sharia.

However, after 1650s we see a significant transformation of the bureaucratic concept of decline as well, with the introduction of Ibn Khaldun's *Mukaddime* into the equation.

1.5 Khaldun and Dynastic Cyclicism: A Theory of Decline

In a memorandum written in 1653 by Katip Çelebi, a polymath and arguably the most famous intellectual figure of pre-nineteenth century Ottoman history, we observe a significant shift in the content and concept of decline.¹⁴⁸ A historian and a scribe in the Ottoman bureaucracy his perspective reflects the comprehensive bird's eye view acquired by access to state records and archives. Not only does he register a general degeneration in the affairs of the Ottoman state but also he considers the degeneration to be endorsed by theoretical knowledge:

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 295, "Allāh sübhānehu ve te 'ālā (celle celāluhu) seni coban eyledi kulları koyuncuıklarına. Bu kırdları gendi hāline korsañuz bes on ra'yyeñ kaldı, anı da iħrāk bi'n-nār iderler, vilāyetüñ hep ħarāb olur gider. Ĥazīne 'i havādan mı cem' idersin soñra?"

¹⁴⁸ For an overview of Katip Çelebi and his contribution to decline debates see also Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 125-30.

...in accordance with God's custom and as is the nature of sedentary communities and human societies, there appeared signs of subversion in the disposition of this Exalted State and evidences of discord in its powers...¹⁴⁹

He explains this natural course of degeneration through the body analogy which was quite common in medieval political thought. Just like individual human body which goes through youth (*sinn-i nümüv*), adulthood (*sinn-i vukūf*) and old age (*sinn-i inhitât*), human societies and states follow this natural course, though some states have stronger dispositions and may go through these stages more slowly than others.¹⁵⁰ Hence Katip Çelebi identifies the present state of Ottoman Empire to be adulthood which, he argues, is evident from the Celali revolts, devastation of the country side settlements and mass immigration of the peasants to urban areas.

Katip Çelebi uses the medical analogy all through the memorandum, also employing the doctrine of humorism explained above.¹⁵¹ As human body falls ill when one of the four humors (*ahlât-ı erba'a*) is in excess of others, the state's disposition is disrupted when one of its four estates (*esnâf-ı erba'a*) grow disproportionately. Hence he warns against the gradually increasing numbers of janissary corps in Istanbul and the budget imbalance of the central treasury just like Koçi Beğ or the author of *Kitab-ı Müstetab*. The weight of the medical analogy is apparent in his usage of the word disposition (*mîzac-ı devlet*) when referring to state and moreover his preference to use order when referring to society (*nizâm-ı cemîyyet*) suggests a conceptual distinction, albeit vague, between the state and the society.¹⁵² Yet, be it disposition of the state or the order of society, what is at stake is an abstract space of social and economic relations which is violated by the immoral and excess behavior of the elements:

In short, just as the temper of a body survives with humors, elements and strength, temper of a state also rests upon the four estates. And just as the

¹⁴⁹ Katip Çelebi, 134, "...ber mûceb-i âdet-i ilâhiyye ve muktezâ-yı tabî'at-ı temeddün ve ictimâ'-ı beşerîyye bu devlet-i alîyem-i inhirâf ve tabî'at ve kuvâsında âsâr-ı ihtilâf görülmegle..."

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 137-38.

¹⁵¹ See Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 125-26.

¹⁵² For a survey of the reification of the concept of state in the early modern Ottoman political vocabulary see Marinos Sariyannis, "Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought," *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013): 83-117. For the same transformation in European vocabulary see Quentin Skinner, "The State," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, eds. Terrence Ball et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 90-31.

health of a body is tied to the balance of humors, the order of society relies on the balance of estates. Even though in both cases perfect balance is inconceivable, ups and downs should not exceed certain bounds so that the disposition and health is not disrupted.¹⁵³

Katip Çelebi is not too optimistic regarding the prospects of reform. The situation cannot be remedied or reverted completely but nonetheless it can be partially corrected and stalled with adherence, again, to *kānûn-ı kadîm*.¹⁵⁴ What is needed above all, he argues echoing Kınalızade, is a strong man of the sword (*sahib-i seyf*) who is the sultan, comparable to the faculty of reason (*nefs-i nâtika*) in human body.¹⁵⁵ That is because, people who care for the state are rare and most people are simply after their base desires (*huzûz-ı nefsâniyye*). Even this most structural and schematic decline account is still explained and understood in moral terms and from within a Hobbesian conception of human nature and society: a leviathan is called for.

Incidentally, soon after Katip Çelebi's call for a man of the sword, in 1656, Mehmed IV appointed Köprülü Mehmed Pasha as grand vizier –as if he had heard the author of *Kitâb-ı Müstetab*- and Köprülü did much to restore and consolidate political power, albeit quiet violently –as if he had heard Koçi Beg. Other grand viziers from the Köprülü family followed him in power until 1683 and established a stable hold over political power and initiated administrative and financial measures to restore “order” to the Empire. The period, known as Köprülü restoration in modern historiography, was also recognized as a period of restoration by the late eighteenth century reformers occasionally (See Ch. 2 and 4).

Katip Çelebi introduces two novel elements to the concept of decline: the schematic cyclicism suggested by the organic conception of society and the unmistakable sense of inevitability and determinism it provokes. This implied determinism and the question of the possibility of averting the fate of the state grow more central to the Ottoman political writing especially in the eighteenth century as the Ottoman state

¹⁵³ Katip Çelebi, 145, “*Hâsılı kıvâm-ı beden ahlât ve erkân ve kuvâ ile nice bâkî ise kıvâm-ı devlet dahi bu esnâf-ı erba‘a-i a‘yân iledür. Ve sıhhat-i beden nice ahlât i ‘tidâline mevkûf ise nizâm-ı cem‘iyyet dahi bu esnâfun i ‘tidâline menûtdur. Egerçi ikisinde dahi i ‘tidâl-i hakîkî mutasavver değıldür lâkin kesr ü inkisâr bir mertebe hadden efzûn olmaya ki arz-ı mizâcdan çıkmağla sıhate halel gelmeye.*”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 151,

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 152, 159.

goes through successive inconclusive campaigns, runs into financial impasses and more political power is lost to the peripheral actors. An increasing engagement with Ibn Khaldun and his doctrine of dynastic cyclicism also contributes to the debate. Although Katip Çelebi does not refer to Ibn Khaldun in his memorandum, we know that he was aware of Khaldun's famous work on history, the *Mukaddime*.¹⁵⁶

With Katip Çelebi, the discourse on decline is transformed from a polemic regarding the dissolution of boundaries to a greater narrative explaining the Empire's situation in the greater scheme of things. From macro and micro observations regarding the dissolution of order (*nizâm-ı âleme hâlel gelmesi*) within the empire we move on to a schematic explanation which locates the Empire comparatively in the middle (*sinn-i vukûf*) of a linear path of dynastic cycles.

Çelebi's influence on the later authors was significant. Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, also a historian with a famous work on world history with a commentary on Çelebi's *Takvîmü't-Tevârih*, wrote a work on Ottoman laws which closely follow Çelebi's observations regarding decline and his suggestions for reform albeit with a more pessimistic vision regarding the possibility of a reversal.¹⁵⁷

First Ottoman official chronicler Naima¹⁵⁸, however, was the person who developed and elaborated upon Çelebi's schema and integrated it into his famous chronicle of the Ottoman Empire, together with a summary of Khaldun's five stage formula of a state's lifetime. In the quite lengthy and elaborate introduction to his chronicle, Naima starts with invoking Treaty of Hudaibiyyah¹⁵⁹ to justify the Treaty of

¹⁵⁶ Cornell Fleischer concludes that although comparable conceptions of history existed in the works of Mustafa Ali as well, there is no sign that Ottoman authors were aware of Khaldun's work before Katip Çelebi, see Cornell Fleischer, "Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclicism and 'Ibn Khaldunism'" in *Sixteenth Century Ottoman Letters*, ed. Bruce Lawrence (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1984): 46-69.

¹⁵⁷ Hagen, "Legitimacy and World Order", 80.

¹⁵⁸ While chronicling was common and there was an attempt at making it an official post with the post of *şehnâmecî* in the sixteenth century, it was interrupted in the early seventeenth century. Naima is the considered the first holder of the post of *vekayinüvis*, official chronicler, which started in the final years of the seventeenth century and continued until the late nineteenth. See: Christine Woodhead, "An Experiment in Official Historiography: The Post of Şehnâmecî in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1555-1605" *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 75 (1993): 157-182 and Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Vekayinüvis" in *Vekayî'nüvis: Makaleler* (Istanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1994): 103-39.

¹⁵⁹ Naimâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ Vol. 1*, ed. Mehmet Ipsirli (Ankara: TTK, 2007): 11-20. Naima recounts the treaty in detail and at length. Signed between Muslims of Madina and Quraish in the sixth year of the Hijra, Hudaibiyyah peace was at first glance in favor of Quraish and Muslims

Karlowitz in 1699. Ending the almost fifteen years of Austrian campaign the Treaty meant a clear defeat for the Ottomans leading to loss of Ottoman control in central Europe. By comparing it to Hudaybiyyah Naima attempts to console the Ottomans and wishfully suggests it still may turn out to be auspicious for the Ottomans allowing them to have some breathing space to focus on the domestic problems at hand.

After narrating Hudaybiyyah, Naima follows with a few pages recounting Katip Çelebi's views comparing the state to human body and what this means for the Ottoman state.¹⁶⁰ But after that he also includes the five forms (*tavr-ı hamse*) which correspond to the three stages of a state's lifetime, summarizing Khaldun's typology. The first form is the time when the state is still a nomadic tribe and there is equality among the peers and solidarity (*asabiyyet*), which is the source of power and victory is at a maximum. The second form is when the nomadic tribe starts to settle down and the tribe that leads to the emergence of the dynasty has no more the same solidarity and equality. Hence the ruler starts to gather people who will be loyal servants to him and subjugating those rival groups who were once his peers. Naima explains the formation of Ottoman military class and the bureaucratic class with reference to this necessity.¹⁶¹ The third form is when the state is fully established with strong foundations and dynasty is at its strongest. Statesmen are busy with perfecting the laws and their practices become a source of inspiration for the late comers. Since the dynastic succession is also secured there is no need for the tribal solidarity anymore.¹⁶²

The fourth form is when the disposition of the state (*mîzâc-ı devlet*) is most prone to disorder and corruption (*fesâd*). The ministers grow very powerful and the high ranking people amass a lot of wealth. Gradually disagreement and conflict arise between the men of rank due to rivalry. Though military campaigns may prove

were at a loss to understand why the Prophet had agreed to it. Yet, soon certain articles of the treaty proved to be in favor of Muslims and just three years later Mecca was conquered in a decisive moment of victory for the Muslims.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 21-25. In addition to Katip Çelebi, when he talks about circle of justice he cites both Ibn Khaldun and Kınalızade and frequently refers to the scholars of the past.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 27.

¹⁶² Ibid, 28 "*Bu tavırda olan esâs-ı devlet müşeyyed ve binâ-i saltanat mümevhed olmakla aşîret ü asabiyyet lüzûmundan müstağnî olur.*"

victorious at first, when they grow long and inconclusive they do irreparable damage to the treasury. Rulers forsake the practices of their ancestors. The best measure for this stage is to avoid military campaigns and focus on domestic affairs (*tanzîm-i umûr*). The fifth form is when the problems in the fourth are heightened. People no longer follow the laws of the ancients and worse they start inventing weird ceremonies and practices. Conflicts and rivalries run rampant and rulers and governors focus on amassing wealth and protecting their own interests forsaking that of the state. Budget imbalance imposes loans and wealthy statesmen are reluctant to lend a hand. Again the only possible action is to avoid wars and focus on internal reform.

After this historical summary which resonates too closely with narratives of Ottoman history, Naima concludes the introduction with a return to classical texts again. He invokes Saladin of the Ayyubid dynasty (d. 1198) who arrived at a similar time of unrest and conflict and revived the state with his excellent measures which were recorded by an Abdurrahman Şîrâzî whose work Mustafa Âli has partly translated in his *Nûshatü's-Selâtîn*.¹⁶³ This points to a discrepancy in the way the concept of decline develops and the solutions suggested. From complaints of disruption of domestic social order in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century (*nizâm-ı âleme halel gelmesi*) we arrive at a theory of state transformation. The concept of order also expands from a hierarchical arrangement of social estates to a disposition of state which follows different forms in a linear pattern. The order is no longer strictly tied to the moral standing of the political actors but a general structural logic is recognized and this logic governs virtually everything pertaining the state. Naima makes this quite clear:

Let it be known that, God's custom and His will is such that, condition of all states and societies is not consistent in one form or unchanging fashion; rather it passes at different times into various forms and renewed conditions such that

¹⁶³ Ibid, 33. Elsewhere in his history Naima returns to that record of Saladin's exploits and laments that this piece of literature has been lost. He sees an ultimate solution to the problems of the Empire in that essay and says "If that great essay be found it will be perfectly plain that these perplexing questions really retain no difficulties." This comment alone is an excellent evidence of the kind of influence classical texts had on the political concepts of Ottoman authors. See Lewis Thomas, *A Study of Naima* (New York: NYU Press, 1972): 47-48.

conditions of one time are opposite of another and what is necessitated by one form disagrees with the others.¹⁶⁴

Another phenomenon which complements this extant comparative perspective is the contemporary popularity of universal histories, in which the history of the Ottoman dynasty is identified as part of a multi-dimensional concert of dynasties and where interest shifts from singular events to the pattern of rise and fall of dynasties.¹⁶⁵

Nonetheless, despite recognition of such a logic and pattern, remedy is sought in the classical texts and practices with one difference: the suggested measures are less personalized and less incumbent upon the sultan or the grand vizier. Rather they address a larger group of overseers who are in state service, which is another evidence of the gradual separation of the concept of the state from the sultan's sovereignty and its reification.¹⁶⁶

That the theory is borrowed from Khaldun does not exclude the particularity and embeddedness of the problems in Ottoman political world. On the contrary, the degree of engagement and appropriation evident in the resonance of the narrative with Ottoman history attests to the fact. Katip Çelebi and Naima were not isolated cases either. Two decades later, in 1725, Pirizade Mehmed Sahib Efendi, a prominent member of the ulema and one close to the Sultan Ahmed III, started translating Khaldun's *Muqaddima* into Ottoman, completed the first five chapters and submitted it to the sultan in 1730.¹⁶⁷ Pirizade justifies his choice of translation by referring to the general interest and reverence to the book among the Ottomans.¹⁶⁸ His work involves more than a simple translation; occasionally he interceded in the

¹⁶⁴ Naima, 26, "Ma'lûm ola ki âdet-i ilâhiyye ve irâdet-i aliyye bu vechile câri olagelmıştır ki her devlet ü cem'iyetin hâli dâ'imâ bir karar üzre müstekar ve vetire-i vâhide üzre müstemirr olmayıp her bâr etvâr-ı muhtelif ve hâlât-ı müteceddideye müntakıl olmaktadır. Şöyle ki bir vaktin hâli, asr-ı âhara mugâyir ve bir tavrın iktizâsı tavr-ı sâlife muhâlifdir."

¹⁶⁵ Hagen, "Legitimacy", 78. Katip Çelebi and Hezarfen Hüseyin were both famous for their works on universal histories. Katip Çelebi's *Takvimü 't-Tevârih*, a brief history of the world from Prophet Adam up to the mid seventeenth century in the form of a calendar, was quite popular as is evident from its extant copies in manuscript. It was also one of the first books printed in Ibrahim Müteferrika's printing press in 1730s.

¹⁶⁶ See also Saryiannis, "Ruler and State, State and Society."

¹⁶⁷ Ibn Haldun, *Mukaddime: Osmanlı Tercümesi*, eds. Yavuz Yıldırım et al (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2008), xxii. This translation would be completed a century and a half later by Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, the famous nineteenth century historian and Tanzimat statesman, who would pick up from where Pirizade had left.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, xxvi.

text and includes his own comments on the margins. After translating this passage from Khaldun:

Let it be known that, of the three stages pointed out in the life and continuity of a realm, each is estimated to be forty years and hence the state lives its natural life span of a hundred and twenty years. This life span is based on the majority; it is not true for every state and maybe sometimes lasts shorter or longer than a hundred and twenty years. But mostly, it does not exceed roughly a hundred and twenty years and collapse occurs shortly before or after. And sometimes when the age of the state reaches a hundred and twenty and its strength fails in senility and yet there emerges no enemy or foe and some measures and remedies are found, it lives on much longer. But if a strong enemy emerges in the moment of weakness it will be ruined earlier since there will not be any means of defence or retaliation. In any case, since in accordance with the verse ... [Quran 7:34]... the life of humans designated by fate will not allow delay or haste, a state, too, will not collapse before its time of death arrives.¹⁶⁹

He intercedes with a postscript and sardonically notes that Ottoman state has been around almost five hundred years. This passage and Pirizade's postscript perfectly reveals the tension inherent in the bureaucratic concept of decline, between fatalism and voluntarism. First, decline is perceived as a fact which is both empirically and theoretically endorsed. As I have argued, there is a gradual process where the concept develops from more empirical to theoretical which reinforces the sense of inevitability. Second, the question of whether it is unavoidable or not arises. Some authors such as Katip Çelebi are more pessimistic, regarding a full return to past grandeur almost impossible yet all of the scribal authors seem to believe with the right kind of measures it can be stalled for an indefinite period. The longevity of the empire which spans several centuries and is virtually unprecedented in Islamic history creates an idea of Ottoman exceptionalism¹⁷⁰ which is also reinforced by the fact that Ottoman Empire was the unchallenged leader of the Muslim world at large. This exceptionalism is also evident in the frequently used definition for the Empire "ever-lasting state" (*devlet-i ebediyyü'l-karâr* or *devlet-i ebediyyü'l-devâm*) which Mehmet Genç attributes to the financial system of the empire based on the principle of balance.¹⁷¹ As long as the administration can keep income and expenses in balance

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 334.

¹⁷⁰ Sherif Mardin, "The Mind of the Turkish Reformer 1700-1900", 413-436.

¹⁷¹ Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi* (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2000), 33.

and provide enough sustenance for the subjects, the ideal of the circle of justice is preserved.

Khalidun's warnings against the threat of a strong enemy during the later ages of a state seems to have appealed to the Ottoman bureaucrats as Naima's advice for avoiding wars and focusing on reform returns in an intriguing piece commissioned by grand vizier Nevşehirli İbrahim Paşa to be presented to the Sultan Ahmed III shortly before the Treaty of Passarowitz after two years of war with Austria and Venice¹⁷². The piece is written in the form of an imaginary dialogue between a Muslim and a Christian military officer in which they converse about the reasons why the Ottomans started to lose against their enemies recently while they have always been victorious up until the death of Suleiman.¹⁷³ The conversation starts with a brief talk about Karlowitz in which the Muslim officer justifies the peace by counting the definite virtues and benefits of a peace over a war whose outcome is not known. The core of the conversation, then, moves on to the reasons of Ottoman defeat which boils down to the difference between an army which has formations and follows orders and (*nizâmlı asker*) and an army which has neither (*nizâmsız asker*). The Christian officer advises peace during which Ottomans, too, can achieve order in their military by having able officers, following the orders of their rulers and getting rid of unruly soldiers. Upon this the Muslim officer agrees that ceasefire is the best option since victory depends on order and order requires some time.¹⁷⁴

The military prowess of the Ottoman army gradually becomes the main index of the general order of the state and the concept of order shifts from the general order of society and preservation of social boundaries to internal organization and efficiency

¹⁷² Faik Reşit Unat "Ahmet III. Devrine Ait bir Islahat Takriri: Muhayyel Bir Mülakatın Zabıtları" *Tarih Vesikaları* 1 (1941): 107-121. The memorandum is found in the collection of Mahmud II's chronicler Mehmed Esad Efendi who invokes the memorandum as an example of the principle of *mukâbele-i bi'l-misl* (response in kind) which becomes the main justifying argument of military reform during New Order era and later when the janissary corps is abolished. The text can also be found in Sahhaflar Şeyhizâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvis Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, ed. Ziya Yılmaz (İstanbul: OSAV, 2000), 586-605.

¹⁷³ Es'ad Efendi, *Tarihi*, 587. "Devlet-i 'aliyye-i ebed-peyvend-i 'Osmânî, ibtidây-ı zuhûrlarından inkızây-ı 'ömr-i Süleymân Hânî'ye dek her seferde gâlib olup... Amma Beç seferinden sonra istidrâc-ı küffâr mütemâdi ve her mesâffda hezimetimize bâdi oluyor, vechi nedir?"

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 600. "...sûret-i galebe nizâma mevkûf ve nizâm ise murûr-i zemâne muhtâc olmağla, mütârekenin rûchânı ma'lûm oldu."

of the military-administrative apparatus. It is telling that, in the above mentioned text, the Christian officer starts with a question seemingly quite out of context:

It is a curious thing that while in the states of other sultans, official ranks are hold for long periods and removal from office does not happen except in the case of death or observed abuse of office, Ottomans deviate from this. Many removals and reappointments take place in a short time. Some of those are all right if their time is up according to the customary practice. Yet, is it not a cause of dissolution [*mûcib-i ihtilâl*] to change so frequently the ranks belonging to the pillars of the state and overseers of the dynasty? ¹⁷⁵

The Muslim officer considers this question “inappropriate” since it impinges on the business of the sultan but nonetheless answers by saying that the other states heed status and descent in their appointments and they inherit their posts whereas Ottomans only look for merit and capacity of the person and since there are many men of merit and very few available positions, this calls for frequent removals and reappointments.¹⁷⁶ As long as the principle of merit is observed, the damage done by frequent transfers can be countered he concludes. The rhetorical motivation behind such an off-topic deviation in a treatise on military reform presented to the sultan is obvious. Grand vizier sees the frequent changes in official ranks a significant cause of disruption on par with the disorganized military regiments and probably considers them causally linked, yet cannot challenge the sultan on a topic directly at his discretion and hence suffices with emphasizing the necessity of principle of merit, at the same time implying that it would be better if government officers served longer terms.

The preoccupation with appointment procedures becomes a recurrent topic in later Ottoman political writing during the New Order debates, early Tanzimat and even Young Ottomans (See Ch. 2, 3 and 4). While the complaints seems to resonate with the early decline literatures complaints about intrusion of subjects into servant class, the way disruption is conceptualized and causally explained is quite different. Whereas in the former the problem is the disruption of circular logic of the social organization and blurring of boundaries, in the latter the problem is bureaucratic and military efficiency which is judged within its own logic and in comparison to other

¹⁷⁵ Es'ad Efendi, 590-91.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 591-92.

states in existence. The focus of bureaucratic political writing narrows down gradually after Katip Çelebi. Abou-el-Hajj argues that in the second half of the 17th century Ottoman elite seems to have surrendered to the new social logic. While this is an argument to be made by political historians, I argue that the evidence from the literature, changing concept of order and different causal explanations for decline support this observation. In any case, Ottoman political decision makers rarely heeded the conservative and reactionary suggestions of the decline authors except in attempting to restore more political power to central authors.¹⁷⁷ To give a basic example, timar system, one of the pillars of the ancient law, continued to wane and was gradually replaced with tax farming and tax farming was gradually expanded into longer tenures up to a lifetime possession of tax collection rights. Decision makers mostly chose to adapt to the changing conditions and innovate. Ottoman political writing also changed its subject matter accordingly and we could even say that there is not a necessary connection between the early complaints of dissolution of order and later narrative of decline.

1.6 Alternative Concepts of Decline in the Eighteenth Century

As demonstrated before, the bureaucratic concepts of order and decline were by no means the only available concepts among the Ottomans for making sense of the transformation and movement of the society and the state in time and history. For instance, an awareness of decline is observed in popular language as well, albeit expressed in economic and understandably less abstract terms. In eighteenth-century court registers we come across frequent phrases referring to “times of welfare” (*zamân-ı mağmûriyet*) that withered away with the passage of time (*mürûr-ı zaman ve inkılâb-ı eyyâm ile*). This popular concept of decline has two major dimensions: dwindling of wealth and transformation of rural space. The complaints are cited usually in the context of court trials regarding taxation and they frequently refer to disappearance of villages because of poverty and immigration. The peasant’s narrative of decline was, hence, tied to taxation and the rural geography of the

¹⁷⁷ Cemal Kafadar, “Osmanlı Siyasal Düşüncesinin Kaynakları Üzerine Gözlemler,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 1: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet’in Birikimi*, Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil eds. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2009), 23-29.

empire. Though this popular narrative found representation in courtly chronicles and bureaucratic reports, it was always translated into the concern for order, the space of an abstract set of social and political relations.

In a particularly interesting passage from Naima's history which has attracted a lot scholarly attention, we catch a glimpse of the radical political views in the Empire, particularly of Janissaries. Following the 1703 revolt, which deposed Mustafa III, one Janissary ring leader by the name of Çalık Ahmed seems to have entertained a radical regime change:

This dimwit governed the business of the community with his own judgment and he was plotting to turn the Ottoman state, which, for four hundred years preserved order with independent rulers [*istiklâl-i mülûk*], into a republican society [*cumhur cem'iyeti*] and a communal government [*tecemmu' devleti*] following the fashion of Algerians and Tunisians.¹⁷⁸

Although it is difficult to make out what the whole plan was about, it is clear that at least some Janissaries had no more respect or reliance on the Ottoman dynasty and the monarchical model and evidently they were considering some form of regime change to initiate janissary rule. Again, it is difficult to make out how far reaching such radical ideas were, yet their mere existence demonstrates what variety of concepts and ideas Ottoman bureaucrats were face to face with.¹⁷⁹

Demonstrating the continuity of the Sunna-minded trend we could note a particularly interesting work from the 1740s written by Fazlîzâde Ali, a resident of Istanbul with no obvious ties with the bureaucracy. Fazlîzade writes about the moral corruption in society and his fears of the impending apocalypse.¹⁸⁰ His complaints from Ottoman society cover a wide range of issues some of which are the corruption of the

¹⁷⁸ See Naîmâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'îmâ Vol. 4*, 1877. See also Sariyannis, "Ruler and State", 102-103; and Tezcan, *the Second Ottoman Empire*, 223-24.

¹⁷⁹ For a comprehensive overview of various challenges to Ottoman dynasty particularly by Janissaries see Feridun Emecen, "Osmanlı Hanedanına Alternatif Arayışlar Üzerine Bazı Örnekler ve Mülâhazalar," *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6 (2001): 63-76.

¹⁸⁰ Not much is known about the author of this work whose only copy is in Berlin, save what can be inferred from the 364 folios. The author of the monograph on the manuscript, Marlene Kurz, concludes that Fazlîzade Ali was neither a bureaucrat nor a member of the ulema, but probably a member of the Naqshibandiyya order with a quite Orthodox view of Islam. Marlene Kurz, *Ways to Heaven, Gates to Hell: Fazlîzade Ali's Struggle with the Diversity of Ottoman Islam* (Berlin: EB Verlag, 2011), 22-24.

ulema¹⁸¹, increasing freedom of women and immoral sexual behavior of the people ranging from lesbianism to sodomy¹⁸², growing influence of the non-Muslims in state and society and Muslims resembling non-Muslims in their attire and behavior¹⁸³, bribery, nepotism, greed, corruption of the janissary corps with buying and selling ranks freely¹⁸⁴, too much interest in philosophy and other sciences which amounts to intervening in God's affairs, and widespread heretical beliefs and practices in general. While some of Fazlızade's complaints converge with that of the bureaucrats (nepotism, bribery, corruption of janissaries etc.), his position is rather an orthodox pietist reaction to what he sees as the "utter moral decadence" and interprets as a sign of *âhir zaman*, the end of times before the apocalypse.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, whereas he seems to have some kind of familiarity with the bureaucratic discourse as understood from his pointing to 1000 AH for the beginning of corruption of the ulema¹⁸⁶, his main reference point for moral corruption and societal degeneration is not the golden age of Ottoman state in the mid sixteenth century but the age of the prophet and his companions ('*asr-ı sa'âdet*)¹⁸⁷, a characteristic of later modern Muslim revivalist movements. As such he sees the chance of redemption and revival in strict emulation of the life of the Prophet and his companions and not in returning to the practices and regulations of the ancients.

One final alternative conceptualization of social order and politics can be observed in the introduction of the Şemdanizade Süleyman Efendi's chronicle from 1770s.¹⁸⁸ His

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 51-52,107.

¹⁸² Ibid, 38-39.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 32-34.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 47-48.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 25.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 107, "... 'ulemâ dedüğün bin târihinden berü firaq-i zaile suyuna gitmişdür..."

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 9-10, 253-54.

¹⁸⁸ Şemdanizâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Mûri't-Tevârih*, ed. Ahmed Tevhîd (Istanbul: Maarif Nezareti, 1338 [1919/1920]). In one of the final examples of the works on universal history Şemdanizade chronicles the events roughly between 1735 and 1770 and claims that he intends to complement *Takîmü't-Tevârih* of Katip Çelebi which brings the history until 1655 and Emir Buhari's addendum which brings the work until 1733 and was published by Basmacı Ibrahim Efendi (Müteferrika). Not much is known about Şemdanizade save that he was the judge of Fayyum in Egypt and he was deeply interested in history and read 400 books to write his chronicle. Babinger celebrates him as a good historian and one of the last authors to produce universal history in Ottoman literature. The chronicle was published as a critical edition by Münir Aktepe who did not include the introduction and the commentary on Katip Çelebi's *Takvîmü't-Tevârih* in the edition. See Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Mûri't-Tevârih (3 Vol)*, ed. Münir Aktepe (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1976-78).

use of the concepts of politics and order are almost the opposite of the early 17th century bureaucratic authors. After mentioning history as a very beneficial science which informs the sultans and viziers about the art of war and protecting the domains, he compares political action to the game of chess to emphasize the necessity of the use of reason and discards the idea that it has anything to do with one's religion.¹⁸⁹ And as an example he suggests Nadir Shah of Iran (d. 1747) who, he says, rose from being a common subject to sultanate by simply using his cunning, strategy and politics (*siyâset*).¹⁹⁰ Thus politics emerges as not as an exercise of power exclusive to the sultan, but as ploy and strategy which grants one power to rule. Şemdânizâde does not see any problem with a commoner rising to height of power, something which would give Mustafa Ali nausea. What is more, further in the text he compares Ottomans with other states and says:

As we learn from history, since the government ranks of other states are like *ocaklık* [heritable property], it is not possible with them to give a man high status in a sudden. But the House of Osman, with their grace and blessing, can make a lowly man famous or ruler of Egypt and raise his power to the level of Keyvan or caliph of Bağdad.¹⁹¹

Thus he actually celebrates quick social mobility as something that distinguishes Ottomans from other states in a favorable way. While he also cites the doctrine of four estates before in the text, he has no concern for keeping everyone in their place or in proportion. Society has different roles but one can switch and rise through them. While his comparison of Ottoman appointment system with other states immediately reminds us the imaginary conversation presented to Ahmed III, Şemdânizade does not seem to have any agenda of making a point about bureaucratic efficiency; he simply celebrates the Ottoman way as he sees it.

¹⁸⁹ Şemdânizâde, 6, “*Ama bir merd-i sâhib-i tedbîr bir fikr-i isâbet-pezîr ile iklim zabt idüp bî-pâyân leşkari perişân nice kişver-i âbâdânı virân ider. Bu hâlet la‘b-ı şatrencden nümâyândır. Bir Müslim ile bir kâfir mülâ‘abe-i şatrenc iddikde kangisi ziyâde tedbîr ider ise dâimâ gâlib olur ve hasmı gâlib olsa dahî bir mensûbe ile ma‘lûb ider.*”

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 7, “*Karibü’l-‘ahdde üç yüz senelik Safevîyye devletinin ‘ukalâsı pespâyede kalmağla devletleri munkarız oldukdan sonra ra‘iyyeden Nâdir ‘Ali zuhûr ve tedbîr ve kiyâset ve siyâset ile riyâsete gelüb Nâdir Şah oldu...*”

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 7-8, “*Tevârihten istinbât olunan düvel-i sâirenin taht-ı tasarrufunda olan menâsıb ocaklık misillü olmağın, def‘aten bir âdemi zîşân itmek mümkün değildir. Ammâ selâtin-i Âl-i Osmân ‘[d]a olan mevhibe-i kübrâ ve ‘atiyye-i ‘uzmâ ile bir ednâyı ednâ işâretle zîşân ve a‘lâ hân ve Mısır’a sultân ve kadrini hem rütbe-i Keyvân ve halife-i Bağdâd sâhib-i ‘ünvân ider.*”

1.7 Conclusion

From the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth we observe the emergence of a concern for dissolution of order in bureaucratic letters, which draw on classical works on ethics and politics. This concern manifests itself as a conservative reaction to the crisis of Ottoman administration due to drastic social and economic change. By referring to a vague “ancient law,” these authors defend their claims for preservation of the boundaries separating the ruling class and the ruled thus preventing the intrusion of commoners into government service. Tracing the inception of dissolution back to the era of Sultan Suleiman, they advocate reform as a swift return to the earlier policies.

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, this very particular bureaucratic concern for dissolution of social boundaries is replaced, in Katip Çelebi’s writings by a more general theory and narrative of decline which incorporates organistic conceptions of the body politic and Ibn Khaldun’s dynastic cyclicism. The concept of social order which was associated with stratification gradually disappears and social mobility is accepted. However, that the Ottoman Empire is in the stage of stasis approaching its decline is accepted. Yet, possibility of reform is still seen in the emergence of a leader who will uphold justice.

To conclude, in a span of a century we see Ottoman bureaucrats engaging with different sources available to them in order to conceptualize and react to the transformation they perceive in the Ottoman society.

However, bureaucratic concepts of order and decline are not shared by all segments of Ottoman society; we also observe competing approaches which stress degeneration of morals and economic breakdown in society at large by drawing on more Orthodox interpretations of Sharia and Islamic law or Sufi tradition as opposed to more philosophical interpretations upheld by the bureaucrats.

As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, during the late eighteenth century we will observe Ottoman bureaucrats continuing to draw on Ibn Khaldun and accounts of decline in the sixteenth century, while also incorporating the complaints of moral degeneration which are based on more orthodox interpretations of Islam.

CHAPTER II

TECDÎD: RENEWAL OF ORDER

This chapter follows the previous chapter by showing how the narrative of decline eventually leads to the emergence of a comprehensive concept of renewal (*tecdîd*) which replaces the seventeenth and early eighteenth century word for reform, *islâh*. I deal with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century reform debated within the Ottoman bureaucracy in the context of the programme of New Order (*nizâm-ı cedîd*) which was devised in response to the existential crisis of the Empire primarily due to the Russian threat. Under the concept of renewal, I discuss the incorporation of the previous accounts of decline, the concept of “symmetric retaliation”¹⁹² (*mukābele-i bi'l-misl*) which presents emulation of Europe as a way to restore Empire’s former grandeur, employment of Khaldunian cyclicism and particularly his nomadism (*bedeviyet*) and urbanism (*hadâriyet*) binary to explain Ottoman decline. The literature mainly takes the references to past and the concept of restoration as little more than simple rhetoric, emphasizing instead the “innovative” aspects of the reform project. In response, I demonstrate that the concept of renewal, which encompasses political restoration and religio-moral revival, actually addresses significant concerns of a traditional society and New Order debates reveal a persistent debate over tradition and limits of innovation. In this usage the concept of renewal draws on classical Islamic doctrine of periodic (centennial) religious and moral revival and the historical logic driving religious reform can be observed in the bureaucratic concept of restoration as well. Parallel to these debates, I demonstrate

¹⁹² *Mukābele-i bi'l-misl* basically means countering the enemy using the tools and strategies of the enemy, thus emulating them in war. The phrase has been translated in different ways including “retaliation in kind” and “competitive emulation”; whereas I translate it as “symmetric retaliation” throughout the text following Gültekin Yıldız’s advice.

the gradual replacement of the vocabulary of the philosophical tradition with a moral vocabulary which is associated with Sharia.

2.1 The Context and the Problem of Conceptualizing Reform

Ottoman bureaucrats in the second half of the eighteenth century inherit the sense of decline and the quest for a way out of the impending collapse of the Empire we encounter in Ibn Khaldunist accounts of Ottoman scribes. The Empire faced serious problems in administration, economy and military efficiency, most of which were inherited from the seventeenth century transformation and imperial policies.

Taxation and revenue raising was a ubiquitous problem.¹⁹³ There was increasing pressure for military reform yet the extensive financial crisis made it increasingly difficult to pay salaries which made facing janissaries who were suspicious of even the mild changes in status quo, even more difficult.¹⁹⁴ The expansion of tax-farming to life-long terms and the weakness of imperial control over the provinces had gradually lead to the emergence of *ayans*, a class of provincial notables. Ayans were local individual power holders and sometimes families who had amassed financial fortunes and military power and oversaw the administration of certain provinces with the partial consent of the local population and also the official nod of the palace, usually following a process of negotiation.¹⁹⁵ Hence, the imperial centre had to negotiate with a wide range of social and political actors in order to initiate any kind of reform process. This administrative difficulty itself must have contributed to the sense of hopelessness which was frequently vocalized by the bureaucrats and the palace. One other significant change in Ottoman administration was the gradual rise of the scribal class, that is *kalemiyye*; the significant rise in the complexity of administration and the amount of documentation needed for that and also due to the

¹⁹³ For eighteenth century financial problems see Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi: XVII. Yy'dan Tanzimat'a Mali Tarih* (Istanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1986), 27–88; and Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi* (Istanbul: YKY, 2013).

¹⁹⁴ For Janissary opposition to New Order and its financial basis see Kadir Üstün, “The New Order and Its Enemies: Opposition to Military Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1789 – 1807” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 61–117.

¹⁹⁵ For the most up-to-date study of the emergence of provincial notables and their gradual rise to becoming “partners of the empire” see Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016), 65–117.

rise in the volume of diplomatic correspondence with Europe had promoted the scribal class to prominence.¹⁹⁶

A poetical conversation which took place between Mustafa III (1757-1774) and his circle of advisors in 1760 is an excellent example of differing attitudes towards Empire's fate.¹⁹⁷ First Mustafa III starts:

The world is crumbling, think not, with us, it will be set aright,
Wretched fate turned the state all over to the petty,
Now the men of rank about us are all cowards
Our fate resides with the compassion of the Eternal one

Grand Vizier Ragıp Paşa replies:

Many have thrust their desires onto this world restless,
Yet, fortune's wheel is congruent with the eternal concert.
Think not, O my heart, that cowards find a moment's rest,
The Creator ordained a petty world to the petty

The Grand Mufti Çelebizade İsmail Asım Efendi takes up:

Truly the affairs of the world are in the hands of the lowly,
Nor can the order be restored by true reason.
The leaf and the fruit, all pillaged by the cowardly
May the spring of Şariat imbue the garden of State

Finally, Râsih Enderûnî, the Sufi Sheikh concludes:

If one's gaze turns to God's eternal judgment

¹⁹⁶ See Virginia Aksan, "Ottoman Political Writing 1768-1808," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993), 57; Norman Itzkowitz, "Eighteenth Century Ottoman Realities," *Studia Islamica* 16 (1962): 73-94.

¹⁹⁷ This particular conversation is cited in translation by both Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 55; and M. Sükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 6. The translation here belongs to me. For the original text see Tayyazade Ahmet Atâ, *Tarih-i At'nın Eş'ar Faslına Dair Olan Dördüncü Cildir*, (İstanbul, 1293 [1876]): 67. There is no explanation in the source regarding the immediate context or actual form of the conversation. Considering that Çelebizade Asım was Grand Müfti for a duration of eight months before his death in 1760 it certainly took place sometime around 1759-60.

Indeed, his perception will falter to no avail
There is no point in objection and protest
For His tent is built on eternal principles
What is required is modesty and resignation, O my soul
No other remedy to the providence of the Eternal

The correspondence is suggestive and revealing on many levels, displaying a variety of attitudes towards the problem of imperial decline. Mustafa III, who was known for his reverence to astrology, soothsaying and prophecies, complains in despair about petty and unworthy people crowding the state apparatus and invokes divine providence as the sole means of salvation. He reminds us of the decline literature of the seventeenth century in complaining about the loss of political power to persons without merit or desert. The grand mufti on the other hand warns that the use of reason will not help restore the order and suggests adherence to the religious law, Sharia. As the head of the religious institution he is trying to delimit the political reason with tradition of which the ulema were the guardians.¹⁹⁸ The Sufi sheikh proposes total resignation in the face of God's impenetrable plan. In an almost fatalistic mood, he sees no use in protest or political action. Only Grand Vizier Ragıp Paşa shows some optimism by referring to the examples of the past and implying that time will come when the tables will be turned, hence invoking the concept of political cycles.

The problem of facing the possible fate of the empire and whether utter collapse could be avoided was closely related to the problem of "theodicy" namely the question of why Muslims, who were supposed to have God's providence, were defeated.¹⁹⁹ Ethan Menchinger highlights the proliferation of theological treatises on free will and predestination at the time and the centrality of the problem of causality

¹⁹⁸ The relationship between reason (*akl*) and tradition (*nakl*) is always riddled with tensions though not always political. For the political aspect of the tension between rational sciences and tradition see Baki Tezcan, "Some Thoughts on the Politics of Early Modern Ottoman Science" in *Beyond Dominant Paradigms in Ottoman and Middle Eastern/North African Studies: A Tribute to Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj*, ed. Donald Quataert and Baki Tezcan (Istanbul: ISAM, 2010): 135-56. See also Kurz, *Ways to Heaven*, 176-247 on the eighteenth century attitudes toward science and reason.

¹⁹⁹ Menchinger, "An Ottoman Historian in an Age of Reform: Ahmed Vasif Efendi (ca. 173-1806)" (PhD Diss., University of Michigan, 2014), 68, 69-70, 73; also see his "A Reformist Philosophy of History: The Case of Ahmed Vâsif Efendi," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 44 (2014): 141-168.

in political-historical writing as well.²⁰⁰ The reformist cadre of bureaucrats, hence, were looking for ways to revert the process of decline and collapse, which led to successive military and fiscal reform attempts during the reigns of Mustafa III and Abdulhamid I, particularly during the grand vizierate of Ragıp Paşa. What particularly motivated the reform movement was the successive crushing defeats against Russian forces beginning with the 1768-1774 campaign which ended with the loss of Crimea, the first predominantly Muslim territory to be lost. As such reform attempts had predominantly military character, with financial regulations following in order to fund the campaigns.

Commenters on the political language of the period are mostly in agreement regarding the changes in political ideology and sources of justification. Drawing mainly on her work on Ahmed Resmi, Virginia Aksan observes that the sources reflect a fierce debate between “conservative and modernist forces”, rationalization of war, the gradual weakening of the ideology of ever-victorious frontier, disappearance of the classical “circle of equity” model and the demise of the image of the just sultan as the centre of politics to be replaced by a concept of obedience to the state and religion (*din ü devlet*).²⁰¹ Following Aksan, Kemal Beydilli also observes a break from traditional tropes and concepts and a move towards rationalization.²⁰² Noting that the New Order project is framed as an attempt to reacquire the grandeur of the Empire as it was during the reign of Suleiman which is expressed even by Selim III himself, Beydilli brushes this aside as no more than a spiritual reference point to motivate the reform process.²⁰³ According to Beydilli, although concerns of accordance of innovations to shari’a and reverence to tradition find their way even into the Tanzimat Edict, these are no more than lip services or habitual expressions used to improve morale.²⁰⁴ He also evaluates the religiously framed criticism against the New Order programme as a possible consequence of

²⁰⁰ Ethan Menchinger, “Free Will, Predestination and the Fate of the Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of History of Ideas* 77:3 (2016): 445-466.

²⁰¹ Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing”, 57, 63-64, and Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi 1700-1783* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 194-199.

²⁰² Kemal Beydilli, “Küçük Kaynarca’dan Tanzimat’a İslahat Düşüncesi,” *İlmi Araştırmalar* 8 (1999), 28-30.

²⁰³ Ibid, 30.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 59-60.

miscommunication due to the failure of the reformers to properly express their intentions to the broader public thus disregarding the inherently polemical nature of political debates.²⁰⁵

This kind of explanation however implies a static concept of tradition in two ways: the historian considers Ottoman-Islamic tradition as a static one and also attributes such conception on the actors under scrutiny, ignoring the different ways tradition can be framed by them. Arguments for rationalization rely on a particular concept of modern rationality and inevitably imply that in the former eras Ottoman bureaucracy was not that rational. And in an effort to reconcile the traditional language with the explanatory paradigms of Westernization and secularization, the reformist camp is imagined to have an alternative project –and a corresponding alternative vocabulary– which is then veiled behind and legitimized via an ancient vocabulary which glorifies the past.

Recently, Ethan Menchinger, through his comprehensive analysis of the works of official chronicler Ahmed Vasıf (d. 1806), has argued against scholars who claim the dissolution of classical social and political concepts and tropes such as the “world order” and the “four estates” and the “circle of justice,” Ottoman world view still rested on indigenous metaphysics and concepts albeit with a context-dependent content.²⁰⁶ Marinos Sariyannis, on the other hand, classified the authors of the period into two camps: “Westernizers” and “traditionalists” while recognizing that the gap between the two were probably narrower than previously argued.²⁰⁷

I argue that New Order debates reveal a debate over what constitutes the Ottoman-Islamic tradition, with different authors taking different positions within a continuum. The proposal of imitating the European military technologies and restructure the military creates a tension between the reformist camp and the janissary alliance who perceive it as a threat to the status quo. This and the fact that novelty and innovation (*bid‘a* or *ihdâs*) had to be negotiated and justified in a traditionalist political culture like the Ottoman one makes not only the importation of

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 37-38.

²⁰⁶ Menchinger, “An Ottoman Historian”, 214-22.

²⁰⁷ Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 176.

European technologies but also every reformist attempt by the palace a conceptual problem, which was not a problem exclusive to the late eighteenth century. The distinction between what is *kadîm* (ancient, established) and what is *hâdis* or *bid'a* (innovation or invention in a derogatory sense) was a core element of Ottoman-Islamic legal and political tradition.²⁰⁸ The concept of renewal (*tecdîd*) addresses exactly this tension and problem. The word renewal invokes the concept of periodical reform in Islamic tradition, which postulates gradual degeneration and dissolution over time due to human error and foresees the necessity of renewal and regeneration of the tradition through human agency.

Several other scholars have picked upon the apparent binary between the ancient (*kadîm*) and the new (*cedîd*) and concluded the New Order to be a replacement of the ancient order and concepts with novel ones, a significant diversion from the ancient practices.²⁰⁹ Yet, such a conclusion ignores the fluidity of tradition and what was considered an ancient practice and what was considered innovation and that these concepts were always subject to negotiation. Ottoman economic, political and military practices had significantly changed several times from the fifteenth century onwards, each stage involving similar conservative reactions by different camps involved. An ancient practice could sometimes be something invented, as in the case of the invention of ancient law (*kânûn-ı kadîm*) by the early seventeenth century bureaucrats (see Ch. 1) and sometimes it could refer simply to practices that had been in effect for a decade or two at most. The accusations of wrongful innovation (*bid'a* or *ihdâs*) by the opponents of the New Order was as conjectural as that of the reformists for renewal and the debate between them should be taken for what it is: an attempt to win the rhetorical battle, by successfully framing “true” meaning of Islam and the “exact” boundaries of the tradition. Yet, rhetoric and semantics cannot be separated; in the process of debates, what is ancient (*kadîm*) is redefined, with a

²⁰⁸ Marinos Sariyannis, “Kadim ve Hadis” (Unpublished paper presented at the Ottoman Key Concepts Workshop, Oslo University, Oslo, August 24-26, 2016).

²⁰⁹ See Ahmet Kolbaşı, “XIX. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Yenileşmesi ve Değişimi Üzerine Kavramsal Bir Yaklaşım,” in *Tarih Boyunca Yenileşme Hareketleri*, ed. Mehmet Ali Beyhan (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2014), Mehmet Öz, “Kânûn-ı Kadîm: Osmanlı Gelenekçi Söyleminin Dayanağı mı, Islahat Girişimlerinin Meşrulaştırma Aracı mı?” in *Nizâm-ı Kadîmden Nizâm-ı Cedîd-e III. Selim ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (İstanbul: ISAM, 2010): 59-79. Even the title of this edited volume plays on the apparent conflict between old and new.

novel interpretation of Empire's decline and a new moral discourse emerges. *Kadim* does not refer to past as it was; it refers to how it is remembered.

As such, throughout the chapter, first I discuss the emergence of the argument against war-making in the writings of Ahmed Resmi and early concept of renewal in Canikli Ali Paşa. Then, I discuss the various meanings attached to the concept of renewal such as restoration of political power to the centre, rejuvenation and reinvigoration of the political community, moral revival and religious reform mainly over the memoranda written to layout the program of the New Order project and later on to defend it against the opposition. I conclude with the observation that while the vocabulary of the philosophical tradition gradually withers from the political vocabulary of the Ottoman bureaucrats, it is replaced by a moral-economic vocabulary which draws on Sharia as well as Ibn Khaldun's work.

2.2 War vs. Peace and Early Calls for Reform and Renewal

The vulnerability empire due to economic crisis and military weakness becomes even more prevalent and critical with the disastrous Ottoman defeat in the Russian campaign of 1768-1774, which ended with loss of Crimea, the first predominantly Muslim territory to be lost. Facing the inability of Ottoman army to counter Russian troops in battle despite superior numbers, motivates a new wave of political writing in an attempt to come to terms with the defeat and question the general direction of Ottoman politics.²¹⁰ For instance Ahmed Resmi Efendi, who was a high-level scribe participating in the campaign, which also caused his fall from favor, attacks the members of religious institution and the sycophants who push an agenda of war against Russia with bitter and at times mocking remarks:

They say "A rolling stone gathers no moss; these realms have been conquered by the word. The Sultan of Islam has a good fortune, able men and a sharp sword. It should be possible to reach the Red Apple once we have a religious and valiant vizier with the cunning of Aristo, and twelve thousand select soldiers who pray five times a day," and hence they expose their ignorance. Like the minstrels who read from mythological tales on top of a chair, they

²¹⁰ For a detailed summary of the campaign see Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman*. For a survey of Ottoman campaigns and crisis of military organization in the eighteenth century see Virginia Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow: Routledge, 2007).

think the Red Apple is actually a red apple to be plucked from Moldavian orchards.²¹¹

Echoing Süleyman Efendi who suggests the analogy of chess and victory goes to the better prepared be it Muslim or non-Muslim (see Ch. 1) he challenges the absurd expectations of the warmongers by implying that they learn from mythological stories instead of history. And echoing Naima who defended the Karlowitz peace (see Ch. 1) for the breathing space it provides and he argues that the order of the world rests on the principle of defence and any wise man who reads history would choose peace over war, thus providing comfort and security to his subjects.²¹²

Invoking the classical concept of the order of the world (*nizâm-ı alem*) and referring to the example of history he advocates peace. It is obvious that, having experienced the dismal state of the army and field command during the campaign, Resmi is trying to curb down the irrational zeal for war-making –represented by the ulema- promote peace and push an agenda of domestic reform.

What is particularly striking is that in his defense of peace through history he goes so far as to reinterpret the most “glorious” examples of Ottoman campaigns as anomalies in the pattern of history. In explaining the unusual success of Russians under Catherine the Great, he writes:

This kind of rare great occurrences are exceptions to the nature of time and come about once in every two, three hundred years and like Sultan Suleiman’s campaign to Yemen and conquest of Egypt by Selim the First ... this kind of occurrences happen rarely like great floods and great storms they call hurricanes. They cannot last. Consequently, Russians see such provision once in forty years and they have turned the fortune to their favor, yet they cannot become ever victorious.²¹³

²¹¹ Ahmed Resmi, *Hülasat*, 91. “‘Hareket olmayınca berekat olmaz. Bu memleketler seyifle alınmıştır. Pâdişâh-ı Islâm’ın bahtı ‘âli, ricâli pişkindir, kılıcı keskindir. Dünyâda dîndâr bahâdir vezîr-i Aristo-tedbîr ve beş vakıtı cemâ’atla kılar on iki bin güzide ‘asker tedârik itdikden sonra Kızıl Elma’ya dek gitmeğe ne mimmet vardır’ diyü temturak elfâzla cehlîni i ‘tirâf ve sandalye üzerinde Hamzanâme nakl iden pehlivanlar gibi lâf ü güzâf idüb Kızıl Elma’yı Boğdan’dan gelen al yanak elması gibi yenür şey zann ider.” See also Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman*, 162-63.

²¹² Ibid, 91, “‘nizâm-ı âlemin esâsı müdâfa’a üzerine konmuş. Ve dünyâ mülkinin ma ‘mûr ve müstahkem olması iktizâ-yı hâle göre düşmanlar ile sulh ve masâfât musâlihine mevkûf olmak kaziyesine tahsîl-i vukûf idegelmiş ‘akl ve tecrübe sâhibleri bu kâ ‘ide-i hikemîye ile ‘amel iderek her vaktıda gavgamın ‘ilâsı olmadığın fehm idüb daimâ sulhı cenk üzerine tercih ile hidmetkâr oldıkları devlet ve ‘ibadullaha râhat ve emniyet başışlayagelmüşlerdir.”

²¹³ Ahmed Resmi Efendi, *Hülâsatü’l-İtibâr: A Summary of Admonitions*, Ethan L. Menchinger ed. and trans. (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011), 137. “Bu makûle nâdire hâdise-i kübradır ki tabî’at-ı dehrden hâric

Resmi attributes regularity to the “nature of time” which he, then, contrasts with Russian victory, an exception. Even more striking is the fact that he considers the famous campaigns of glorious sultan’s of the past also among such rarities.

Resmî obviously inherits the cyclical account of history we observe in Naima and Ibn Khaldun.²¹⁴ He even locates Ottoman Empire in the age of decline (*sinn-i inhitât*).²¹⁵ History has patterns and regularities and one has to be informed about it instead of the mythical stories. He recounts the turmoil in Iran from the early seventeenth century on and Poland as well. Thus, instead of waging war irresponsibly, a wise ruler has to focus on improving the domestic order and prosperity.²¹⁶ Resmi’s account of history is not a deterministic one; it just provides one with the causes and consequences. It also recognizes a general transformation world order beyond the Ottoman realms; again using his experience with historical writing Resmi notes that since the last decades of the Hijri millennium (950 AH) there is an observable lack, all over the world, of new dynasties emerging which he attributes to a decline in state power.²¹⁷

From Naima to Ragıp Paşa, Şemdanizade and Ahmed Resmi we see the continuity of a pragmatic approach to war making which grows as a political argument against certain factions within Istanbul who advocate a crude idea of *cihad* and conquest, the

olmağla iki üçyüz senede bir kez zuhûr idüb cennetmekân Sultan Süleyman Hân’ın Yemen diyarına seferleri ve Sultân Selim-i Evvel merhûmun iklim-i Mısır’ı fetihleri gibi ... elhâsıl bu makûle zuhûrât-ı garîbe seyl suyu gibi ve tûfân dedikleri büyük fırtınalar misillü nâdiren gelür geçer. Müstemmir olmaz. Binâen’aleyh Moskovlu bu tedârüğü kırk yılda bir kere gördükleri sûrette rûzgârı kendulara uydırub herhâlde gâlib ve her mahalde emniyeti sâlib olamaz.” Menchinger also provides a translation, yet the following more literal translation is mine.

²¹⁴ Virginia Aksan argues for direct influence of Ibn Khaldun whereas Ethan Menchinger considers it a possibility considering the lack of any direct evidence. See Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman*, 161, 195-98, and Ahmed Resmi, *Hülasat*, 23-24.

²¹⁵ İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, “Bir Türk Diplomatının Onsekizinci Yüzl Sonunda Devletler Arası İlişkilere Dair Görüşleri” *Belleten* 47 (1983): 527-535. The article includes a facsimile of Resmi’s memorandum to Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa.

²¹⁶ See also Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing”, 57-59.

²¹⁷ Ahmed Resmi, *Sefaretnâme-i Ahmed Resmi: Prusya Kralı Büyük Frederik nezdine sefaretle giden Giridi Ahmed Resmi Efendi’nin Takriridir* (Konstantiniyye, 1303[1885]): 39. “Dokuz yüz elli hududundan sonra bi hikmetullahi teâlâ dünyânın kuvvâsına rehâvet ve harm ârız olub devlet-i müsteccede-i müstemirre-i mümehhidi bir sahib-i zuhûr intâcında izhâr futûr....”

ideology of “ever-victorious frontier”.²¹⁸ Resmi’s account would by no means remain an idiosyncratic perspective. As Menchinger demonstrates, Resmi’s work would later be incorporated into the official history of the Empire through the prominent late eighteenth century chronicler Ahmed Vasıf who, himself, would be a quite vocal proponent of the New Order.²¹⁹ These scribal authors denounced the ignorant crusader mentality based on mythical tales and promote a rational reading of recent Ottoman history as the primary evidence for the need for military and administrative reform. Virginia Aksan emphasizes the classical scribal education Ahmed Resmi receives and his familiarity with the classical sources²²⁰ which also shows once again that this kind of historical consciousness was limited to a certain habitus, a limited number of people who were actively engaged in the affairs of the state. They came to promote a concept order which emphasized domestic stability, prosperity and administrative efficiency. However, this should not translate into an adoption of a categorical rejection of war making by the bureaucratic reformers and gaining of “reform” as an official ideology; the concept of holy war against the infidel retained its rhetorical power well into the nineteenth century. As I will demonstrate further (see Ch. 4) argument for peace and domestic reform had to be made anew in each era.

A few years later after the Russian defeat, in 1777, we see another case for reform with Canikli Ali Paşa who proposed “New Measures” (*tedbîr-i cedîd*) which would reverse the process of decline of order.²²¹ Ali Paşa fiercely criticizes the previous Sultan, Mustafa III, for indulging the astrologers, soothsayers and prophecies in decisions regarding the matters of the state.²²² Instead, he reflects on the state of affairs and suggests the possibility of restoration:

²¹⁸ Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing”, 63; and Beydilli, “Küçük Kaynarca’dan Tanzimat’a Islahat Düşüncesi”, 28.

²¹⁹ See Resmi, *Hülasat*, 25, and also Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing”, 58.

²²⁰ Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman*, 5, 10-12.

²²¹ Virginia H. Aksan, “Canikli Ali Paşa (d. 1785): A Provincial Portrait in Loyalty and Disloyalty” in *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi*, eds. Eleni Gara, Erdem Kabadayı and Christoph Neumann (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 211-224.

²²² Yücel Özkaya, “Canikli Ali Paşa’nın Risalesi: Tedabirü’l-Gazavat,” *DTCF Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 12 (1972), 158.

... by observing the character of the world and reflecting on the conditions, worrying restless day and night about a new regime regarding the order of the state and organization of the military, thus, this short piece has been written to question whether order and reorganization is possible or not.²²³

Canikli does two things here. First he openly discusses restoration of order as a possibility thus disclosing his suspicion that it may eventually not happen and the Empire may actually collapse. He also betrays the tension between Divine Judgment and a rational account of decline as he writes later on: “though this ruinous state came as a judgment of God, it is caused by one, two, three things.”

Second he refers to a “New Measures” (*tedâbîr-i cedîd*), a new set of policies, thus replacing the word reform (*islâh*) with a broader project. References to a “New Order” (*nizâm-ı cedîd*) can be seen in previous contexts in Ottoman political literature: Niyazi Berkes attributes the first usage of this concept to Ibrahim Müteferrika’s 1732 treatise on military reform *Usûlü-l-hikem fî nizâmî ’l-ümem*²²⁴, Kemal Beydilli briefly notes that it has been used to refer to Köprülü Fazıl Mustafa Paşa’s extensive tax reform project circa 1690.²²⁵ However, in the context of late eighteenth century reform Canikli is the first person to use the concept in writing as far as I could locate. The use of the word new immediately brings to mind a break with the past, the traditional and the old. However, Canikli does not define the “new” or contrast it openly with something else, for instance with the established or the ancient (*kadîm*). On the contrary the set of measures he suggests boils down to a return to strong personal rule by the sultan and restoration of hierarchical order to the state. He frequently refers to the examples of Sultan Suleiman, Murad IV and the Köprülü Mehmed Paşa all of whom he praises for the strong personalistic rule they

²²³ Ibid, 173, “...alemin keyfiyetine nazar ve hallerini mülâhaza eyleyüb ayâ bu alemin nizâmı ve râbitâsı mümkünmüdür? Yohusa değil midir? deyu fkr ve endişe iderek gice ve gündüz hâb ve rahâtı terk ve nizâm-ı devlet ve râbita-ı asker zımnında tedbîr-i cedîde şürû’ olunub vüsum mertebe ve zihnim irişdiği kadar bu kadarca bir ramak şey tahrîr olundu, bu tahrîrden akşâ-yı merâm ancak bu tedbîr mümkün değil ise dahi murâd-ı ismimiz yâd olmak için hisbete ’n-li ’llâhi te’âlâ devr-i zamana bir yadigâr-ı tarih tahrîr olunmuşdur.”

²²⁴ Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye’de Çağdaşlaşma* (Istanbul: YKY, 2009), 54.

²²⁵ “Nizâm-ı Cedîd” *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi* 33: 175-178. Indeed *Tarih-i Raşid* cites Fazıl Mustafa Paşa’s taxation reforms as *nizâm-ı cedîd*, see Raşid Mehmed Efendi and Çelebizade Asım Efendi, *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli Vol I*, eds. Abdülkadir Özcan et al. (Istanbul: Klasik, 2013), 401.

exerted in administration, their courage and wrath (*celâlet ve şeca'at*) and the order they established for the state (*devlet-i aliyyeye nizâm virmek*).²²⁶

His complaints include the penetration into janissary corps of persons who have no business with soldiering, breakdown of the timar system, wide-spread self-seeking behavior, succumbing to luxury and comfort, appointment of unworthy and inexperienced people to the government posts, corruption of the ulema, over urbanization in the case of Istanbul which depletes the resources of the country side.²²⁷ Although he does not endorse a highly differentiated society of the kind we see in the circle of justice, he still objects to the ascendance of commoners to government and emphasizes the circularity of the relationship between the sultan and the subjects.²²⁸ The remedies he suggests all boil down to centralizing the decision making mechanism through iron-rule. He objects to consulting with most of the ulema and the statesmen and suggests a limited circle of advisors, advises tight control of janissary corps, execution of any opposition, and even considers it paramount that the sultan leads the campaigns personally and ride into battle.²²⁹ These observations and suggestions reveal Canikli's familiarity with the decline literature of the seventeenth century and its arguments. Yet, these arguments are presented as a new set of measures which, at the same time, re-imagine and present the past of the Empire in a way that suits a project for restoration of political authority to Sultan.

Canikli's concept of New Regime hence emerges as a full-fledged restoration of sultanic authority and the administrative arrangement as he argues the way it was in the era of the great sultans. He endorses adoption of the military techniques of the Empire's rivals by pointing to the necessity of responding to the enemy's tricks and tools in the same way; if the enemy is using rifles, one should also use rifles. Thus he foreshadows the concept of "symmetric retaliation" (*mukābele-i bi'l-misl*) which would be used frequently through the New Order debates. However, military innovation was simply a part of the broader project of restoration which took many

²²⁶ Özkaya, "Canikli Ali Paşa", 151-52.

²²⁷ Ibid, 157, 159, 162, 164, 165-66, 172.

²²⁸ Ibid, 156.

²²⁹ Ibid, 143.

of its cues from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century debates, instrumentalizing their argument for a project of restoration in the eighteenth century context.

Canikli also presents a case for learning from history when he curses those who fail to understand his ideas and discard them as just some palaver on history (*bir alay kelâm-ı târîh deyu ta'an iderse*). When we compare Canikli and Resmi we see a similar emphasis on history, albeit with slightly different interpretations and examples. While Resmi's concept of history has a broader space of experience which incorporates European and Persian history as well as the Ottoman, Canikli focuses exclusively on Ottoman history. Whereas Canikli presents an almost circular pattern with his emphasis on the "Golden Age" of the Empire, Resmi comes up with a more linear (non-progressive) pattern which discards the possibility of a Golden age. Resmi simply suggests military-administrative reform and discourages war making, Canikli suggests military-administrative reform as part of a broader restoration which will eventually make victorious campaigns possible once again. As will be demonstrated below, the New Order project follows Canikli Ali rather than Ahmed Resmi. Canikli's call for restoration under the guise of new measures trumps Resmi's pessimism.

2.3 Tensions of New Order: Reform, Tradition and Innovation

The ambiguity regarding the actual novelty of the new and the tension between determinism and contingency in the political sphere carries on to the debates on Selim III's *Nizâm-ı Cedîd* (New Order) program fifteen years later in 1790s. As soon as the 1787-92 campaign with Austria and Russia ended, Selim III commissioned officials from various branches of the state to write memoranda regarding the possible measures to restore the order to the state. One of the memoranda writers, official chronicler Enveri lays down the tension and motivation behind the program as such:

... these dissolutions which came about gradually in a hundred and fifty years, can be possibly set aright again gradually. Maybe not all of them, but it is not a remote possibility with due effort. These problems that we mentioned and everyone is aware of are, of course, a result of the leniency of those who minister the state in any time; yet they are also subject to the supreme will of God who is the real governor. Just as he willed the corruption of those before

us by creating the things and causes, he also wills that the order is restored by creating the men that are capable. Yet, one cannot say “One state’s established order cannot be eternal; for the order to be eternal, the state should be eternal and eternity is an attribute of God only.” That is because in every age, every sultan and every vizier and every man are responsible for enabling and providing the causes for the welfare of the subjects who are themselves entrusted to us by God.²³⁰

Here, Enveri, by referring to a hundred and fifty years of dissolution, incorporates the experience of the literature of the previous two centuries, thus both providing a depth to the concept of restoration and legitimizing it. Moreover, he formulates the tension between determinism and contingency, structure and agency in the most explicit fashion. It is true that God has a plan and not everything is in men’s control, yet this does not absolve the statesmen of his political responsibilities. Preserving the order, by enabling the conditions and causes is the duty of anyone involved in the government. Whether the order can be restored or not is a matter of contingency, however taking the necessary measure is a matter of moral responsibility. Obviously he is countering the arguments of a faceless clique of people, who, as we understand, object to the reform process by resorting to a “fatalist” conception of God’s will in order to defend their social and political status.

Menchinger argues that this debate between free will and predestination gains frequency in the eighteenth century due to the concern with the fate of the Empire, by pointing out the number of religious treatises written on the topic and recurrence of the subject in political and historical writing.²³¹ While the immediacy of the discussion in the late eighteenth century cannot be ignored, we also encounter such an argument and a very similar response in the anonymous *Kitâb-ı Müstetab*,

²³⁰ Ergin Çağman, *III. Selim’e Sunulan Islahat Layihaları* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2010), 8, “... bu ihtilâller ki ba ‘zısı yüz elli yıllık ve ba ‘zısı yüz ve elli yıllıktır tetricî tetricî olmuş olmağla yine tetricî her husûsun yoluna girmesi mümkündür. Hâtıra gelür bi ‘l-küllîye olmaz ise de sa ‘y-ı fâ ‘ideden hâli değildir zirâ bu avârız ki zıkr olundu ve ekserîsi herkesin ma ‘lûmudur devlete ârız olması her ne kadar her vakitte devlete nâzır olanların müsâmahasından oldu ise de Allahu Te ‘âlâ hazretlerinin irâde-i aliyyesi ta ‘alluku ile olmuştur bundan ötürü ki mutasarrıf odur eşyâda temâm ne havâs irâde herkez ne avâm nihâyetü ‘l-emr eslâfin bozulmasına irâde-i aliyyesi ta ‘alluk eylediğinden ol maslahatların ricâlini halk eyledi şimdi erbabını yine halk itmekle nizâmını murâd eylemiştir. Amma her devletin nizâm-ı kadîmi bâkî kalamaz zirâ bâkî kalsa devlet bâkî olmak iktizâ eder bekâ ise Allahu Te ‘âlâ hazretlerine mahsûs olan san ‘atlardandır dinilmez şundan ötürü ki her asırda her padişâh ve her vezir ve ricâlden her racûl vediatullah olan re ‘âyânın bâ ‘is-i emn ü rahatı olur esbâbın ele getürmesine sa ‘y ile mükelleflerdir.”

²³¹ See Ethan L. Menchinger, “Free Will, Predestination, and the Fate of the Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77:3 (2016): 445-466.

authored two years before the regicide of Osman II who had set out to initiate a similar wide-scale restoration (see Ch. 1). As in the case of war vs. peace, once again we are facing a cache of arguments which are recycled in different periods and put to use in context. Moreover, while it would be tempting to argue for a debate between a rational/secular claim and a religious claim, this is rather a fight between two positions which try to establish control over the religio-moral language from which the political language had still not been distinguished. It would be equally problematic to call this a religious discussion since it is obviously a political polemic.²³² While both positions on predestination and free will had deep roots in the Islamic theological tradition, the argument for contingency and free will depended on a wider range of sources and experience.

This tension is also realized and expressed by the contemporary actors themselves. There are some memoranda writers as well who are in between the two positions and frame the tension as one between reason (*akl*) and tradition (*nakl*). For instance chief treasurer Mehmed Şerif Efendi, after suggesting some venues of reform briefly, warns that the principle of tradition should not be violated:

... as the principle goes “our religion is not based on reason but tradition” and hence not everything we conceive is beneficial and advisable. In any case it needs to be congruent with venerable Sharia. It is obvious that any policy and order not congruent with Sharia will not only prove useless but also will yield material and spiritual damage...²³³

While not directly challenging reform attempts, Şerif Efendi still perceives a tension between what is to come in the name of reform and whatever it is that he considers the religious tradition. What people do in the name of reform may prove harmful, he argues; reason may err, whereas tradition will not. Şerif Efendi thus takes a hesitant and cautious position with respect to reform; he endorses it and yet suggests caution fearing that tradition may be violated.

²³² Cf. the debates around the abolition of the Janissary corps during Mahmud II’s reign. Gültekin Yıldız frames the problem in a similar way, see *Neferin Adı Yok: Zorunlu Askerliğe Geçiş Sürecinde Osmanlı Devleti’nde Siyaset, Ordu ve Toplum (1825-1839)* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2009), 28.

²³³ Çağman, 21, “...dininâ mebnîyyün ale’n-nükûl, lâ âlâ münâsebetu’l-ukûl fetvasınca her akla gelen memdûh ve müstahsen olmak iktizâ itmeyüb beherhâl şer’i şerîfe tatbîk ve tevfiq lâzîmedendir zîrâ hilâf-ı şer-i şerîf olan nizâm ve siyâsetin kat’ân fâ’ide ve semeresi olmayacağından gayrı sûrî ve ma’nevî zararî çekileceği mücerreb ve ma’lûm olmağla...”

Another anonymous author expresses his concern in a more direct albeit cynical way, framing military reform as adopting French habits:

... it is possible to train soldiers who can face the enemy in battle, yet only on the condition that it must definitely not be revealed to the soldiers and the commoners that they will be donning the French [European] form which is contrary to our nature and customs. They should be told something to the effect that “the Sultan is doing a favor to his regiments and he will restore them to their former glory and this is what is necessary and is there anything one could not find within Islam anyway.” And although what is desired is the application of the French arrangements, French military terms should not be adopted and must be replaced with Turkish words.²³⁴

What many other authors call “symmetric retaliation” (*mukābele-i bi'l-misl*) this anonymous author calls “donning the European form” (*tavr-ı efrence girmek*). However, by calling it as such, he is not objecting to military reform, rather he anticipates the reaction of the opposition and grasps the gist of their argument. He even reminds the previous violent reactions of the janissaries to reform attempts by saying “it is possible that once again the men of the sword, one of the four estates of the state, overpowers others, as it has happened in the earlier times.”²³⁵ This prognosis, of course, turns out to be quite accurate when New Order program disastrously fails with the dethronement and later execution of Selim III by the Janissaries.

We should not, however, fall into the mistake of taking the account of this anonymous author for granted and thinking of him as more honest compared to the others which would amount to identifying with the position of the Janissaries. Facing each other at a standoff, Janissaries –and their allies- try to preserve their privileges and the New Orderist try to restore the power to the state by centralizing command, both sides attempting to legitimize their position with reference to tradition. Importing military technology was not a late eighteenth century innovation and had been practiced by the sultans of the past as pointed out by several memoranda writers

²³⁴ Çağman, 9, “...*düşmene mukabil cengâver eylemek mümkündür be-şart-an ki mizâc ve meşrebe muhâlif tavr-ı efrence girecekleri tavâ'if-i askeriyeden ve cümle avâmdan be-gayet hafî tutulub pâdişâh ocaklarına i'tibâr eyledi resm-i kadîmi icrâ edecek ya zâhir işte böyle lazımdır İslam'da ne bulunmaz aransa ve i'tibâr olunsa kelâmları meyânlarında devrân eyleyüb her ne kadar matlûb tertîb-i frengiye tatbik ise dahi hiç ol taraflara varmayub ve elfâz-ı efrenciyyeyi lisâna almayub...*”

²³⁵ Çağman, 9.

as well.²³⁶ It was the late eighteenth century power struggle that made it a key point of conflict between the New Orderists and the Janissaries.

Interestingly, even the anonymous author, who is cynical about framing the issue still justifies the emulation by distinguishing between form and principles and arguing that it will work as long as form changes and principles remain (*etvâr değıştüb usûl değışmemek ile olur*).²³⁷ Thus, he resolves the tension between preserving tradition and justifying innovation, by splitting the Ottoman way into material and essential halves: a conceptual move which will be repeated in almost all post-colonial contexts.²³⁸ Separating the social into two realms, one material and the other ideal, the defeated side argues for emulation of the technologies of the enemy and frame this act within the wider project of once again becoming victorious against the enemy.

2.4 Tecdîd as Religious Renewal and Moral Revival

The tension between tradition and innovation is reflected in the basic language within which the New Order is framed and particularly in the concept, *tecdîd* which replaces the word *islâh* we encounter in the seventeenth century reform tracts. The whole discourse on reform in the memoranda revolves around the concept of renewal (*tecdîd*) and order (*nizâm*). Similar to Canikli's text, in the context of New Order what is meant by the word "new" is not defined, but the expressions always refer to the past and the ancient (*kadîm*). To list some of the expressions used by the memoranda writers: "to attain the ancient state and conditions" (*eski hâlin bulmak, tavr-ı kâdimi bulmak*)²³⁹, "a new kind of integration and order" (*bir nevî cedîd râbûta ve nizâm, intizâm itmek*)²⁴⁰, "renewing the ancient order as it had been renewed in the past" (*mukaddemâ tecdîd olunan nizâm-ı kadîmlerini yine tecdîd*)²⁴¹, "restoring the

²³⁶ See Brentano's memorandum in Çağman, 28-29; Ali Osman Çınar, "Es-Seyyid Mehmed Emin Behic Efendi'nin Sevânihtü'l-Levâiyh'i ve Değerlendirilmesi" (MA thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 1992), 78; Sema Arıkan, "Nizam-ı Cedit'in Kaynaklarından Ebubekir Ratib Efendi'nin Büyük Layihası," (PhD Diss., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1996), 6.

²³⁷ Çağman, 10.

²³⁸ For this phenomenon see Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), ch 1.

²³⁹ Ibid, 5.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 59.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 78.

ancient law to its former glorious state” (*kanûn-ı kadîmelerinin hâlet-i ûlâsına ircâ’ı*)²⁴².

The language of the memoranda does not put the new (*cedîd*) and the ancient (*kadîm*) as a binary opposition; instead the act of renewal (*tecdîd*) has an organic connection to what is ancient. Minor exceptions aside *cedîd* and *tecdîd* had not been used as key concepts in political context before in Ottoman texts. It is possible to encounter in any kind of text the word *tecdîd* being used in the very basic non-political sense of renewal, i.e. renewal of a contract and agreement, renewal of a marriage after a divorce, renewal and renovation of a building. As noted above, what stood against *kadîm* semantically was the words *hâdis* and *bid’â*, both denoting undesirable innovation, the latter being a more technical term in Islamic scholarship. *Cedîd* and *tecdîd* here appear to have been consciously chosen to counter the accusations of *bid’â* and *ihdâs* as favorable words. Moreover, the word *tecdîd* also invokes the classical Islamic doctrine of periodic renewal in tradition in the face of confusion and contestation.

The doctrine of *tecdîd* is based on a particular hadith which says “God will send to this community at the turn of every century someone (or: people) who will restore religion.”²⁴³ Based on this hadith, there emerged in the second Hijri century a vague tradition which predicted one exceptional scholar, a renewer (ar. *mujaddid*, ott. *müceddid*) to arise around the turn of each century and renew the religious tradition and doctrine by resolving the contemporary problems, debates and controversies and reinvigorating religious zeal. Although there has never been a solid consensus on the particular renewers of each century, the names who were circulated were exclusively scholars, meaning legal scholars philosophers, Sufis, or exegetes. Some frequently cited examples are, Umayyad Caliph Umar II, philosopher and mystic Al-Ghazali (d.

²⁴² Ibid, 80.

²⁴³ Ethan Menchinger is the first scholar to make the connection between reform and this particular tradition in the case of Ahmed Vasîf Efendi, see his “An Ottoman Historian,” 229-31. For the tradition of cyclical reform see Ella Landau-Tasseron, “The “Cyclical Reform”: A Study of the *mujaddid* tradition,” *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989): 79-117. Landau-Tasseron summarizes the arguments from the earliest centuries of Islam among Muslim scholars from different traditions as to who deserves the title of restorer and concludes that there is no consensus on the qualities of the restorer and that it is used by various schools of interpretation to justify their own leaders, particularly the Shafi school of legal interpretation. Also see E. Van Donzel, “MUDJADDID,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed Vol VII* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 290.

1111), and Sufi mystic Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624) who was referred to as the renewer of the second millennium (*müceddid-i elf-i sâni*).

Landau-Tasseron points out the tension between the two senses of the words from the *cdd* root, between innovation (*bid'a* or *muhaddas*) and renovation (*ihyâ*) and argues this might be the reason *tecdîd* was not employed as frequently as *ihyâ* (revitalization).²⁴⁴ She also argues that such a tension does not exist in the English language; however, such semantic tensions are contextual and a comparable tension between innovation and renovation can be observed in the eighteenth century British concept of reform in the public and parliamentary debates as well.²⁴⁵ Opposition to the New Order instrumentalizes exactly this tension and label the adoption of European military techniques and technologies as *bid'a* and *ihdâs* (from the same root as *muhaddas*).²⁴⁶ In response, the New Orderists defend their efforts as *tecdîd*. Thus the debate over reform becomes a full-blown debate over tradition and claims to legitimacy.

For instance, one preacher in particular, Ubeydullah Kuşmânî, has a treatise defending Selim III's New Order and military reforms, and at the same time openly attacking the janissaries in a heavily derogative language for their unruly behavior, ignorance and their penchant for sin and pleasure.²⁴⁷ The treatise is a defense and justification of the principle of *mukâbele-i bi'l-misl* and obedience to the ruler in general, with frequent references to the Prophetic tradition (*hadith*) and particular verses from the Quran. He particularly counters the accusations, by the Janissaries, of innovation and invention by citing the aforementioned hadith and invoking the

²⁴⁴ Landau-Tasseron, 107-8.

²⁴⁵ See Joanna Innes, "'Reform' in English public life: fortunes of a word," in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850*, ed. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 71-97.

²⁴⁶ See for instance Dihkanizade Ubeydullah Kuşmânî, *Zebîre-i Kuşmânî fî Nizâm-ı İlhamî*, ed. Ömer İşbilir (Ankara: TTK, 2006), 10, "... *cehl-i mürekkebân-ı kec-reftâr icâd-ı mezkûreyi*, "*ihdâs-ı küffârdır ki isti'mâl edenler dahi anlar ile berâberdir. Zîrâ bu mikdâr ekâlim-i bisyârda şehîr u diyâr-ı bî-şümârın fethiyle behredâr olan pâdişâhân-ı nikû-kirdârın rûzgâr-ı meymenet-karârlarında bu misillü bid'at-ı bed olan etvâr yok idi*" deyüp...

²⁴⁷ See *ibid*, 11-12. Kuşmânî is an interesting and partly enigmatic figure. A travelling preacher whose origins are unknown he is estimated to be affiliated with the Mujaddidî branch of Naqshbandiyya order. After spending a few years in Istanbul where he vehemently supports the New Order and Selim III in his sermons, he is driven out of the city by angry janissaries. For Kuşmânî see also Menchinger, "An Ottoman Historian", 244; Şakul, 135-39; Beydilli, "Küçük Kaynarca'dan Tanzimat'a", 35-37; and Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 165-67.

doctrine of the centennial renewal.²⁴⁸ Kuşmânî argues that what is being done is none other than *tecdid* and *ihya*²⁴⁹, considers *mukābele-i bi'l-misl* a religious obligation (*farz*)²⁵⁰, and spends more than one page to simply condemn the opponents of the New Order in a morally insulting (and virtually untranslatable) language.²⁵¹ He also reminds that, at the time of their foundation, Janissaries had met with similar accusation as well by virtue of their being new; indeed janissary name itself meant “the new soldiers” (*veni-çeri*).²⁵²

As mentioned above, the word *müceddid* (renewer) had come to be used to designate Muslim scholars who engaged with the textual tradition to renovate it. However, from the 16th century onwards, in the Ottoman vocabulary, we observe the word being used for Ottoman sultans as well. For instance Selim I, Suleiman I²⁵³ and Murad II²⁵⁴, had all been designated by the title in some way. As pointed out by both Fleischer and Felek, the image of the renewer and restorer, brought together in the political ruler instead of the scholar, carries strong connotations of Messianism, especially when one considers Suleiman I and Murad III’s reigns coincided with the end of first Hijri millennium. This Messianic trend apparently resurfaces in the late eighteenth century context in the face of crisis. Several grand viziers of the late eighteenth century such as Koca Ragıp Paşa and Halil Hamid Paşa were expected to be renewers as well.²⁵⁵ Apparently, Ottoman bureaucrats also saw a restorer in Selim III. Menchinger notes that official chronicler of the period Ahmed Vâsîf Efendi, a staunch supporter of reform himself, refers to him as “men of the century” (*sâhib-i mia*), another term for *müceddid*.²⁵⁶

The appeal to doctrine of renewal and to the trope of the renewer finds its most complete manifestation in the work of Mehmed Esad Efendi who, two decades later

²⁴⁸ Kuşmânî, 4.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 7, 60, 84.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 23.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 11-12.

²⁵² Ibid, 60.

²⁵³ See Cornell Fleischer, “Lawgiver as Messiah.”

²⁵⁴ Özgen Felek, “(Re)creating Image and Identity: Dreams and Visions as a Means of Murad II’s Self-fashioning,” in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, ed Özgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 249-272.

²⁵⁵ Menchinger, “An Ottoman Historian”, 71, 229-30.

²⁵⁶ Menchinger, “An Ottoman Historian”, 229-30.

in 1827, hails Mahmud II as the real renewer of the century (*re's-i mi'e*) after his success in abrogating the janissary corps. He allocates a separate chapter to exploring the concept of renewal in his chronicle of the events leading to and following the abrogation of the janissaries, and starts by citing the same hadith.²⁵⁷ And citing one Abdurrauf el Munawi, he argues that “*tecdid* is all about distinguishing between *sunna* and *bid'a*, expanding the knowledge, honoring the men of knowledge with support and sponsorship as well as belittling those who engage in *bid'a* and destroying them.”²⁵⁸ Hence, *tecdid* refers not only to a scholarly act of reform within tradition to revive the religion, but also a political act aimed at rooting out sedition and heresy. Now wonder then, Esad Efendi goes on to cite Imam Suyuti and Ibn Esir to argue that the renewer of the century does not have to be one of the *fuqaha*; it could actually be the *uli 'l-emr*, the political authority to whom the ummah obeys. Because, he contends, without the power of the ruler to enforce right and wrong Sharia would not mean much; protecting the religion essentially requires the power to enforce which is the prerogative of rulers.²⁵⁹ Then he goes on to do some calendar calculations to prove over birthdates that Mahmud II is indeed the renewer of the century.

It is no wonder that, from the start, the opposition to the reform movement also took issue with the title of the renewer as well. An anonymous notice left in front of a public fountain in Istanbul, in early 1789, during the heat of another Russian campaign, accuses Abdulhamid I of losing territories to the Russians and causing the ruin of soldiers in the war effort.²⁶⁰ The author who calls himself *ocaklı* (a member

²⁵⁷ Es'ad Efendi, *Üss-i Zafer: Yeniçeriliğin Kaldırılmasına Dair*, ed. Mehmet Arslan (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2005), 138-145. Also see Elçin Arabacı, “A Quest for Legitimization of the Ottoman State or Modernization of Islam in the Early Nineteenth Century Ottoman Center?,” (Unpublished paper).

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 139, “... *tecdid-i dîn, sünnet ü bid'at beynini fark ve 'ilmi teksîr ve ehlini nusret ü i'âne ile tevkîr ve erbâb-ı bid'ati kesr ü tezlîl ve kahr u tahkîrden 'ibâretidir.*”

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 140, “*Zîrâ hıfz-ı dîn-i mübinde asl u esâs, kânûn-ı siyâseti icrâ ile bess-i 'adl ü nasfetdir ki onunla dimâ-hakn u ta'addî-i nâs men' olunup ikâmet-i kavânin-i şer'îyyeye kudret hâsıla olur. Bu ise ancak uli 'l-emr ve selâtin vazîfesidir.*”

²⁶⁰ See Fikret Sarıcaoğlu, “Osmanlı Muhalefet Geleneğinde Yeni Bir Dönem: İlk Siyasî Bildiriler,” *Belleten* 241 (Dec 2000): 901-920. The full text deserves to be cited in its entirety: “*Sultan Abdülhamid; Bizim tâkâtımız kalmadı. Aklın başına gelmiyor. Gördün ki Yusuf Paşa işi göremedi. Niçin bu ânâ dek sözüne aldanıp memleketleri kâfîre verdin. Ümmet-i Muhammed'i dağlar başında açlık susuzluktan kırdın. Senin vezirin, şeyhülislâmın, kaymakamın Müslüman değildir. Sana doğru haber vermiyorlar. Sefer fetih olmaz. Bundan böyle asker gerek, akçe irişdiremezsin. Hemen bir gün akdem ortalığı tebdil idüb seferin sulhüne mübâşeret idesin, sancağı askeri içeri getiresin. Vallahi sonra pişman olursun. Yusuf Paşa işi göremez, zararı sana dokunur. Yetişir aldandığın, yetişir*

of the janissary corps) openly threatens the Sultan with counter-action -a dethronement is heavily implied, if not regicide- if he does not declare peace and call the troops back from the campaign. He accuses the viziers, the grand mufti and the other officials for misinforming the Sultan and questions their Muslimness. He blames the Sultan for oppressing the ummah and says they do not want a renewer (*müceddid*) vizier or grand mufti, openly questioning the legitimacy of the category and obviously mocking the reform attempts.

The challenge to the legitimacy of the revival/restoration move does not come only from the janissaries and other hard core opponents of centralization. In 1806, one Ömer Faik Efendi, clearly of the *ilmiye* class, cautiously criticizes the New Order overall without brushing it aside completely. He approves of the military reform but still warns that:

As is known to all, the Exalted State is a state based on Sharia and hence when setting out to some business it should be referred to Sharia and consulted with the God-fearing pious people. One should abstain from inventions [*muhaddesât*]; indeed it is preferable to reinforce the constitution of the state by repairing and renovating [*tecđid*] those orders of the past [*nizâmlar*], that is *kânûn* and *shari'a*, which have been dissolved [*halel-pežîr*] with the passage of time, instead of inventions.²⁶¹

Ömer Faik Efendi is obviously torn between the necessity of renewal and the dangers of innovation. He echoes the concerns of one of the memoranda writers mentioned above when he accuses the regulations of the New Order with rootlessness and being based solely on reason (*nizâmlarda mebd'e olmayub yalnız akla teba'iyetle mübâdere olunmağın*). He conceptually solves the tension by classifying the New Order measures into two: substantial/spiritual (*mânevî*) and formal (*sûrî*).

maskaralık iylediğın. Mâbeyncilerle devlet işi görölmez. Bir Müslüman paşaya mühür viresin. Sulhün ucuna yapışasın. Vallahi bu seferin sonu çıkmaz. Sonra işi sana dayarız. Müceddid veziri, şeyhülislâmı istemeyüz. Ortalığı tebdil idesin. Ümmet-i Muhammed'e yazık oldu. Nice beri gaflettesin. Bu kâğıdın sahibi Ocaklı. Bu kâğıdı sana göstermeyen karısı boş, kendi kâfir. Görüp işine nizâm viresin. Gün vakit kalmadı. Bundan aklın başına gelmezse artık biz işimizi görelim.”

²⁶¹ Ahmet Sarıkaya, *Ömer Fâik Efendi, Nizâmü'l-Atik* (Senior Thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü, 1979), 5, “Ma'lûm-ı cihaniyândır ki, Devlet-i Aliyye şer'i'at-ı mutahhara devleti olmağla ibtidâ bir emre şürû' olunacak olduksa şer'e tadbik ve zümre-i etkâyâdan istimdâdla Hak te'âlâdan taleb-i tevfik emrine şürû' birle muhaddesât ihdâsından ictinâb ve zamân-ı sevâbıkda şer' ü kânûnlar olan nizâmların mürûr-ı ezmine ile halel-pežîr olanlarını vakt-i hâl-i devlete göre ta'mir ü tecđidle esâs binây-ı devlete metânet vermek, muhaddesâtıdan ahsen ü evlâdır.” For Ömer Faik Efendi's treatise see also Şakul, 145-47 and Beydilli, 37-40.

Accordingly, military, financial and administrative measures are the formal measures, pertaining to the materiality and religious measures which pertain to spirituality. He brings criticism for both categories yet he is particularly concerned about the substantial/spiritual measures; he thinks religious scholars and pious people do not get the necessary respect and attention.²⁶² This distinction also echoes that of the anonymous memoranda writer between form (*tavir*) and essence (*usul*). By drawing a line, one distinguishes between what may be subject to change and what should not, which, in the end, boils down to an intuitive distinction between material and spiritual realms.

Even without particular reference to the doctrine of centennial renewal, it must be remembered that the argument for revival, regeneration or reform in Muslim thought follows a certain logic within identifiable parameters. As eloquently expressed by Thomas Naff, “the incongruity between the received God-perfect immutable past and the ever-changing commonsensical reality of the present” drives any reform attempt and gives it a religious character:

Within a strictly Muslim interpretation, the concept of reform entails a process of purifying Islam of those excrescences of human misunderstanding which have been attached through the centuries, restoring Islam to the pristine state in which Muhammad left it.²⁶³

Besides religious reform (i.e. reform of the religious institution) being an item in the New Order agenda, the logic of religious reform informs the whole program of reform. It is easy to mock the argument for restoration of order when we single it out as a simple argument for “return to the age of Suleiman;” however, we need to remember that reform is a convoluted attempt which involves identification of what was right to begin with, what went wrong and when, what has been ignored and who is responsible. The established logic and doctrine of religious reform in Islam puts these questions into a schematic framework and establishes a precedent for how to proceed. A contested element from the depths of the Islamic tradition (especially due to lack of any consensus on the location of the renewing authority), doctrine of

²⁶² Ibid, 12-13.

²⁶³ Thomas Naff, “Linkage of History and Reform in Islam: An Ottoman Model,” in *In Quest of an Islamic Humanism*, ed. A.H.Green (American University in Cairo Press, 1986), 127.

renewal allows formulation of a program and its contestation with reference to tradition. Whereas the outcome of these debates, the formation of new orthodoxies and emergence of hegemonic interpretations depend rather on the outcome of material struggles, still it is the same logic at play, and same frame of reference which is invoked to justify the outcome.

The New Order program, hence, not only proposes the reform of religious institution, but also involves a serious argument against the observed moral laxity within Ottoman society, which is expressed with reference to a moral ideal which increasingly incorporates the Sunni orthodox position associated with Sharia, akin to the one observed in the seventeenth century Kadızadeli challenge. The complaints about moral laxity, lethargy and apathy and moral uprightness as a prerequisite of reform is not simply restricted to the men of government who are supposed to shoulder the reform attempt. Observable in the reform memoranda is an emphasized concern for moral subjects overall, which is expressed in terms of religious piety.

One of the authors complain that in the Balkans there are places where call to prayer is not heard let alone people going to the mosque to pray five times a day.²⁶⁴ Since majority of Ottoman army is recruited from these provinces, he argues, it is essential that the people be educated in the ways of the religion by sending madrasa graduates with pamphlets in plain Turkish in their hands. While this point obviously served as an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the janissaries who were infamous for their laxity in observing religious duties and practices, the complaints had a wider scope, attributing the overall lack of order to a widespread moral corruption.

Resorting to Sharia and restoration of the ulema and the religious institutions to their proper ways figure prominently in many of the memoranda.²⁶⁵ In fact, Sharia and *kānûn* are used both interchangeably and together as a single construct (*şer ü kânûn*).

²⁶⁴ Çağman, 57, “*edâ-yı evkat-ı hamse değil ezân-ı Muhammed’i dahi nâdiren kırâ-at olunduğu ve gerek kisvede ve gerek harekât ve sekenâtda ve sâ’ir mu’âmelâtta müslim ve kâfir lâ-fark olub ancak kâr kaydıyla mukayyed ve bir dîn ile müneddîn olmadıkları... Âstâne-i Aliyye medreselerinden salâh ve takvâ ile ma’rûf âlimi bi’l-mesele kimesneleri Türkî risaâleleri ile iktizâ iden mahallerde tesy’ir ve tashih-i i’tikada himmet olunduğu gibi fi-zemânina dahi farz olmuştur zirâ Devlet-i Aliyye’nin askeri taşra memleketlerden müterâkim olub mādâm ki esâs-ı dîn-i mübin olan i’tikadları bâtil ve şurût-ı Islâmî câhil olalar beyne’l-enâm nizâm muhal olub...*”, for a repetition of the same advice see also Çınar, 10.

²⁶⁵ Çağman, 3, 21, 32, 35, 59, 66, 68, 69, 71,

Grand Vizier Koca Yusuf Paşa's (d. 1800) memorandum explicitly establishes the link between religion and order as such:

What is of utmost importance and should be addressed above all is the adherence to the corpus of the luminous Sharia. For the times are such that obedience to the command "obey God, obey his Messenger and those of you who are in authority" [Quran 4:59] and loyalty to the way of Sharia has fallen quite low and the fear of God does not seem to reside in people's hearts. God protect us, there is no counting the habits and practices contrary to the Prophet's Sharia....²⁶⁶

As such The Grand Vizier directly equates piety with obedience to the rule. Another author suggests reproduction and dissemination of the *Risale-i Birgivi*, easily the most widely known and disseminated religious treatise in the Ottoman history by Imam Birgivi (d. 1573) a judge who vehemently opposed Grand Müfti Ebusuud Efendi's *fetvas*.²⁶⁷ Birgivi had advocated the primacy of Sharia against *kānûn* in guiding government and his name is associated with salafism and fundamentalism in modern scholarship. He is also seen as a precursor to the seventeenth century Kadızadeli movement which had a strictly orthodox Sunni orientation.²⁶⁸ The incorporation of his treatise into the official language is an evidence of the variety of traditional sources the New Orderists employed in their defense of the reform project. Indeed, the *Risale* was printed in 1803 by the imperial press as the New Order program enfolded.²⁶⁹

The employment of religious language in order to promote obedience and order has already been noted by various scholars.²⁷⁰ The expression "obedience to the religion and the state" (*din ü devlete itâ'at*) is encountered quite frequently in the memoranda and treatises and the concept of obedience is repeatedly linked with morality and piety as demonstrated above. Especially, Behiç Efendi's memoranda of 1803 has quite detailed policy measures for making sure that the people adhere to the Sharia

²⁶⁶ Çağman, 59, "Evvelâ cümleden akdem ve ehem olan cemi' umûrda habl-i metin-i şerî'at-ı garrâya i'tisâmdır zîrâ zemâne bir hâle varmışdır ki etîullâhe ve etî'u'r-resûl ve ulû'l-emri minküm emrine ittibâ' ve urve-i vüskâ-yı şerî'at-ı mutahharaya mütemessik ve teşebbüs hâletleri irtifâ olmuş ve derecesini kesb idüb haşyetullâh derûn-ı nâsdan selb olmuş gibidir ne'uûzu billâhi min zâlike mugayir-i rızâ-yı Bârî ve muhâlif-i şer'-i nebevî olan etvâr ve ef'âlin hadd ü nihayeti olmayub..."

²⁶⁷ Marinós, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 63-65.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 101-104.

²⁶⁹ Beydilli, 43;

²⁷⁰ Beydilli, 44; Şakul, 120, 134; Aksan, "Ottoman Political Writing", 62; Yayıoğlu, 46-47.

and those who do not are punished accordingly. After informing people about their responsibilities according to Sharia by preparing pamphlets in Turkish, he suggests drunkards, thieves, prostitutes, sodomists, adulterers (even those who do not pray and those who turn a blind eye to their wife's indecency) all should be punished by Sharia (*hudûd-ı şer'îyye*).²⁷¹ These policy suggestions apparently do not go to wastes as moral policing and social control of the population particularly in Istanbul becomes a core item in the New Order agenda.²⁷²

2.5 *Tecdîd* as Political Restoration: Return to Roots

As in the case of *tecdîd* as periodical religious reform, the reform of the political apparatus, the state, the administration and the military follow a circular logic which finds its reference point and inspiration in the past. As evident from the available memoranda, for the overwhelming majority of the authors *kadîm* is the main reference point for the revival/restoration effort. First, there is the emphasis on order conceptualized as a society which is regulated and controlled from the centre and every element follows a common logic, the prime example of which is the Ottoman “golden age”. Second, all the problems mentioned in the memoranda are framed as problems (*ihtilâl*) with reference to the ancient laws from which the previous rulers deviated. New Orderists use *ihtilâl-i nizâm* (dissolution of order) or simply *ihtilâller* (dissolutions) which connotes a more abstract sense of long lasting decline, in comparison to the more concrete expression used in the seventeenth century, *nizâm-ı âleme hâlel gelmesi* which, conveyed a sense of immediacy.²⁷³ And third, which, I argue, is the most neglected point, the projected future is none other than restoring an order to the state and society legible in the terms of “tradition” which will lead to an Empire once again victorious against its enemies. As Menchinger quite convincingly

²⁷¹ Çınar, 49, “evvelâ kütüb-i fıkhiyyenin hâvi olduğu mesâ'il-i diniyyeden mesâ'il-i hudûd-ı şer'îyye Türkî 'ibâre ile bend bend mahşûş bir risâleye kayd olunmak. Saniyen hudûd-ı şer'îyyede der-kâr olan hadd-i mu'ayyen gibi herkesin 'aklı ırmek ya'ni cesâret ideceği fazâhat mukâbelesinde müstahakk olacağı 'ukûbeti bilüp ittikâya vesile olmak için meselâ şâhid-i zürûn timürdan maşnû' ve sıcak tamğa anlına basılmak gibi hudûd-ı siyâsiyyeye dahi mahşûş hadd ta'yin olunmak. Sâlisen sâlifü'z-zikr hudûd-ı şer'îyye şârib-i hamr ve bi-namâz ve kartabân ve zânı ve lütfi ve fâhişe ve sârik ve sârika ve emssâli ef'âl-i şeni'a-i menhiyyeyi irtikâb idenler haklarında ikâme olunacağına binâ'en...”

²⁷² For the emphasis on social control during the New Order see Betül Başaran, *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century: Between Crisis and Order* (Leiden, Brill 2014), and Yayıçlı 46-47.

²⁷³ Çağman, 6, 8, 32, 78; Çınar, 22, 80.

argues against scholars who claim the dissolution of classical social and political concepts and tropes such as the “world order” and the “four estates” and the “circle of justice,” Ottoman world view still rested on indigenous metaphysics and concepts albeit with a context-dependent content.²⁷⁴ We see authors recouring to the Ottoman intellectual tradition, some invoking to the “circle of justice” while some employ Ibn Khaldun, or in most cases merging both.

As evident from the way reform attempt is framed by the scribal authors, the concept of *tecdîd* heavily implies a political restoration which has its reference point somewhere in the near history of the Empire. Relying on a hundred and fifty years of political and historical writing by their predecessors, the late eighteenth century bureaucrats reinforce and crystallize the narrative of decline which starts in the late sixteenth century and is overcome temporarily in periods of restoration (i.e. Murad IV and Köprülü era). *Tecdîd* either designates order (*nizâm*) or law (*kanun*), both used interchangeably, yet order is used disproportionately more than law. The most frequent words used to describe the effort are *tanzîm* (to give order, to regulate), *tertîb* (to arrange, to bind), and *râbûta/rabı* (to align).²⁷⁵ In effect, all these words signify a desire to bind to a central and top down command the different elements of society, all of which have developed their own *modus operandi* and logic of practice. As Fatih Yeşil puts it, New Order refers to “a state of orderliness or new laws/regulations that would ensure the order of civil life, which is subject to reconstruction.”²⁷⁶ Yet, this order does not find its reference point in a utopian future, during the New Order era, it is still an order that has been lost and needs to be restored as it had been restored before.

The most refined expression of this concept of renewal as restoration is found in Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi’s memorandum, which presents a comprehensive concept of restoration which rests on Khaldunian concepts of *hadâriyet* (sedentary/urban life) and *bedeviyyet* (nomadism).²⁷⁷ The memorandum has separate chapters for each

²⁷⁴ Menchinger, “An Ottoman Historian”, 214-22.

²⁷⁵ See also Yaycıoğlu, 47.

²⁷⁶ Fatih Yeşil, “Nizâm-ı Cedîd,” in *III. Selim: İki Asrın Dönemecinde İstanbul*, ed. Coşkun Yılmaz (İstanbul, 2010), 103.

²⁷⁷ There is another memorandum attributed to Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi published by Enver Ziya Karal in *Tarih Vesikaları* and referred to by Ahmed Cevdet Paşa. However, as Kahraman Şakul notes

issue of reform including the land forces, naval forces, the religious institution, devaluation of money and the scribal service (see Appendix). Each chapter follows the same pattern: a description of how it was in the glorious age of Sultan Suleiman, an elaborate analysis of how it came to decay and fall behind that of the adversaries and detailed suggestions regarding rehabilitation.

The central motive of the text is the Khaldunian dichotomy of sedentary vs. nomadic forms of habitation (*hadâriyet-bedeviyet*) which he uses to explain the causes of military weakness and decline. As is the case with practically every other author at the time who benefit from Khaldun's work, Tatarcık does not mention or cite Ibn Khaldun, but the concepts are unmistakably appropriated from him. Under a separate subchapter titled "On the Good and Benefit of Movement and Travel for his Excellency around the Domains of the Caliphate" (*Der Beyân-ı Fevâid ve Menâfi'-i Hareket ve Nehzet-i Hümâyûn ez Dârü'l-Hilâfe*) Tatarcık narrates how after a nomadic and mobile way of life, which allowed for dynamism and vigor in battle, the Ottomans settled in cities, started building big structures, indulged themselves in luxury and gradually lost their penchant for war making.²⁷⁸ Accordingly, to regain that dynamism and readiness for war, the Sultan should lead the army personally into battle, the statesmen should refrain from staying in one place for long (*meks ü âram*) and move around (*geşt ü güzâr*) the domains, excessive spending and imported luxury products shall be avoided. Tatarcık relates every other issue to this eventually; finance is in ruins due to excessive spending and overpopulation of Istanbul, and military is weak due to their urbanization and staying in barracks too long. Returning to the habits of nomadism (*tavr-ı bedeviyet*) once again will cut the costs and hence benefit the treasury. Abdullah Efendi also advocates the principle of *mukâbele-i bi'l-misl*, emulating Western military technology and especially the regular military drills and in the conclusion he emphasizes this to be the most

it is not Abdullah Efendi's memorandum but rather a summary of the existing memorandums. Abdullah Efendi's original memorandum was published in Ottoman print script in three installments in the early twentieth century: Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi, "Sultan Selim-i Sâlis Devrinde Nizâm-ı Devlet Hakkında Mütâla'at" *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni* 41-43 (1917). Abdullah Efendi later goes on to become one of the leading New Orderists and his memoranda is the most detailed and elaborate compared to the rest of the memoranda. For an article which compares Abdullah Efendi's views with Ziya Gökalp, see Alp Eren Topal, "Against Influence: Ziya Gökalp in Context and Tradition," *Journal of Islamic Studies* (forthcoming 2017).

²⁷⁸ See particularly Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi, *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası* 41, 281-83.

important item on the agenda.²⁷⁹ If regular drills are implemented the troops will recover from the lethargy of *hadâriyet* and will gradually regain their *bedevî* habits. This will lead to “a brilliant condition like a revival” (*teceddüd misillü başka halât ve revnâk*), “reinforcement of the order of the state” (*te'yîd-i nizâm-ı devlet*) and “strengthening of the essence of the dynasty” (*te'kîd-i esâs-ı saltanat*), all phrases used frequently by Abdullah Efendi.

As such Abdullah Efendi frames the New Order within a solid Khaldunian framework. The order of Ottoman state and society was disrupted due to laxity and lethargy caused by urbanism and the way to restoration necessitates adopting nomadic habits once again. Considering that the Ottomans were proud of their urban culture and its achievements, and detested nomadic tribes for the nuisance they caused the state this line of thinking is, indeed, revolutionary. It points to a full conceptual reversal. However, it is also an easy logical conclusion of accepting the Khaldunian schema of dynastic cycles but rejecting its determinism.

Order, in this account, is presented as a problem of very basic moral economy. The descriptions of New Order focus on the extant problems instead of defining the order to come and main argument is that the people who are supposed to restore order and those who are supposed to be given order lack the most basic moral incentives, they are all driven by self-interest, comfort and profit. As noted in the accounts of Canikli Ali Paşa and also with Tatarcık Abdullah Molla, Istanbul is presented as the locus of this moral corruptness and apathy; a place where everyone is trying to settle down. Reform, on the other hands, needs movement and persistence. Hence several memoranda writers emphasize stability and persistence (*istikrâr*) in the reform attempt which, in turn, rests on moral persistence of the actors themselves.²⁸⁰

It could be argued that this Khaldunian framework was limited to small number of people. However, in a recent study Şükrü Ilıcak documents the emergence and

²⁷⁹ Ibid, *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası* 43, 32-34.

²⁸⁰ See Çağman, 10, “... bu husûs tedrice ve kemâl-i ketme ve devâm ve istikrâr-ı kavâ'id muhtâcdır ve tabiat-ı devlete nazaran devâm u istikrâr henüz muhal görünür lâkin müdir ve ve mürettibler istikrârın muhâfaza eyleseler ve kendüleri dahi hull-ı ilâhiyyeye değin müstekâr olsalar belki mümkün ola.”; Çağman, 68-69; Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi, *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası* 42, 339; and Çınar, 44, 47.

frequent use of the concepts of *hadâriyet* and *bedevîyyet* in response to the Greek Revolt of 1821 during Mahmud II's reign.²⁸¹ In an effort to explain the inability of the Empire to counteract against the Greek rebels, both the Sultan and the divan members refer to the Greeks as the *bedevis* and attribute the lack of zeal and indifference among the Muslim population to *hadâriyet*. The obvious solution is to invoke, once again, among the Muslim population the spirit of *bedevîyet*, in order to facilitate mobilization (*seferîyet*) of the population against the Greek insurgents.²⁸² Accordingly, the state distributed a huge number of rifles to local Muslims and encouraged them to own horses and carry daggers all the time, the statesmen, ulema and other dignitaries were also encouraged to do the same and discouraged from displaying the symbols of *hazarî* life style, i.e. giving up flamboyant and luxurious clothing and donning simple garbs, avoiding extravagance in all things and especially excessive food and alcohol consumption.²⁸³ Ilıcak particularly emphasizes the disappointment and frustration, frequently expressed in Mahmud II's letters, with the disinterest and inertia with which the Muslim population met one of the gravest crises of the Empire.²⁸⁴

Underlying this frustration is again the comparison of the Empire's earlier grandeur, dynamism and military prowess, as presented in the histories and accounts of decline, with the utter helplessness the statesmen feel in controlling the social and political elements. The appeal of Khaldunian schema and concepts should be sought in its ability to explain this decline to the Ottoman bureaucrat in structural terms which are also translatable to a moral language. It also allows for contingency in the form of human agency, at least in the Ottoman interpretation. Comparing Khaldun's concept of *asabiye* to Hegel's *Volksgeist* and Gumilev's *passionarity* Ilıcak observes that unlike the latter two, *asabiye* "is an endogenous variable explaining the dynamic of social change."²⁸⁵ Once the variables that bring degeneration are known, they can be reverted through human agency as well. It is debatable whether such an interpretation is warranted by Khaldun's work but as we have seen in the case of

²⁸¹ Şükrü Ilıcak, "A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society During the Greek War of Independence (1821-1826)" (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2011). See Ch 2.

²⁸² Ibid, 122-23.

²⁸³ Ibid, 153-54.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 117.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 120.

Katip Çelebi, Naima and Pirizade and the late 18th century reformist writers, Ottoman reading obviously makes this point based on its own experience of previous restorations. If Murad IV and Köprülü viziers succeeded in prolonging the life of the Empire well beyond the 120 years predicted by Khaldun, the order and dynamism could be restored once again.

At a time when British economists were coming up with the evolutionary and progressive concept of history in successive economic stages and the French were conceptualizing their revolution, the Ottoman scribes were reasserting the cyclical political and moral economy of Ibn Khaldun. History was being presented as a realm of possibility and contingency, within given variables and resting on the moral responsibility of the statesmen, not as a linear progress or development associated with modern European concept of progress. Victoria Holbrook reaches a similar conclusion with respect to the poetics of the famous Mevlevî Sheikh Galib who was a close friend to Selim III and celebrated his reforms with his poetry. While making an argument for the inexhaustibility of the poetical language against the dull repetition of contemporary poets, Galib also argues from Sufi ontology for the inexhaustibility of possibilities in the physical world:

It is not progress or decline that [Galib's] perpetual creation theory disallows but the inevitability of either to which we have become accustomed in explanations of historical change by Hegelian dialectic, Darwinian evolution, or Marxist class struggle.²⁸⁶

Just as Galib claimed to novelty through creative use of the sources of poetical tradition with his *Hüsn ü Aşk*, the New Orderists engaged in a comparable project of restoring the order to the state and society and thus rejuvenating the political institutions. Novelty of both attempts makes sense only with regard to the continuity.

Based on Selim III's use of the word *devran*, which, he notes, was not only associated with cyclical natural time but also with collapse and rebuilding, Ali Yaycıoğlu suggests New Order project resonates with the concept of revolution as it was used in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe.²⁸⁷ However, the

²⁸⁶ Victoria Holbrook, *The Unreadable Shores of Love: Turkish Modernity and Mystic Romance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 111.

²⁸⁷ Yaycıoğlu, 17-18.

significant point about the modern concept of revolution as it came to be used after the French revolution is its radical break with the past orders and future orientedness as opposed to the circularity it implied prior to the nineteenth century.²⁸⁸ The question here is whether the Ottoman reform project implied or intended a radical break with the past and the tradition. My answer to this is that by and large it did not.

The New Order project as reflected in the concept *tecdid* does not connote a break with an abstract concept of the past or the tradition; rather it puts into parentheses a period of a hundred and fifty years of dissolution of order, subversion and corruption which was not warranted by tradition anyway, and suggests restoration and revival following tradition. The ambiguity and disagreements regarding what constitutes the tradition is a major component of reform debates, however, politically the reference point is still the past and what is expected of the future does not deviate from what the history has taught. This is not to say that there was no tension or hesitation regarding the outcome of the New Order program. Promise of a restoration is at once liberating in the face of total collapse, but at the same time threatening for a traditional and conservative regime. That is why the political writing of the period is underscored by an emphasis on the necessity of gradual (*tedrîcî*) action as opposed to introduction of sudden (*def'aten*) and dramatic changes, which is understandable considering that they all anticipated a reaction from the Janissaries who were heavily vested in the preservation of the status quo. That is also why, all the memoranda writers unanimously express the necessity of gradual (*tedrîcî*) and cautious (*hekimâne*) institution of any reform and emphasize stability and persistence (*istikrâr*). As mentioned in Ch. 1, the alternative to order is not another, different order but disorder, "order can be disrupted, but not changed."²⁸⁹ In the prognosis of the authors, either the political authority will be successfully restored and a hierarchical and centralized order will be re-established, or a violent janissary reaction will interrupt the reform project. Or as the famous Ottoman expression goes it would be "either the bird of the state/fortune that lands on one's head or the raven

²⁸⁸ See Koselleck, "Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution," in *Future's Past*, 43-57.

²⁸⁹ Hagen, "Legitimacy and World Order", 62

on his corpse” (*ya devlet başa, ya kuzgun leşe*). Somewhat ironically the latter came true for the New Orderists.

As mentioned above, the warnings of many memoranda writers at the onset of the New Order program proved to be prophetic. As the New Order project carried on New Orderists faced increasing difficulties. The project focused on creation of a parallel army in European style, yet the government failed to create new sources of revenue to fund the cost of military modernization. Increasingly revenues from existing taxes and other revenues were channelled to finance the project and new taxes were imposed upon the already impoverished population, which alienated them from the New Order. In the face of opposition and resistance the New Orderists failed to propagate the project to broader public and resorted to an aggressive discourse, which accused anyone who opposed the project as ignorant animals.

Eventually, Selim III was dethroned in 1807 after a successful Janissary revolt to which ulema and the populace gave silent support and Mustafa IV was crowned. Selim III was imprisoned and in order to restore him to the throne and continue the reforms Alemdar Mustafa Paşa, the *ayan* of Rusçuk in alliance with several New Orderists invaded Istanbul. Mustafa IV ordered Selim III to be killed before he could be saved. Alemdar Mustafa Paşa crowned Mahmud II in return for signing the Deed of Alliance (*Sened-i Ittifak*) with the *ayans* recognizing their status in return for their support of the state. This was somewhat ironic considering that most of the New Order memoranda refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the existence and political influence of the provincial power holders. However, a few months later Janissaries revolted again, killing Alemdar Mustafa Paşa and settling down with Mahmud II as he was the only remaining heir of the Ottoman dynasty. After a brief waiting period Mahmud II would start his own restoration program as will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.6 Conclusion

In the later examples of New Order literature, written after 1800, we also observe a novel expression: *gerii kalmak* (staying behind). For instance, in his 1803 memorandum, Behiç Efendi observes that the business of Ottoman state is staying behind (*mesâlih-i Devlet-i ‘aliyyenin giriye kalması*) due to unskilled people being

employed in palace service.²⁹⁰ In the same year, Seyyid Mustafa, an engineer in the New Army, complains about the staying behind of the Empire in the science of warfare compared to knowledgeable nations (*refte refte fenn-i muhârebede milel-i mütefenninenden gerü kalup*).²⁹¹ In these only two instances of the expression I could find, we observe a sense of decline in relation to other states, a slightly different conceptualization of what was meant by the expression “symmetric retaliation” (*mukābele-i bi'l-misl*). The inability of Ottoman state to respond to its enemies lead to a sense of belatedness. However, such expressions were quite rare and they did not grow into a larger debate involving comparisons of the Ottoman European political order at the time, probably due to the interruption of the New Order program. Rather, as I have demonstrated decline and reform was discussed mainly as renewal and restoration.

Underlying both the doctrine of centennial renewal and the project for political restoration was a similar logic which has a circular structure with a reference point in the past. With regard to Ottoman politics the immutable past was the age of Suleiman, when virtually everything worked and belonged in its rightful place. The desire to restore order and reinvigorate the military-administrative apparatus went hand in hand with a desire to renew the religion and restore moral order and piety within the society, whose immutable example lay further in the past. Drawing on different sources of the Ottoman-Islamic tradition, both projects fed each other. Hence, rather than clearly separating different senses and layers of the word *tecdid*, we should think about it as a basic logic which underlies all reform attempts be it political restoration or religious renewal.

Understandably, military reform, obviously the most pressing item in the New Order agenda, has attracted the attention of scholars for a long time and an extensive literature has accumulated. Yet, focusing on military reform and emulation of Western technological advances diverts our attention from the persistent political

²⁹⁰ Çınar, 39.

²⁹¹ Kemal Beydilli, “İlk Mühendislerimizden Seyyid Mustafa ve Nizam-ı Cedid’e Dair Risalesi,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 8 (1987): 435. For a detailed exposition of Seyyid Mustafa’s views on science and reform see Berrak Burçak, “Modernization, Science and Engineering in the Early Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 44:1 (January 2008): 69-83.

language under which this technical transformation was located and justified. What should not be forgotten is that realm of scientific knowledge and the domain of the political thought have separate logics and their interaction is by no means a unilateral or linear one. Scientific advances gives political actors new tools to exercise their power, be it for resistance or governing subjects. During the New Order era, importation of military technology was a means for the New Order clique to subdue the opposition, yet it did not necessarily disrupt the consistence and coherence of the political ideology in a significant way. If anything, justification of reform led to a reinforcement of a particular vocabulary of Sharia based piety.

In his article on Westernization in the Ottoman Empire, Rhoads Murphey criticizes the arguments for an “enlightenment” in Ottoman Greek and Muslim communities throughout the eighteenth century as a consequence of European impact, and argues that “there is no evidence to suggest an erosion of confidence in their own indigenous Arabo-Perso-Turkic Ottoman or pre-Ottoman Byzantine Greek traditions and cultural heritage.”²⁹² New Order debates also confirm such an observation with regard to political thought. It is virtually impossible to find an instance of adoption or translation of modern Western political ideas during the New Order. Even Bernard Lewis who allocates a chapter to impact of the West still ends up admitting that the French revolution did not have a discernible influence on Ottoman political ideas.²⁹³ Expecting otherwise would mean reducing politics to actual policy making by the state. Politics is a relational field which depends on a multiplicity of actors each occupying different positions and a common tradition and language which makes negotiation possible. While introduction of technical innovation may disrupt the power balance between actors, it would still be framed, discussed and debated within a language available to all the actors. Furthermore, it is quite evident that the New Order program did not envision a political arrangement significantly different than what was in the Ottoman past. What they desired was an obedient society, regulated from high above by the state; a restoration, not a revolution.

²⁹² Rhoads Murphey, “Westernization in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire: how far, how fast?” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 23 (1999): 116-139.

²⁹³ Lewis, *Emergence*, 40-74 and “Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey,” *Journal of World History* 1:1 (1953): 105-126.

The recognition of this political language heavily imbued by religious vocabulary has led some scholars to label the process as Islamic modernization²⁹⁴ in order to emphasize the “religious” character of the New Order which has hitherto been conceptualized predominantly as a period of Westernization, secularization and modernization. However, as we have seen the Islamic character of the New Order reforms was a matter of controversy between the actors themselves. Both restorationist and revivalist bureaucrats and the anti-New Order coalition framed their projects within a religious vocabulary and framework which questioned the legitimacy of the other camp and both sides have resorted to concepts and arguments contained within Ottoman-Islamic tradition. The now-outdated modernization accounts presented the New Order period as a conflict between progressive and reactionary actors, favoring the former and passing judgment on the latter.²⁹⁵ Similarly, presenting the New Order as an Islamic modernization puts into question the Islamicity of the Janissaries and their allies in opposition, again amounts to a value judgment which contains an argument as to what is truly Islamic.²⁹⁶

Rather we should simply acknowledge the argumentative and conceptual diversity of the Islamic tradition from which the actors derive their language depending on their political position. In that effort, sometimes they end up re-enacting certain debates which have taken place in the seventeenth century context and even before that in certain episodes of the history of Muslim societies, and in that they intentionally or unintentionally reinforce the tradition in different ways.

²⁹⁴ See Şakul.

²⁹⁵ See Berkes, Shaw, Karal.

²⁹⁶ See once again Ahmed, *What is Islam*, ??.

CHAPTER III

***TANZÎMAT*: REINSTITUTING RULER-SUBJECT RELATIONS**

In this chapter I deal with the concept of *tanzîmât* and the discussions of reform before and after the proclamation of the Tanzimat Edict. Following the abolishment of Janissary corps and the restoration of power to the palace through the comprehensive program of centralization, Ottoman bureaucrats engage in a debate over the direction reform attempts should take. These debates take place in the context of the programme of reform inherited from the New Order Era, reflect on the crises the Empire is going through and also incorporate the European administrative and governmental practices. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the political writing of Sadık Rıfat Paşa, who was a political and intellectual figure central to Tanzimat reforms and concepts of order, politics, civilization and progress. Throughout the chapter, I also demonstrate that during the course of reform debates leading up to the Tanzimat, bureaucratic language relies more and more on the vocabulary of Sharia in criticizing the Ottoman past practices.

3.1 Historiography of the semantics of Tanzimat

As with the New Order era, in this period, too, we see the word *islâh* being used in the basic sense of reform as well as *tecdîd* in the sense it was used in the New Order memoranda; even the Tanzimat edict names what is being done as *tecdîd*. However, this chapter focuses on the particular meaning of the word *Tanzîmât* and the Edict itself.

The Imperial Edict of Gülhane of 1839, or shortly Tanzimat Edict has long been a puzzle for Ottoman historians with quite different and sometimes even conflicting explanations being brought forward. For Enver Ziya Karal the edict was mostly an adaptation of the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789*, a product of West-oriented perspective of Mustafa Reşid Paşa who was but one in a

chain of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century bureaucrats who had defended Westernization but failed to act upon it.²⁹⁷ Yavuz Abadan questioned whether the edict can be considered a constitution, a defining text of public law which regulates state-society relations, but concluded that it falls short of such a character due to its textual ambiguity and the fact that it is non-binding.²⁹⁸ Halil Inalcık, summarized the economic problems, particularly the problem of land administration accumulating up to the Tanzimat and concluded that Tanzimat edict was an attempt to bypass these problems by paving the road to Westernization and secularization of government albeit in a language which invoked religious tradition.²⁹⁹ Roderic Davison saw the edict as partly a product of British diplomats, who sought to push the Ottoman state on the path to reform.³⁰⁰ Şerif Mardin argued that behind the edict lied a desire to limit the executive power of the sultan, entertained by Mustafa Reşid Paşa who might have been influenced by William Godwin's *An Inquiry Concerning Political Justice*, which promoted parallel ideas in England following John Locke's liberalism.³⁰¹ He also highlighted Sadık Rıfat Paşa's ideas on government and administration as a context in which to understand Tanzimat but seeking the inspiration for Sadık Rıfat Paşa's work in European sources, particularly Comte de Volney's *Les Ruines de Palmyre*. Later he emphasized the influence of Metternich's conservative reformism through Sadık Rıfat Paşa again.³⁰²

The drawback of these explanations is that they are retrospective and hence suffer from teleological models which see the Ottomans in a linear path to Westernization,

²⁹⁷ Enver Ziya Karal, "Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu'nda Batının Etkisi," in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, eds. Halil Inalcık and Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu (Ankara: Phoenix, 2006), 65-83.

²⁹⁸ Yavuz Abadan, "Tanzimat fermanının tahlili" in *Tanzimat I: Yüziüncü Yıldönümü Münasebetiyle V. I* (İstanbul: Maarif, 1940), 31-58, reprinted in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 37-65.

²⁹⁹ Halil Inalcık, "Tanzimat Nedir?" *DTCF Yıllık Araştırmalar Dergisi I* (1940-41): 237-263 and "Sened-i İttifak ve Gülhane Hatt-I Hümayunu," *Belleken* 112 (Ekim 1964): 603-622. Both articles have been reprinted in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 13-35 and 83-100 respectively.

³⁰⁰ Roderic Davison, *Essays in Ottoman-Turkish History, 1774-1923* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 78.

³⁰¹ Şerif Mardin, *Türkiye 'de Toplum ve Siyaset: Makaleler I* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1990), 246-266; originally published in "Tanzimat Fermanı'nın Manası," *Forum* 8:88-91 (1957) and also reprinted in "Tanzimat Fermanı'nın Manası: Yeni Bir İzah Denemesi" in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 109-126.

³⁰² Mardin, *Genesis*, 169-195.

legal maturity and liberalization of political structures in the light of later political developments in the Empire. A concrete example of this drawback is that despite the popular and scholarly conviction, the text of the decree did not promise legal or social equality to Muslims and non-Muslims, notwithstanding the fact that the reception of the edict varied greatly around the Empire partly owing to the ambiguity and brevity of the text.³⁰³ Legal or social equality (*müsâvât*) became a key political concept only after the Reform Edict of 1856, which was also called the Edict of Equality (*müsâvât fermânı*).³⁰⁴

This begs the question of in what context the firman should be read and made sense of if we are to take Westernization into brackets. In the last few decades, there has been several attempts criticizing the earlier accounts and suggesting novel interpretations. Somewhat ironically, the first criticism came from Yalçın Küçük, the rogue scholar who unforgivingly bashed Enver Ziya Karal for his emphasis on the influence of foreign ambassadors such as Canning and instead pointed out that the declaration of Tanzimat had much to do with the Egyptian question and the challenge of Mehmet Ali Paşa.³⁰⁵ Butrus Abu Manneh, in a most original article, has argued that Mustafa Reşid Paşa was not solely responsible for the drafting of the decree, that an earlier draft had been decided upon with the agreement of several statesmen and palace members under the influence of the Sunni-orthodox doctrine of the Sufi order of Naqshbandiyya of whom they were all followers.³⁰⁶ In a recent follow up article, he argued this time in a reductive framework that Tanzimat Edict had a completely Islamic character as opposed to the secular character of the Reform Edict of 1856,

³⁰³ Candan Badem, “The Question of the Equality of Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War (1853-1856)” in *The Crimean War 1853-1856 Colonial Skirmish or Rehearsal for World War? Empires, Nations, and Individuals*, ed. Jerzy W. Borejsza (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2011), 80-83; and Veysel Şimşek, “The Grand Strategy of the Ottoman Empire 1826-1841” (PhD Diss., McMaster University, 2015), 233.

³⁰⁴ For instance Young Ottomans frequently referred to the Reform Edict as such, see Ch. 5.

³⁰⁵ See Yalçın Küçük, *Aydın Üzerine Tezler: 1830-1980 V. I* (Ankara: Tekin Yayınevi, 1984), 207-270.

³⁰⁶ Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Islamic Roots of Gülhane Script,” *Die Welt Des Islams* 34:2 (Nov, 1994): 173-203.

due to the allegiance of the makers of the first to Naqshbandi order and Islam it represented, and those of the latter to an abstract concept of the state.³⁰⁷

Recently, Frederick Anscombe highlighted the widespread domestic unrest and revolt in reaction to the oppressive and arbitrary policies of the palace from Selim III onwards and particularly during the later reign of Mahmud II as the context of Tanzimat.³⁰⁸ The unfair taxation policies, and particularly the institution of tax farming, introduction of conscription and the ensuing state violence employed to execute conscription and other reforms had created wide-spread dissent with the people in Anatolia and Balkans, leading to an unfavorable image of the ruler; and the Tanzimat Edict addressed primarily and explicitly these concerns and promised restitution of justice through upholding the law, basically equated with Sharia. In a parallel argument, Linda Darling highlighted the influence of the “circle of justice” both for the text of the firman and Tanzimat policies.³⁰⁹ According to Darling while there is obviously an influence of European ideas on government, these are still couched in the framework of circle of justice which is recognizable within the tradition.

This begs the question of what Tanzimat meant in the most comprehensive sense, or motivation behind what Veysel Şimşek calls the “Ottoman grand strategy.” My argument is that the reform project proposed in the Tanzimat edict was a combination of the broad quest for order whose outlines had been devised already during the New Order era, and a move to address the issues arising from a sweeping overhaul of the elements that had previously preserved the domestic balance of power within society at large. On the one hand, the state was trying to reorganize itself to achieve higher military-administrative efficiency through centralized command and on the other hand it was trying to address the grievances created by over-exertion of state power over the society. This was a tension already existing within the reform agenda in the late eighteenth century: a desire to reintroduce order

³⁰⁷ Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Two Concept of the State in the Tanzimat: the Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane and the Hatt-ı Hümayun,” *Turkish Historical Review* 6 (2015): 117-137.

³⁰⁸ See Frederick Anscombe, “Islam and the Age of Ottoman Reform,” *Past and Present* 208:1 (2010): 159-189, and *State, Faith and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2014), 61-90.

³⁰⁹ Darling, *Social Justice*, 161-167.

to a society which was not legible anymore in traditional moral terms, and a necessity of reinforcing the state apparatus by creating material and human resources needed, which somehow always put the burden on the subjects considering the inability of the state to create new sources of finance. To put it differently, it was the tension between restoration of political power to the centre and creating a broader social order recognizable in traditional terms. Tanzimat Edict was not a singular text in that regard either; political writing of the period, before and after the edict, reflected this tension, complementing the concept of Tanzimat.

3.2 *Nizâm* Triumphant? After Janissaries

The destruction of Janissaries and the establishment of the new army through mass conscription marks the end of a long era in Ottoman politics. During the early years, the power and influence of the provincial magnates had already been curbed, in what Şükrü Iııcak calls the de-ayanization policy.³¹⁰ With Janissaries gone the ulema lost their allies in challenging the authority of the palace, and with the curbing of the power of the ulema through transfer of the control of pious foundations to the state by Mahmud II, virtually all political power was restored to the palace. As Gültekin Yıldız also observes, what Mahmud II achieved was a restoration *par excellence* rather than simple reform.³¹¹ As we have seen with Mehmed Esad Efendi, the political writing of the period also framed the events as a renewal and Mahmud II as the renewer of the century, referring to the classical doctrine of centennial renewal. Beydilli also argues that Mahmud II himself believed that he was the sole agency who could save the Empire.³¹²

Reforming the army, however, was only one, albeit the most pressing item on the reform process envisioned during the New Order era. Ottoman state still faced a dire need to improve the finances through creation of new resources in order to fund the new army, reorganize the bureaucracy to achieve administrative efficiency to be able to govern an Empire especially after the removal of all the intermediary power

³¹⁰ For a detailed account see Iııcak, 27-98.

³¹¹ For an excellent discussion of the implications of Mahmud II's restoration project see Yıldız, 15-130.

³¹² Beydilli, "Küçük Kaynarca'dan Tanzimat'a", 62.

holders, particularly the *ayan*, and the remoulding of the population into obedient and moral subjects was still on the agenda. Indeed, the Ottoman state had to fill the power vacuum it had created itself and fast, considering the traumatic Greek revolt and the impending challenge of Mehmed Ali Paşa, the governor of Egypt. Hence, order was still a major concern for the Ottoman bureaucratic elite.

A reform memorandum written by Keçecizade İzzet Molla³¹³ in 1827, shortly after the destruction of Janissary corps, shows how decline and order were still major concerns despite the successful restoration and victory of the crusade against the Janissaries:

If you ask whether giving order to this old world amounts to recovering what was not there to begin with, then we answer: The Habsburgs have been administering their state of two thousand years by rational measures and conversing with their enemies, even though they are infidels and hence, removed from God's blessing. Indeed, their capital has faced invasion twice, yet they did not say "It is the time of old age [*vakt-i inhitât*] and collapse for our state, there is no more room for any measures, let us see what fortune brings"; they have emerged anew as a powerful state.³¹⁴

He also rebuts those who argue that Frankish ways and the Ottoman ways are not compatible (*usûl-ı efrenciyyeye bizim usûlümüz mugâyirdir*) and puts forward Egypt as an example who was revived by an Ottoman vizier even after the French invasion.³¹⁵ In a following passage which demonstrates the persistence of the fatalist argument, he responds to those who see Armageddon approaching and expect salvation only in the arrival of the Mehdi (*zuhûr-ı Mehdi yakîn iken nizâm-ı âlem olmaz diyenler*) by invoking the dictum that one has to plant his trees even if he is

³¹³ Keçecizade İzzet Molla has been a popular figure in the study of Ottoman poetry due to his innovative style and substance. Tanpınar's celebration of him as one of the forerunners of modern Turkish poetry and prose also contributed to this popularity, see Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı*, 91-95. His political writing, however, seems to have been mostly neglected despite his key role in certain political crises of the period. For an exception see Beydilli, "Küçük Kaynarca'dan Tanzimat'a Islahat Düşüncesi", 58-62.

³¹⁴ Lütfi Doğan, "Keçecizade İzzet Molla'nın Islah-ı Nizâm-ı Devlete Dâir Risâle Adlı Eserinin Transkripsiyonu ve Edisyon Kritiği" (MA Thesis, Istanbul University, 2000), 7. "Su'âl olumursa ki bu eski âleme nizâm virmek i 'âde-i ma'dûm kabilinden değil midir? Cevâb virilür ki Nemçe Devleti vükelâsı ma'a-küfr, hem te'yidât-ı ilâhiyyeden mahcûr iken tedâbir-i akliyye ile iki bin senelik devletlerini idâre eyleyüp tedâfîü vü tahaffuzî düşmenleriyle söyleşmededirler. Hattâ iki defa pâ-yı tahtları istilâ mertebesine gelmiş iken devletimizin vakt-i hedm ve inhitâtdır diyerek tedâbiri terk idüp artık böyle oturmadan gayrı çâre yoktur, bakalım felek ne yapar dimeyip yeni zuhur itmiş sâhib-i kudret bir devlet oldular."

³¹⁵ Ibid, 8.

told tomorrow is the end of the world.³¹⁶ Yet, he is not overly optimistic about the prospects of reform either; İzzet Molla argues that something has gone clearly wrong with the Ottoman way:

The question is who will do all this? Our answer is “we will do it by God’s support.” There are so many states who have established order in their realms; there are no instances of deputies from one state going to another to establish order. It is up to the deputies of that realm in any case. Our own deputies are not possessed or traitors, thank God, but since our ways (*usûl*) are corrupt, it would not make a difference even if we had Aristo or Plato here. It took us forty years to convince people of the benefit of the issue of military drills (*madde-i ta’lîm*), an issue which is clear as day.... Besides the matter of religion, the order of the infidel states are better than the Islamic state, as in the issue of military drill. That is because, unbelief is constant in its creed and hence they have established order in their world. We, on the other hand, are not loyal to our creed, and not constant in our practice.³¹⁷

Besides the sober admission of Christian superiority in all worldly things, we see a minor shift of vocabulary here: the suggestion that what is corrupt is actually *usûl*, not anything else; Ottoman way itself is corrupt. *Usûl* is a difficult word to translate, it can mean either principles (foundations and sources) or method, or both at the same time. The late eighteenth century authors advocated renewal of the ancient and revered laws/order (*nizâm-ı kadîm* or *kânûn-ı kadîm*) which had been dissolved with the passage of time and within that vocabulary *usûl* was something to be preserved whereas *tavr* (form) could be changed. Keçecizade, on the other hand, in an effort to explain the systemic, structural problems of the Ottoman state puts the blame on a corrupt *usûl* and advocates a return to Sharia:

What do we have the execution of Sharia for? Once we change our ways [*usûl*] and all the issues are bound to the way of the New Order [*usûl-ı Nizâm-ı Cedîd*], with the auspice of the glorious Sharia... The order that is from God is not spoiled easily. Right is triumphant and nothing may trump it. If an order is still spoiled upon the execution of necessary policy with reference to the

³¹⁶ Ibid, 10.

³¹⁷ Ibid, 11-12, “*Su’âl vârid olur ki bunları kim yapacak? Cevâb viririz ki bi-tevfiki’llâh biz yaparız. Zîrâ bu kadar mülküne nizâm virmiş devletler var, bir devletden âher devlete vükelâ gelüp nizâm virdiği yokdur, yine o mülkün vükelâsı yapar. Bizim mevcûd olan vükelâmız li’llâhi’l-hamd ve’l-minne hâ’in ve mecnûn değildir; fakat usûlumuz bozuk olduğundan bu hâle göre Aristo ve Eflatun gelse böyle olur. Şu maddesi tadimin hüsnünü zann iddirmeğe kırk yıl küff’ ve inâd üzre... İşte ta’lim maddesi gibi umûr-ı dîniyyeden mâ’adâ kefare devletlerinin nizâmâtı devlet-i Islâmîyye’ye gâlibdir; zîrâ küfr hulûde’l-i’tikâddırlar. Anın için dünyâlarına nizâm virmişlerdir. Biz dahî lâîk olan murûriye’l-i’tikâd olup hulûdiye’l-muâmele olmayız.*”

glorious Sharia and after analysis and verification, its fault may be blamed upon this humble servant. It is beyond order to object to such a perfect order by bringing up things with corrupt and spoiled foundations.³¹⁸

Although Keçecizade invokes the New Order as the program as being still in currency, his argument goes one step further than that of the New Orderists in emphasizing that there is something rotten in the way things have come to be with the Ottoman state and the solution is proper application and execution of Sharia. Another difference is that while the New Order literature (and the literature of earlier centuries) emphasize the poor moral standing of the men of the state and the people as the cause of lack of order and present order as something to be achieved as a result of and maintained through moral responsibility, with Keçecizade we see a partial reversal of the equation: lack of order may also lead to moral corruption; one cannot have good moral subjects with a corrupt system.

In his usage, *nizâm* comes to mean both major and minor regulations regarding the state and proper moral conduct of the individuals as well. He still repeats the previous arguments in the literature, complaining about extravagance, the unnecessarily high wages paid to the statesmen, corruption, lethargy etc. as causes of disorder, yet order also gains a new abstract meaning as a broad set of regulations and a sum of these regulations. The of the instrumentality of the vocabulary of Sharia becomes apparent at this point: proposed as an abstract set of politico-moral principles, Sharia allows both a criticism of Ottoman way/system/tradition through broader Islamic precepts and also again as an abstract set of principles it allows legitimization of the European administrative and military practices to be imported. Thus new order gains a clearer meaning: ridding the Ottoman *ancien regime* of its corruption and building a new order on the principles of Sharia which are “compatible” with rational practices of the Europeans anyway.

³¹⁸ Ibid, 36-37, “*Siyâset-i şerîyye ne gün içündür? Bir kerre usûlümüz değışüp cemi’-i mevâdd usûl-i Nizâm-ı Cedid’e tatbik olunup şer’at-ı mutahbara nâzır olduđu sûretde... Li’llâh olan nizâm pek güç bozulur... Ancak el-hakku ya’lû ve lâ-yu’lâ ‘aleyh tedkîk ü tahkîk ile şer’-i şerîfe tatbik ile iktizâ iden siyâseti icrâ ile bir nizâm bozulur ise anın kusuru bu kemterde icrâ olunsun. Esâsı fâsîd, bozulan şeylerle böyle mü’esses nizâma karşı söylemek nizâmdan hâricdir.*”

Keçecizade uses *nizâm* and *tanzîm* with frequency which is striking even for an Ottoman political text, which betrays the preoccupation with reorganizing the state apparatus following military reform. Keçecizade puts the situation as such:

We were three groups: the ulema, the statesmen and the scribes, and the barracks. All three of us had gone corrupt with the passage of time. Our difference from the barracks is that we have confessed to our error and sought refuge in the mercy of our glorious Sultan. They, on the other hand, have not confessed to their situation and engaged in various crimes and treason. For that, God has destroyed them... Reason dictates that knowing our lack we strive to rise above our times and adopt an order among ourselves...³¹⁹

Unless the administrative cadres also adopt an order, they will corrupt the military organization as well, he comments.³²⁰

The concept of order as a set of regulations and principles (*usûl*) emerges even more clearly after Keçecizade's ridicule of some of the earlier reform attempts, particularly the enforcement of the *bedevîyyet* during the Greek revolt:

As Na'ima had responded to Üstüvânî [sic], the ulema and the bureaucrats of this grand dynasty cannot walk around naked like the desert Arabs. We respond to the ignoramuses who say "it was like that once" that equity and fairness is achieved if every class is content with the earlier times. Our times and the earlier times may be seen if one looks at the gravestones in Üsküdar. Something which has reached this stage cannot be returned to its earlier state. But one can issue a ban through Sharia by reasoning that over-decoration of the gravestones are harmful to both the deceased and his inheritors. But one cannot ban all gravestones as harmful innovation and even if one does, it is not worth it. Similarly, since it is not possible to revert each class to that former state, we should strive to care for its order as much as possible following the dictum of "do not completely abandon one thing, if you cannot conceive it completely." Otherwise the objection of the fool is against all classes. If you say "let us organize each class like as it was before", that is not reasonable either, for the land allotment for the grand vizier during Sultan Suleiman's time would not be enough today even for the quiver carrier today. Hence, Sultan Suleiman did not imitate Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, and he, in his turn, did not imitate Umar I. The point of order is to improve upon present and not let the situation fare worse at

³¹⁹ Ibid, 56, "Bizler üç tâ'ife idik: Biri ulemâ, biri ricâl ü ketebe, biri ocaklı. Üçümüz de murûr-ı ezmine ile bozulmuş idik. Ocaklıdan farkımız bu ki biz i 'tirâf-ı kusur idüp şevketlü pâdişâhımızın afv ü merhametine sığınup otururduk. Anlar bulundukları hâle mu 'terif olmayup dürlü dürlü huyânet ü habâsetler eylediler. Anın içün mevlâ-yı müte 'âl kahr ü tedmîr eyledi... İnsâf budur ki biz de cürmümüzü bilüp baş başa virüp rızâ-yı İlâhiyye ve rızâ-yı pâdişâhî üzre vaktimize nazaran ehven olmağla çalışup şu nizâma girüp..."

³²⁰ Ibid, 14, "...yalnız asker nizâmında olup biz böyle bî-nizâm olarak nizâmlı şey'e nizâmsızlıkla nizâm virme dâ'iyyesi hatâ-yı fâhişdir."

least. Otherwise the kind of correction of the world demanded by the people is not possible. Our desire is that bribery -that destroyer of the world- is abolished, our income is preserved, our magistrates and viziers be content with their allotments and they do not commit injustice, and Sharia-abiding regents are appointed and an order is established which is at least better than that of the 40-50 years before. Questioning who owes whom and how much will not lead to anything but the dissolution of the world. Many things may be said in this issue. But, by taking on the case of each class blaming the other, we will corrupt the world instead of correcting it.³²¹

In this short passage Keçecizade tackles several different issues at once and reiterates the doctrine of renewal. The argument about clothing is clearly directed against the more literal arguments for simplicity and frugality that emerge in the early nineteenth century which manifested itself as official state policy during the Greek revolt as a return to *bedeviyet*. By invoking the example of gravestones, Keçecizade equates this approach with Wahhabi salafism. Wahhabism had emerged as a revivalist movement in Najd in the late eighteenth century and challenged the Ottoman rule on both religious and political grounds.³²² One of the main markers of the movement was their rejection of gravestones and visiting of the tombs (including that of the prophet) as harmful innovations (*bid'a*) and idolatry, a reaction which Ottomans found extreme.

Keçecizade similarly reject arguments for a full reversal and total imitation of ancestors for reforming the social estates as ridiculous and foolhardy proposals, which comes out as a criticism of the debates of the New Order era. The optimist projections of the previous literature are also gone; he does not consider a full revival possible and suggests a humbled and controlled reform process which emphasizes prevention of extravagance, austerity, frugality and law-abidance. Hence, revival is not about imitation (*taklîd*) of past practices but the principles and laws underlying these practices, namely principles of Sharia.

Reforms proposed by Keçecizade boil down to the organization of the central bureaucracy and the religious institution and mainly their status and salaries. We also see some economic suggestions such as building of factories and making better use

³²¹ Ibid, 60-61.

³²² See Selda Güner, *Vahhabi-Suudiler (1744-1819): Osmanlı Arabistan'ında Kıyam ve Tenkil* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2013): ----

of sources such as the metal deposits.³²³ In spite of his argument for compatibility between Sharia and the European ways, there is little in his concrete proposal to imitate the Western ways. Still, however, closing his memorandum he feels the need to reiterate that what is at stake is not innovation or novelty but *tecdîd*:

These principles and methods, thus written, look like some new laws [*kavânîn-i cedîde*] and a bunch of regulations [*nizâmât-ı adîde*] at first glance and to the gaze of the fool and as such may disturb the minds of some. Observed with a meticulous eye, however, they are all about the renewal [*tecdîd*] of the old laws [*kavânîn-i atîka*] of our Exalted State... Either we take this approach or stay the way we are now. There is no middle ground.³²⁴

Keçecizade's memorandum hence implicitly puts forward a concept of tradition (*kânûn-ı kadîm*) which is equated with principles rather than established practices, but nonetheless rejects a fundamentalist destruction of everything acquired. We can observe the basic and unmistakable logic of renewal which proposes restoration of tradition in the face of a perceived moral and systemic degeneration. Izzet Molla may have been one of the latest instances of Ottoman bureaucrats who came from *ilmiye* background and later switched to the central bureaucracy, a trend observable throughout the eighteenth century, which would partly explain his emphasis on tradition and renewal. However, Izzet Molla's utilization of concepts is representative in more than one way. Besides his polemical attitude which betrays the kind of discussions going on within the central Ottoman bureaucracy, his debate with Akif Paşa one year later in 1828 regarding how to respond to Russia inciting revolts in Morea, reveals a lot about the state of Ottoman political language.³²⁵

3.3 Domestic Reform vs. Jihad

Keçecizade starts with pointing out that a state of five hundred years will not remain the same way throughout as is evident from the histories and one should seek the lesser evil by making peace with the enemy.³²⁶ With the Janissary corps just destroyed, new army being weak and unable to meet the enemy in the battlefield, the

³²³ Doğan, "Keçecizade Izzet Molla",

³²⁴ Ibid,

³²⁵ Both Izzet Molla's memorandum and Akif Paşa's response are recorded by chronicler Ahmed Lütî, see Ahmed Lütî Efendi, *Vak'anüvis Ahmed Lütî Efendi Tarihi I*, trans. Ahmet Hezarfen (Istanbul: YKY, 1999), 281-293; also see Mardin, *Genesis*, 172-73.

³²⁶ Ibid, 283.

Empire should be cautious until it has a proper army. He blames the bureaucrats for being hypocritical in their conduct, opposing military campaign in evening gatherings, and stating the opposite in court gatherings.³²⁷ They also say that the Ottoman state is not a state based on reason (*akıl devleti*) but a state based on Sharia (*şer' devleti*) but they do not have any reservation appealing to the necessity and conditions when they face difficult questions from friend and foe alike.³²⁸ Like Ahmed Resmi of the late eighteenth century he blames sycophants and cowards for warmongering. And echoing Naima he invokes the treaty of Hudaybiyyah against those who suspect the Russians will keep to their words; the prophet knew through divine message that the Meccan infidels would not abide by the treaty yet still he agreed to it, Ottomans on the other hand have no guarantee that the Russians will simply violate the treaty.³²⁹ His suggestions is not to count on God's providence (*nusret-i ilâhî*) since it may not arrive, and risk losing the Morea and focusing on improving the material conditions of the rest of the Empire by having universal tax survey and the sultan moving between Edirne, Bursa and Istanbul (this time echoing Tatarcık Abdullah Molla) thus overseeing the reform process in Anatolia and Rumelia personally.³³⁰ He concludes that improving the prosperity of the realms (*imaret-i memâlik, terfîh-i memâlik*) is better than the expansion of the realms (*tevsi'-i memâlik*).

Akif Paşa's counter memorandum³³¹ starts with a long sermon on the causes of Ottoman military decline which refers to the classical doctrine of four estates (*erkân-ı erba'a*), and the significance of the balance (*i'tidâl*) between the estates for the welfare of the realms and social order (*kivâm-ı imaret-i mülkiyye ve nizâm-ı hey'et-i*

³²⁷ Ibid, 285.

³²⁸ Ibid, 284.

³²⁹ Ibid, 288.

³³⁰ Ibid, 288, "...mekrûh ve gayr-i mekrûh bir musâlaha sûretine bed olunup hitâm-ı maslahatda şevketlü velîni' metimiz efendimiz Edirne cânibine sevk-i kümeit-i izz ü ikbâl buyurup tahrîr-i bilâd ve terfîh-i ibâd için memâlik-i mahrûsa-i şâhâne müceddeden tahrîr ü taharri olunarak Rumeli'ye ahsen-i hâlde bir nizâm verip her ne kadar vücûd-ı nâzenîn-i hümayunlarına sıklet ise de bir iki mâh dahi Bursa'da ikamet buyurulup ba'de vüzerâ-yı izâma ve hükkâm-ı kirâma verdikleri nizâmın ta'lîmnâmeleri verilerek tarîka-i adâlet ile birkaç sene Rumeli'de ve Anadolu'da birkaç Mora peydâ olacağı akıldan ba'îd değildir. Matlûb olan imâret-i memâlikdir. Yoksa idâre olmadıği sûretde cihân memâlikimiz olsa fâide etmez."

³³¹ The memorandum was written by Akif Paşa with Pertev Paşa intervening occasionally and complementing the argument. Akif Paşa and Pertev Paşa were among the most influential statesmen of the period both serving as the minister of the newly established ministry of foreign affairs.

ictimâ'îyye), the law of creation and decay (*kevn ü fesâd*) and transformation and revolution (*tahavvül ü inkılâb*) and how Mahmud II is the man of the century (*sahib-mi'a*).³³² However, this passage on the classical doctrines and concepts are so detached from the rest of the memorandum that their pure rhetorical value becomes immediately apparent. In Akif Paşa's memorandum, classical concepts are really reduced to barely more than a lip service.

Akif Paşa rejects the proposal of peace on the grounds that it is obvious that treaties between states are simply valid as long as states have power to enforce it and they are violated as soon as the situation changes.³³³ Claiming that God's providence may not arrive is attributing ill intent to God and anyway Muslims cannot run from the enemy even if they are outnumbered as is evident from countless battles of the prophet.³³⁴ Hudaybiya is not comparable, since it was not a case of infidels attacking Muslims from all fronts, rather one should look at other battles of the prophet where Muslims fought with difficult odds.³³⁵ Confusing the minds by various objections is not acceptable and what is fitting for a Muslim is to abide by his sultan and fight for Islam.³³⁶

What this debate reveals first is that the debate over reform between New Orderists and their opponents continued under a different disguise, this time within the bureaucratic elite and again in terms of religious concepts and over the proper definition of Muslimhood. It also demonstrates how the traditional concepts and tropes are still pretty much in effect and how the resources of the same bureaucratic discourse can be used to produce argument for the completely opposite sides of a conflict. Both figures start with the argument from the long process of decline, yet while Keçecizade emphasizes the continuation of domestic reforms and advises caution, Akif Paşa discards the argument by stressing the responsibility of jihad. Religious law is invoked both for rational government and reform policy, and for a reckless call for war. And once again the choice between war and peace becomes a measure of proper Muslimhood. Early Muslim history partly replaces arguments

³³² *Lütfi Tarihi I*, 289.

³³³ *Ibid*, 292.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 292.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, 193.

³³⁶ *Ibid*, 294.

from Ottoman history for purposes of political argumentation. The tension between reason and tradition emerges as a central political question. And even when we take Keçecizade's accusation of the hypocrisy of bureaucrats at face value and consider that those who argued for war were doing simply out of fear of persecution, still this demonstrates with which argument the rhetorical power was stronger at the time. No one had the courage to downplay the motivation for war.

What shall we do, then, with the argument that the call for peace and domestic reform gains over the argument for war through the eighteenth century?³³⁷ First, we have to remember that the argument for peace was always conditional as was evident in the reference to the peace of Hudaybiya; Naima, and Ahmed Resmi proposed peace as a necessity arising from the dismal condition of the Empire, which, once overcome, would bring victory once again. As seen in the New Order literature as well, once the Empire regained its power and vigour the war would be taken to the infidels; in fact retaliation, taking the fight to the enemy was the main driver of the reform process. The way Muslim identity was established vis-a-vis the European enemy (infidels) did not allow for an argument for perpetual peace. And second, those bureaucrats who called for peace were mostly in the minority.³³⁸ Actually, the tension between aggressive foreign policy and domestic reform was a significant element, a rhetorical tool, in factional struggles between the bureaucratic elite.³³⁹ Pertev Paşa and Akif Paşa who co-authored the memorandum against Keçecizade would later engage in a bitter rivalry during the infamous Churchill Affair (1836), a diplomatic crisis which led to Akif Paşa's dismissal first and later Pertev Paşa's dismissal and execution.³⁴⁰ While Akif Paşa held a cynical perspective towards Europe and diplomacy, Mustafa Reşid Paşa and Sadık Rıfat Paşa, both protégés of Pertev would be the heralds of a diplomacy and domestic reform oriented policy.

³³⁷ See Ch. 2.

³³⁸ Keçecizade's memorandum caused his exile and he died soon afterwards while the Russian were advancing to Istanbul.

³³⁹ See Cengiz Kırılı, *Yolsuzluğun İcadı: 1840 Ceza Kanunu, İktidar ve Bürokrasi* (Istanbul: Verita, 2015), 89-90.

³⁴⁰ A British correspondent, Churchill accidentally shoots and wounds a Muslim child while hunting in Üsküdar and is taken into custody to be beaten. The incident leads to a diplomatic crisis between the Empire and the British with other European ambassadors being involved. See Taha Niyazi Karaca ed., *Türk-İngiliz İlişkileri ve Mehmet Akif Paşa'nın Anıları (İbret)* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2004), and Joseph M. Fewster, "Lord Ponsonby and the Churchill Affair of 1836: An Episode in the Eastern Question," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 9:2 (1998): 55-90.

A popular treatise on Europe by Sadık Rıfat Paşa, written one year after the Churchill incident and two years before the declaration of Tanzimat clearly invokes the tension between jihad and domestic reform.³⁴¹ He explains the political orientation of European governments as such:

As was the custom since ancient times among all peoples, European rulers, too, had engaged in lots of battles and campaigns among each other previously. However, for some time, the principle of the conservation of the security of the realms and the population has been upheld as paramount by all states following the general peace agreed upon by the consensus of the rulers. That is, today, peace is preferred over war and particularly [it is believed] that prosperity of realms occur as a result of perpetual peace and perfection of the welfare of the subjects and that even though the external glory of a state may rise through victory in war and the conquest of new lands, she loses from its prosperity and order in the domestic sphere so long as she is at war...³⁴²

While clearly a reflection on the state of the art of governmental ideas in Europe, Sadık Rıfat Paşa's framing of the topic as a tension between war and peace still fits in with the ongoing debates within Ottoman bureaucratic elite.³⁴³ Whereas a concept like perpetual peace (*müsâlaha-i mütemâdiyye*) points to Rıfat Paşa's familiarity with European debates –despite him not knowing any European language–, in Ottoman context, his treatise on Europe reads almost like an addendum to Keçecizade's argument that prosperity is better than expansion. Following the introduction Rıfat Paşa lays out the pillars of order as he sees it in Europe (*nizâmât-ı mevzû 'anın asıl esası*) as well-being of the subjects and the realms (*istirâhât-ı teba'a ve mülkiye*), richness of the treasury (*vefret-i hazîne*), and military strength (*kuvve-i askeriyye*), a

³⁴¹ See Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Rıfat Paşa merhûmun Viyana'da ibtidâki sefâretinde Avrupa'nın ahvâline dâ'ir yazdığı risâledir," in *Müntehabât-ı Âsâr II* (Istanbul: Tatyos Divitçiyân, 1290 [1873-74]), 1-12; for the transcript see Bekir Günay, "Mehmet Sadık Rıfat Paşa'nın hayatı, eserleri ve görüşleri" (PhD Diss., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1992), 91-100 and Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, "Sadık Rıfat Paşa ve Avrupa'nın Ahvaline Dair Risalesi," *Liberal Düşünce* 3 (1996): 115-124.

³⁴² Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Avrupa'nın Ahvâline Dair", 1, "...âdât-ı kâdime-i zamâniye üzere kâffe-i akvâm beyninde câri olduğu misillü Avrupa hükümdârânı meyânında dahi mukaddemlerde nice nice ceng ü peykâr vuku'a gelmiş ise de bir müddetten berî inkalâbât-ı sâbika-i harbiyye ve ictimâ'-ı hükümdârân ile bi'l-ittifâk karargir olan musâlaha-i umûmiyye üzerine hıfz-ı asâyiş-i mülk ü millet kazıyye-i nâfi'ası her devletde mültezem tutulmakda ya'ni cemî' zamânda sulh harb üzerine müreccah olub husûsiyle i'mârât-ı mülkiyye ise musâlaha-i mutemâdiyye ve istirâhât-ı kâmile-i teba'a ile hâsıl olduğu ve eğer çi galebe-i harbi ve istilâ-yı memâlik-i cedîde ile bir devletin i'tibârât-ı zâhiriyyesi kesb-i şân ve i'tilâ ider ise de iç yüzünde muhârib olduğu müddetde memâlik-i ma'mûresinden ve heyet-i nizâmiyyesinden gayb itdiği..."

³⁴³ As yet, the only study which notes the continuity in Sadık Rıfat Paşa's political writing is Beydilli, "Küçük Kaynarca'dan Tanzimat'a", 63-64. Otherwise he is presented as the first original modern political writer in Ottoman letters.

formulation which closely resembles the circle of justice while pointing to the new European governmental practices at the same time. In fact, he associates the formula with civilization (*medeniyet*) and advancement/progress (*ilerüleme*), two words introduced by him to Ottoman vocabulary³⁴⁴:

As required by the current *civilization* of Europe, that is, its ways and habits, they attain the progress of the essential good of their realms only through increasing the number of the members of the nation and developing the realms and the state and producing security and welfare. And through such common good they progress and gain over each other in quality of their conditions and fame.³⁴⁵

Here civilization comes to mean the political ways and habits of the Europeans whereas progress refers to the index of relative material development, prosperity and domestic order.³⁴⁶ Progress also mirrors the word backwardness (*girü kalmak*) used occasionally during the New Order debates (See, Ch. 2). While backwardness meant the loss of military and economic power of the Empire in relative terms, progress is the exact opposite. Rather than an abstract concept of human progress and development in idealistic terms, progress in its Ottoman usage was a concept indicating competition and rivalry which had been foreshadowed by the concept of symmetric retaliation (*mukābele-i bi'l-misl*). Rıfat Paşa uses the word progress again in his letters to Mustafa Reşid Paşa from Vienna, detailing his correspondence with Metternich over the issue of Egypt and Mehmed Ali Paşa's revolt.³⁴⁷ In these letters, progress is used as the progress of the administrative order of the Empire (*nizâmât-ı*

³⁴⁴ Interestingly İbrahim Müteferrika uses the word *medeniyet* as early as the early eighteenth century in his treatise on military reform. However, in his usage *medeniyet* is nothing other than the human habit of living in society and inter-dependence as posited by classical ethics literature. Rıfat Paşa's usage, however, explicitly refers to a European civilization. See Adil Şen ed. *İbrahim Müteferrika ve Usulü'l-Hikem fi-Nizamü'l-Ümem* (Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1995), 128, 132.

³⁴⁵ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Avrupa Ahvâline Dair", 4, "Avrupa'nın şimdiki sivilizasyonu ya 'ni usûl-i me'nûsiyyet ve medeniyeti iktizâsınca menâfi '-i mülkiyye-i lâzımelerinin ilerülemesini ancak teksîr-i efrâd-ı millet ve i 'mâr-ı memâlik ve devlet ve istihsâl-i âsâyiş ve rahat esbâb-ı 'adîdesiyle icrâ ve istihsâl itmekde ve bu misülli menfa'at-i külliye ile ilerüleyüb yek-diğer üzerine halen ve i 'tibâren kesb-i meziyyet eylemektedirler."

³⁴⁶ For a detailed account of the translation of the word civilization and the meanings it acquire throughout the nineteenth century see Einar Wigen, "The Education of Ottoman Man and the Practice of Orderliness," in *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in nineteenth century Asia and Europe*, eds Margrit Pernau et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 107-125.

³⁴⁷ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Rıfat Paşa merhûmun elli üç târihi evâhirinde Viyana'ya büyük elçi ta'yîn olduğu esnâda hâriciyye nâzırı bulunan Mustafa Reşid Paşa'ya yazmış olduğu muharrerâtdan intihâb olunan ba'zı mekâtibdir" in *Müntehabât-ı Âsâr III* (İstanbul: Tatyos Divitçiyân, 1290 [1873-74]), 1-79.

mülkiyenin ilerülemesi) by solving the crisis and re-establishing order and security within its borders.³⁴⁸

In the treatise Rıfat Paşa goes on to emphasize the rule of law, which prevents the violation of established order (*nizâmât-ı müessiselerinde bir gûne tagayyür ve inkılâbât olamayub*), and prevents intrusion of personal vendettas and grievances (*ağrâz-ı zatiyye*) in public affairs and self-seeking behavior (*mücerred nüfûz ve ikbâl serriştesi*). He also suggests winning the hearts and minds of the population through provision of welfare, security and prosperity instead of fear and oppression. Also, for the bureaucracy, he notes how Europeans regulate the career paths and do not interrupt it by frequent dismissals and reappointments. While Rıfat Paşa is describing all those qualities as European achievements, at the same time he is addressing many issues which had been brought up in the reform literature before him. While one half of his treatise describes the achievements of European civilization, the other half describes what they do not have, that the Ottomans have. As such, his conception of European government is actually a mirror image of what Ottoman bureaucrats thought was wrong in Ottoman administration and politics, rather than an objective and bipartisan analysis of European state of affairs. It is intended as an intervention into the debates within Ottoman bureaucracy by bringing in exempla from Europe. Hence, the Ottoman bureaucrat receives a new inspiration in the example of Europe; all those problems Ottoman administration has experienced may have a solution whose blueprints are to be found in the West.

As noted by other scholars, the vocabulary and the logic of the Tanzimat Edict bears striking parallels with Sadık Rıfat Paşa's treatise.³⁴⁹ Before moving onto a broader discussion of concepts of decline, order and civilization in Rıfat Paşa's later political writing I will first deal with the Tanzimat Edict and the concept of reform represented in the text.

3.4 The Text of Tanzimat Edict

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 2, 5.

³⁴⁹ Seyitdanlioğlu, 1-3, Mardin, "Tanzimat Fermanı'nın Manası."

Besides being considered the first constitutional text in Ottoman history, the text and format of the Tanzimat edict is generally associated with the Ottoman practice of *adaletname*, performative decrees of the sultan by which he carries out justice within the Empire by commanding or forbidding. However, while the performative quality of the text puts it within the tradition of sultanic decrees, the text of the decree reflects the vocabulary and the concerns of particularly the early nineteenth century Ottoman bureaucratic writing. The edict opens with the invocation of the long history of political and economic decline and associating it directly with the deviation from Sharia:

As is known to all, while, since the inception of our Exalted State, through strict adherence to the glorious commands of the Quran and the laws of Sharia, the strength and force of our government and the welfare and prosperity of its subject had reached its zenith, in the last hundred and fifty years, following successive troubles and numerous other causes and due to lack of adherence to Sharia and the great laws the initial strength and prosperity has turned into weakness and poverty...³⁵⁰

The firman points to the necessity of issuing some new laws (*kâvanîn-i cedîde*) in order to ensure good government (*hüsn-i idâre*) and summarizes these laws to be primarily about security of life (*emniyyet-i can*), protection of honor and property (*mahfûziyyet-i ırz u namus u mal*), taxation (*ta'yîn-i vergi*), and the form and duration of the conscription. The reason for emphasis on security of life, honor and property is stated as the potential for alienation and treason the lack of security incites in the subjects even if they are not inclined by nature (...*hilkat-i zatiyye ve cibiliyyeti fitriyyesinde hiyânete meyil olmasa bile muhâfaza-i cân ve nâmusu için elbette bazı sûretlere teşebbüs edeceği...*).

This judgment is parallel to Keçecizade's argument that if the order is corrupt it will lead to morally corrupt subjects, that there is something corrupt with the Ottoman way and one needs regulations and laws to keep people in good moral standing, in this case particularly pertaining to their attitude towards the state. The edict also

³⁵⁰ "Tanzimat Fermanı," in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 1-3, "Cümleye ma 'lûm olduğu üzere Devleti Aliyyemizin bidâyeti zuhûrundan beru ahkâm-ı celîle-i kur'aniyye ve kavânin-i şer'îyyeye kemâliyle ri'âyet olunduğundan saltanât-ı seniyyemizin kuvvet ve miknet ve bi'l-cümle tebaâsının refâh ve ma'mûriyyeti rûtbe-i gayete vâsıl olmuş iken yüz elli sene vardır ki, gavâ'il-i müteâkibe ve esbâb-ı mütenevvi'aya mebnî ne şer'-i şerîfe ve ne kavânin-i münîfeye inkiyâd ve imtisâl olunmamak hasebiyle evvelki kuvvet ve ma'mûriyyet bi'lakis zaaf ve fakre mübeddel olmuş..."

reflects Sadık Rıfat Paşa's concept of good government as provision of domestic order, security and welfare. Secure subjects will be content and in their security they will mind their own business and in time will grow an affection for the state and nation (... *hemen kendü işi ile ve tevsi-i da'ire-i taayyüşiyle uğraşib ve kendüsinde günbegün devlet ve millet gayreti ve vatan muhabbeti artıp...*). What comes next is the issue of taxation, for, the protection of the realms requires an army which in turn requires money which is raised through taxation.³⁵¹ The reasoning here almost perfectly follows the logic of the trope of the circle of justice as have been observed by Linda Darling as well.³⁵² Keçecizade's and Sadık Rıfat Paşa's calls for reform as instituting domestic prosperity against the zeal for external jihad is repeated within the frame of reinstituting the circle of justice, the contract between the state and the society. The items which breach this circularity are listed as the issue of tax farming (*iltizâmât usûl-ı muzırrası*) which leads to monopolies and the oppression of whole populations through one person, the related issue of taxation which needs to be based on fairness (*vergi-i münâsib*) and the issue of conscription which has been unjust both because regional capacities have been ignored and the duration of mandatory service was too long.

The edict also posits that prosperity (*ma'mûriyyet*), security (*asâyiş*) and welfare (*istirâhât*) are not possible without proper laws (*kavânîn-i nizâmiye*) and promises security of life and property, due process of law and a high council which will provide a forum where all the men of state will speak freely and without any reservations, an item which had been frequently brought up in the New Order memoranda and also by Keçecizade.

Finally the Edict concludes that what all the proposed changes amount to is the "wholesale transformation of the old methods and renewal" (... *keyfiyât-ı meşrûha usûl-ı atîkayı bütün bütün tağyîr ve tecdîd demek olacağından...*). The use of the phrase *usûl-ı atîka* is meaningful in two ways: first, the use of *atîk* (old) instead of *kadîm* (ancient, revered) maintains the reverence for tradition while condemning the

³⁵¹ Ibid, "... *ta'yin-i vergi maddesi dahi çünkü bir devlet muhâfaza-i memâliki için elbette asker ve leşkere vesâ'ir masârif-i muktaziyyeye muhtaç olarak bu, ise akçe ile idâre olunacağına ve akçe dahi teba'anın vergisiyle hâsıl olacağına binâ'en...* "

³⁵² Darling, *Social Justice*, 162.

past. As opposed to *kadîm* which attributes a positive value and a sense of reverence to anything it designates by virtue of coming first and being foundational, *atîk* simply means old. Second, use of *usûl* instead of *kânûn* or *nizâm* again puts the blame on practices and methods that has been in effect instead of traditional values, principles and codes, which is quite congruent with Keçecizade's argument that Ottoman *usul* was corrupt due to deviation from norms, that is Sharia. The Edict, hence, proposes throwing away the practices of the old, that is the past hundred and fifty years which mainly includes tax-farming, unjust taxation, monopolies, confiscation, and recently unfair conscription and promises religious law which will rejuvenate the state, the religion and the nation (*işbu kavânîn-i şer'îyye mücerret din ve devlet ve milleti ihyâ için vaz' olunacak...*), which is again summed up in the concept *tecdîd*.

A letter penned by Sadık Rıfat Paşa after deliberations in court and dispatched to the provincial authorities repeats the items in the firman with further detail as to how the Edict should be put into practice.³⁵³ Besides emphasizing the goals of establishing welfare (*refâh-ı hal*), prosperity (*ma'mûriyyet*), and security (*emniyet, kemâl-i asâyiş*), the letter explains how tax-farming should be abolished without disrupting the cash flow to the treasury, warns against bribery and any kind of unfair treatment of the tax paying subjects and promises due punishment for all who violate the terms of the Edict in a language typical of imperial firmans.

Many scholars have observed a paradox in the wording of the document: what, Mardin calls, agreeing with James Porter -a contemporary observer-, an "internal inconsistency:"

"...it was indeed a curious document that could begin by 'imputing the decline of the Ottoman Empire principally to the transgressions of old laws,' proceed 'to adopt new regulations in the state,' and end by 'praising the restoration of old manners and customs.'"³⁵⁴

This paradox is also framed as an inconsistency between what is promised and what is intended, a ruse or a double speak. Yet, as I have argued with the New Order and

³⁵³ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Tanzîmât-ı Hayriyye'ye dâir Memâlik-i Mahrûseye gönderilen fermân-ı âlinin sûretidir. Rıfat Paşa merhum hariciye müsteşarı iken kaleme almışdır," in *Müntehabât-ı Âsâr VI* (Istanbul: Tatyos Divitçiyân, 1290 [1873-74]), 1-7. See Appendix for the transcript of the text.

³⁵⁴ Mardin, *Genesis*, 196-97. Mardin himself quotes from James Porter, *Turkey: Its History and Progress Vol. II* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1854), 24.

over Keçecizade, what we see as a paradox, a simple tension between old and new, is actually a more nuanced and elaborate reflection on tradition, limits of innovation and reform, which borrows its language directly from the debates on Islamic legal method and theory, namely the doctrine of renewal. Being far from a collage of paradoxical statements, the language of the Edict repeats the formula of the New Order, which had invoked the concept of renewal to address the tension between *kadîm* and *hâdis*. The Edict (and the language of reform in general) condemns some of the past practices and customs as unjust, corrupt and in violation of tradition, while it elevates part of the tradition (that is Sharia) to a more essential and foundational status thus reformulating, in the face of opposition, what the tradition involves and what its limits are. Yet, *tecdîd* here appears as definitely more than what it meant during the New Order; it implies a complete overhaul of the Ottoman *ancien regime* in favour a new one which is supposed to be lawful with respect to Sharia. The Edict goes further than the New Order proposals in condemning the Ottoman past and elevating Sharia to a foundational status.

Of course, this is not to say that there was no tension between what is about to be done in the name of reform and some concept of tradition upheld by the involved parties. In a traditional society any attempt at reform is bound to be disruptive by virtue of challenging established balance and being prone to objections of innovation in negative sense. The language and logic of renewal, however, is intended to address and solve exactly this tension and a careful analysis of the reform texts leaves us with this logic. And again, this is not to say that it is the same concept of reform or renewal that is shared by each and every political actor involved. The clash over various alternative concepts of reform is entangled with factional struggles and international diplomacy as well.

With the Edict, the object of reform and renewal once again shifts from the state as military and administrative apparatus to the society at large. Order stops being only about dynamism, virility, constancy and perseverance of the state and begins to emphasize welfare, prosperity and the security of subjects. In a way, this seems like a logical conclusion of a reform program by a weakened political centre which fails to convince even its own members –the military and the ulema- of the necessity of reform. As such reform manifests itself first as restoration of political power to the

centre and monopolization of violence after which follows a return to establishing the severed economic and political relations between the centre and the subjects.

The literature and the popular memory marks the declaration of Tanzimat as a threshold, a major turning point when modern Turkish history really begins. And the fact that the decree was declared soon after Mahmud II's death reinforces the idea of a clean break with his reign which is associated with tyranny. Indeed, on the one hand, Mahmud II's reign had gradually restored most of the political power to the centre, through de-ayanization, destruction of the janissary corps and anything affiliated with it starting with the Bektashi lodges, expropriation of material and human resources of the Empire for the use of the state and overall monopolization of violence.³⁵⁵ The "tacit contract" between the Ottoman state and its subjects which, as Mardin argued, posited a non-written agreement between the state and the society based on justice and taxation and was upheld by an alliance of Janissaries and the ulema had been completely annulled in favor of the state.³⁵⁶ The expropriation process had been particularly bloody and heavy on the population; just the creation of a standing army through mass conscription alone had been achieved at the cost of more than a hundred thousand lives, with the state waging war on the Anatolian tribes who were not willing to give up their sons and half of the forcefully conscripted soldiers dying simply due to disease and malnutrition.³⁵⁷ Following the empire wide campaign against janissaries, such a destructive exploitation of the human resources had created a resentment which found its expression in the popular support for Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Paşa who had been more successful in economic development and prosperity in the fringes of the Empire.³⁵⁸

Nonetheless, as demonstrated in detail by Şimşek, "many of the ideas and reform projects presented in the decree were in many ways the confirmation and continuation of Mahmud II's earlier designs or 'grand strategy' that had been

³⁵⁵ Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, Ch. 2.

³⁵⁶ Şerif Mardin, "Freedom in an Ottoman Perspective," in *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, eds. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 1988), 23-35.

³⁵⁷ For a detailed account of the human cost of conscription see Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, 140-210 and also Şimşek, "The Grand Strategy of the Ottoman Empire", 182-203.

³⁵⁸ Anscombe, "Islam and the Age of Reform", 178-80.

formulated since the early 1820s rather than a drastic rupture.”³⁵⁹ Terms such as *tanzîmât*, *tanzîmât-ı hayriyye* (auspicious organization), *nizâm-ı müstahsene* (favourable order) and *nizâm-ı cedîd* (new order) had been used in documents during the later reign of Mahmud II, a complete overhaul of the old taxation regime which was claimed to be not in accord with Sharia and institution of a standard tax for each male had been devised during 1838, and many documents in 1830s had laid out the plans for the systematization of conscription.³⁶⁰ Tanzimat in a way follows the spirit of the New Order reforms as a program of renewal and establishing order, on the other hand it represents a shift in the trajectory of goals, from restoring power and efficiency to the state to restoring the broken relations between the state and the society, both contained within the umbrella concepts of dissolution, renewal and order. Resorting to the abstract moral principles of Sharia, as mentioned above, also allows justification of any novelty to be imported from Europe.

The language of reform also drew on different sources of the Ottoman Islamic tradition. In addressing the loss of power it drew on Ibn Khaldun, in addressing loss of order it drew on Sharia, and in justifying innovation it resorted to the doctrine of renewal. Through bureaucrats who were familiar with European system to a degree, it also incorporated the European experience but still framed it within the language of the political tradition. It is this multi-vocality of the language of the Edict which made it address multiple audiences and their concerns and still made it open to multiple interpretations of the historians. By alluding to the circle of justice, promising fair taxation and reasonable process of conscription it addressed the subjects who still upheld the image of sultan as dispenser of justice, by promising rule of law it addressed the concerns of bureaucrats who feared prompt dismissals and persecution in the face of absolutist rule,³⁶¹ and by invoking Sharia as the basis of law it addressed the Muslim sensibilities and the tarnished image of the dynasty after Mahmud II at the same time paving the way for legitimization of novel practices. Again through religious law and the concept of renewal it appealed to the revivalist movements like the Naqshbandiyya which, had supported reform from the late

³⁵⁹ Şimşek, 234.

³⁶⁰ Şimşek, 235-37.

³⁶¹ Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008), 72-73.

eighteenth century onwards with its orthodox Sunni doctrine based on political obedience³⁶² and not surprisingly, had been favored by the state after the ban on the Bektashi lodges and even inherited part of the Bektashi properties.³⁶³

With respect to Europe, the Edict pledged to restore domestic order and rule of law which also implied a more stable policy rather than erratic and irrational zeal for war making. Egyptian crisis and involvement of Russia had made the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and control of Russian advance a central question in European diplomacy, highlighting the significance of the Eastern Question. Sadık Rıfat Paşa's meetings with Metternich served to synchronize Ottoman policy with European international order. It is no wonder that by invoking the friendly European states as witnesses the Ottoman government was committing itself to convergence if not cooperation instead of conflict with Europe, which also signalled the success of pro-European faction within the Ottoman bureaucracy over the pro-Russian one.³⁶⁴

However, while European administrative practices and domestic order inspired Ottoman observers, this inspiration does not appear to have been in the form of importation of abstract political ideals replacing existing ones. Rather, Ottoman bureaucrats appropriated what they observe as good government and efficient administration in Europe through the lenses of their long held concerns over the problems of the Empire, and they were able to integrate European model into Islamic tradition with reference to principles of Sharia. Nonetheless, inspiration from European practices does not seem to have drastically changed how politics and ruler subject relations were eventually imagined and conceptualized as I will demonstrate through the writings of Sadık Rıfat Paşa who is usually credited with no less than revolutionizing and liberalizing Ottoman political thinking.

³⁶² Carter Findley, *Turkey, Islam Nationalism and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2010), 69-71. Also on political influence of Naqshbandiyya see Şerif Mardin, "Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture and Reconstruction in Operational Codes," *Turkish Studies* 6:2 (2005): 145-165. First Mardin and later Findley, both emphasize the relationship between the state and the Naqshbandiyya as of huge significance in the formation of Turkish Islam and national character of religion.

³⁶³ See Muharrem Varol, *Islahat Siyaseti Tarikat: Bektaşiliğin İlgası Sonrasında Osmanlı Devleti'nin Tarikat Politikaları (1826-1866)* (İstanbul: Dergah, 2013).

³⁶⁴ Kırılı, --.

3.5 Order, Decline and Progress: Sadık Rıfat Paşa

Sadık Rıfat Paşa was second only to Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Paşa in his influence on the Tanzimat policies. In his relatively short life, he served as an Ottoman emissary in Vienna (1837-1839) where he had frequent meetings with Clemens von Metternich during the Egyptian crisis, took part in the drafting of the Tanzimat Edict, met with Mehmet Ali Paşa in Egypt for peace negotiations served as the chair of *Meclis-i Vâlâ-yı Ahkâm-ı Adliyye* and oversaw countless reform initiatives.³⁶⁵ Most importantly, as a prolific writer, he left behind several volumes of writing which distinguishes him from the other prominent statesmen of Tanzimat most of whom were quite parsimonious in their penmanship.

Among Rıfat Paşa's works are a chronicle of the 1828 Russian campaign, written in the classical style, previously mentioned treatise on Europe (*Avrupa Ahvâline Dâir Risâle*), his diplomatic letters from Vienna to the Sublime Porte detailing his correspondence with Metternich, and letters from Egypt detailing his correspondence with Mehmet Ali Paşa, dozens of memoranda (*lâyiha*) proposing detailed infrastructural and administrative reforms, a short moral treatise for children (*Risâle-i Ahlâk*) which became part of the standard curricula in secondary schools until the late 19th century, a longer addendum to the moral treatise (*Zeyl-i Risâle-i Ahlâk*) intended for civil servants and government officials, and a treatise on the principles of government and administration (*Idâre-i Hükûmetin Ba'zı Kavâ'id-i Esâsiyyesine Dâ'ir Risale*).³⁶⁶ It is possible, even through a cursory look at his work to see a scribe educated in the classical fashion (he also graduated from Enderun) turn into a 19th century statesman. A high bureaucratic prose, observed in his earlier work gradually leaves its place to a simple, aphoristic and abstract style in his latest work on government.

However, as yet a comprehensive study of his works does not exist in either English or Turkish. Several short studies have focused solely on his treatise on Europe,

³⁶⁵ For the only biography of Sadık Rıfat Paşa based on secondary sources see Bekir Günay, "Mehmet Sadık Rıfat Paşa."

³⁶⁶ All of his works were collected in 11 volumes and was post-humously published by his son in 1857. See Mehmet Sadık Rıfat Paşa, *Müntehabât-ı Âsâr, 11 Volumes* (Istanbul: Tatyos Divitçiyan, 1290 [1873-74])

hailing him as the pioneer of progressive ideas on government and putting the society before the state³⁶⁷, and following Mardin's suggestion one study has explored the influence of German cameralism despite admitting lack of any evidence to the effect³⁶⁸. All these studies uphold Sadık Rıfat Paşa as a novel thinker and a progressive statesman who must have been influenced by European ideas. However, the fact that he did not know any European languages, for which he was even looked down upon in his later services in government, is overlooked.³⁶⁹ Kemal Beydilli, on the other hand, takes a radically different position and argues that Sadık Rıfat Paşa offered nothing new in his reform suggestions compared to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century writing.³⁷⁰

The only significant analysis of his ideas has been done by Şerif Mardin who highlighted the parallels between Rıfat Paşa's ideas and the Tanzimat Edict for the first time in 1957.³⁷¹ In this early essay he first sought the inspiration for his ideas in European liberal thought and particularly Comte de Volney's *Les Ruines de Palmyre* which he argued Rıfat Paşa may have been influenced by. Later, in the *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* where he presented Rıfat Paşa as a precursor to the Young Ottoman Thought, he proposed a much more nuanced picture of him as a conservative reformer who was deeply influenced by Metternich's vision for Europe, this time discarding a direct influence of European political literature.³⁷² He cites the main motivations underlying Rıfat Paşa's ideas as the establishment of an autonomous bureaucracy free from the arbitrary power of the sultan³⁷³, promotion of a policy based on rationality rather than blind faith in providence³⁷⁴, and finally "establish a regime based on right and justice"³⁷⁵. Mardin briefly notes the

³⁶⁷ See Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, "Sadık Rıfat Paşa ve Avrupa Ahvaline Dir Risalesi," *Liberal Düşünce* 3 (Yas 1996); and Seyyit Battal Uğurlu and Mehmet Demirtaş, "Mehmet Sadık Rıfat Paşa ve Tanzimat," *History Studies* 2:1 (2010): 44-64.

³⁶⁸ Çiğdem Erdem, "Mehmet Sadık Rıfat Paşa ve 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na Batılılaşma Bağlamında Kameralizmin Girişi," *Gazi Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 12:2 (2010): 171-196.

³⁶⁹ Günay, 33-34.

³⁷⁰ Kemal Beydilli, "Küçük Kaynarca'dan Tanzimat'a", 63-64.

³⁷¹ Mardin, *Türkiye'de Toplum ve Siyaset: Makaleler I*, 246-266.

³⁷² Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 169-195.

³⁷³ Ibid, 179-82.

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 173.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 188.

continuities in these ideas of Rıfat Paşa's with circle of justice, Keçecizade, and even with Kınalızade on the issue of morality, however he concludes that:

To make these ideas more acceptable to his audience, Rıfat Paşa clothed them in the garb of the classical Islamic-Ottoman "circle of justice," linking the well-being of the state with the prosperity and the contentment of its subjects. Although this conception was thereby made acceptable to a Turkish interlocutor, it would be an exaggeration to say that the idea of the prosperity of the subjects had heretofore constituted the core of Ottoman political theory.³⁷⁶

Putting the issue of intellectual interaction as such, ignores the dynamics of cultural interaction and does injustice to the tradition.³⁷⁷ First, the ideals Rıfat Paşa had tried to promote had been voiced and expressed previously by different Ottoman bureaucratic authors. Securing the career paths and hence professionalization and efficiency of the bureaucracy had been a concern since the early eighteenth century (see Ch. 1). As Findley observes "tendencies toward specialization, differentiation, and systematization were operative even within the traditional state"; patrimonialism however, "meant that such tendencies could not be predominant."³⁷⁸ Yet, as admirably demonstrated by Cengiz Kırılı, one outcome of the factional struggles within the Ottoman bureaucracy in the 1830s was the at least partial transition to a professional bureaucracy as was reflected in the high profile trials in 1841 of Akif, Hüsrev and Nafiz Paşa's who were charged with corruption (*yolsuzluk*) following the 1840 penal code which made it a crime to take "bribes" and hence signalling the shift from a bureaucracy based on gift exchange to a regulated and professional one.³⁷⁹ Yet, while Kırılı considers the early modern concept of bribery –a frequent issue in the reform literature- as essentially different compared to the one introduced by the penal code of 1840, I think it is problematic to draw such a clear line between Tanzimat regulations and the desire for professionalization, standardization and regulation of the bureaucracy and the career paths that underlied the early modern complaints. Rather, both should be seen as part of a continuum whereby Ottoman

³⁷⁶ Ibid, 180.

³⁷⁷ For a similar argument I make on the reception of European thought over Ziya Gökalp see Topal, "Against Influence".

³⁷⁸ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 80.

³⁷⁹ Kırılı, *Yolsuzluğun İcadı*, 1-18.

Empire gradually evolves from a pre-modern state experiencing difficulties in administration comparable to those of European states.³⁸⁰

A rational view of politics was not a rarity among the bureaucrats either; on the contrary the reform literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth century constantly espoused a rational argument against the fatalist argument in an attempt to establish causal logic as the basis of policy. Indeed, the reform literature was in constant struggle against a hard line conservatism which rejected any argument for innovation. Argument for “clothing in the garb of tradition” ignores the fluidity and continuity of the tradition by freezing it.

Second, Rıfat Paşa does not refer to classical categories explicitly anywhere in his writings. He does not use “circle of justice” (*dâ’ire-i ‘adâlet*) or refer to any classical text or author; he does not even invoke tradition anywhere. Some of the concepts he uses (*refâh, istirahat* etc.) are actually novel constructs for the bureaucratic language. Yet, the way he expresses the European governmental practices and his own reform proposals follow the familiar logic of circle of justice: providing prosperity and contentment to the subjects in return for obedience and taxation. While a cornerstone of Ottoman political theory, circle of justice was not given the same reverence by everyone, and as we have seen in the case of Keçecizade-Akif Paşa debate, even when it was shared, it was not interpreted for the same purposes. This begs the question of whom Sadık Rıfat Paşa was trying to convince beside Mustafa Reşid Paşa with whom he corresponded the most and a small clique of likeminded bureaucrats. Finally, considering that his treatise was explicitly titled *Treatise on the Affairs of Europe*, he was not really trying to hide where he had his inspiration.

The answer to this problem is actually given by Mardin again when he traces “the Metternichian influences in Rıfat’s writings” as the “fundamentally conservative approach of Rıfat to the reforming of the Ottoman Empire and his stressing of the measures aimed at securing ‘efficiency’ rather than abstract ‘liberty,’ as well as his fear of ‘excessive’ freedom.”³⁸¹ Later he also draws parallels with French

³⁸⁰ See particularly Salzman, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*, whereby she brilliantly compares the administrative problems faced by the Empire and French *ancien regime*.

³⁸¹ Mardin, *Genesis*, 179.

Colbertism, “the planning by the state of economic welfare and national strength, from the government’s point of view, imposed on the people by law.”³⁸² This definition actually summarizes not only Rifat Paşa’s ideas but also the “grand strategy” of the Empire during Mahmud II’s reign. It is no wonder Rifat Paşa is attracted to Metternich; the latter’s approach to reform as a conservative effort with a focus on domestic order highly resonated with Ottoman bureaucrats, who, following the eternal logic of statesmen who prefer order and stability. The encounter with Metternich allows Rifat Paşa to further elaborate, expand, enrich and refine the arguments for reform observed in earlier literature.

While Beydilli’s conclusion that Rifat Paşa offered nothing new is farfetched considering that concepts such as perpetual peace (*müsâlaha-i mütemâdiyye*) were radical in Ottoman context where Muslim identity preached perpetual struggle against the infidels, it is still not too far off the mark. The increasingly detailed reform proposals of Rifat Paşa for infrastructure (roads, bridges, even establishment of a bank for agriculture) and administration are quite novel; nonetheless the political model within which these proposals still retain much of the traditional concept of what a government is about. His oft quoted aphorism “governments are instituted for the people; not the other way around”³⁸³ is interpreted as a revolutionary statement by many and even Mardin considers it as a bold statement although he does not take it an essentially liberal statement and rather as a conservative statement out of fear of revolutions.³⁸⁴ While obviously a bold statement for the Ottoman political rhetoric, the aphorism curiously invokes another source of Ottoman-Islamic tradition. Rifat Paşa’s aphorism is a rephrasing of a famous stanza from one of the most canonical and popular works of the Islamic culture: Sheikh Saadi Shirazi’s *Golestan*:

The padshah is the guardian of the dervish
Although wealth is in the glory of his reign
The sheep is not for the shepherd

³⁸² Ibid, 188; Mardin quotes from Herman Finer, *The Governments of European Powers* (New York: Henry Holt, 1956), 283-84.

³⁸³ Sadık Rifat Paşa, “İdâre-i hükûmetin ba’zı kavâ’id-i esâsiyyesini mütezammın Rıf’at Paşa merhûmun kaleme aldığı risâledir,” *Müntehâbât XI*, 43, “Hükûmetler halk için mevzu ‘olub yoksa halk hükûmetler için mahlûk değildir.”

³⁸⁴ Mardin, *Genesis*, 186.

But the shepherd for the service of it.³⁸⁵

Shirazi's work was (and still is) a classic work of moral and political education which was translated several times into Ottoman and together with works such as *Kalila wa Dimna* it constituted the basics of scribal education and Ottoman urban culture. Pre-modern Ottoman rhetoric also upheld the prosperity and well-being of subjects as is evident in the circle of justice as well as the recurrent complaints of economic breakdown, tax-farming, and the oppression of the subjects in the seventeenth and eighteenth century chronicles. Still, that formulations proposed a relation of mutual interdependence between the ruler and the subjects, whereas Rıfat Paşa tips the balance in favour of the subjects. And in doing this he alludes to a fragment from an immensely popular work, reviving its meaning in a modern context. Nonetheless, as the rest of his work demonstrates he does not go too far in reformulating ruler-subject relations and maintains a high degree of reverence for the ruler and the state. As we will see in the next chapter, it will be the Young Ottomans who will invoke the stanza from *Golestan* to promote a more radical rethinking of state-society relations arguing that Tanzimat did not live up to its promise.³⁸⁶

The innovation in Sadık Rıfat Paşa's writings lie not only in the way political relations are formulated but also in the way political communities are imagined and conceptualizes. In the aphorism quoted above, for instance, he refers to the subjects not as *re'aya* (the protected) or *teba'a* (the subjects) but as *halk* (the people) thus signalling the emergence of a concept of more abstract community of citizens. Parallel to this, Rıfat Paşa refers less and less to the sultan and more and more to the state (*devlet*) and the government (*hükûmet*). The gradual abstraction of the concept of the state from the person of the sultan in the early modern period (See Ch. 1) had reached a new level during the New Order era when obedience and usefulness to the "state" (and of course treason against it) had become central concepts. With Sadık

³⁸⁵ *The Golestan of Saadi*, trans. Richard Francis Burton (Iran Chamber Society), 47. See also Şeyh Sadi-i Şirazi, *Bostan ve Gülistan*, trans. Kılıslı Rıfat Bilge (İstanbul: Meral, 1980), 357.

³⁸⁶ The stanza is quoted by Namık Kemal in original Persian in "Küllüküm râ'in ve küllüküm mes'ûlün 'an râ'iyetihi," *Hürriyet* 13 (September 21, 1868) and also by Münif Paşa, "Hukuk-ı Hürriyet," in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, eds. Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün and Birol Emil (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1974). The Persian original runs: "*Pâdişâh ez berâ-yı dervîş est / Gerçi ni'met beferri devlet-i ûst / Gûsfend ez berâ-yı çöban nîst / Belki çöban berâ-yı hidmet-i ûst*"

Rıfat Paşa we see the concept of state being further abstracted with government (*hükûmet*) emerging as another abstraction referring to the bureaucratic administrative apparatus. Government becomes the aggregate of people who serve and protect both the state and the nation (*devlet ve millet*).

Focusing on Sadık Rıfat Paşa's later works on morality and politics instead of *Avrupa Ahvâline Dâ'ir Risâle* (Treatise on the Affairs of Europe) helps us better see the continuity of traditional vocabulary and formulas as well as the innovations. In the *Risâle-i Ahlak* (Treatise on Morality) he wrote for children Rıfat Paşa preaches to children in a simple language on the virtue of learning and education, respecting one's elders and obedience, loyalty, frugality, generosity, protecting one's bodily health, temperance, chastity and fraternal love and warns against vices of greed, hubris, envy, haste, grudge, theft, trickery, naughtiness, thriftiness and extravagance.³⁸⁷ In a later treatise titled *Zeyl-i Risâle-i Ahlak* (Addendum to the Treatise on Morality), this time he lectures potential public servants (*devlet ü milletçe hidmet ve me'mûriyyelerde bulunacak zatlar* or *me'mûrîn-i hükûmet*) on proper morality repeating, in further detail, the necessary conduct in state business.³⁸⁸ The bulk of what he preaches is a summary reformulation of the Islamic ethics tradition, albeit in a plainer aphoristic prose which is more digestible. He invokes the Aristotelian golden mean (*i'tidâl*) as the basis of all morality.³⁸⁹ Above all he emphasizes the virtue of obedience and warns against love of fame and political power (*hubb-ı câh*).³⁹⁰ This kind of suppression of earthly and particularly political desires without resorting to extreme ascetism brings to mind Sufi leanings as well, which fits with Abu-Manneh's observation that the names behind the Tanzimat edict had ties with the Naqshbandiyya order.³⁹¹ As such, the motivation of Rıfat Paşa seems to be to address one of the primary concerns of the reformist literature, the

³⁸⁷ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Risâle-i Ahlâk," in *Müntehabât-ı Âsâr X*, 58-72. Also see Kamran Karimullah, "Rival Moral Traditions in the Late Ottoman Empire 1839-1908," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 24:1 (2013): 37-66 and Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 58-62.

³⁸⁸ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Zeyl-i Risâle-i Ahlâk," in *Müntehabât-ı Âsâr XI*, 1-37.

³⁸⁹ Ibid, 14. "Her hâlde i'tidâl üzere hareket cümleye ve bâ-husus me'mûrîn-i devlete elzemdir. Emr-i i'tidal dâ'ima hayr-ı l-umûr olan evsât-ı hâldir; bir şeyin iki ucu birleşir dinür. Ya'ni ifrât ve tefrîtin fenâlığı birdir demektir. Ahlâk-ı memdûha bu iki hâlin ortasında bulunan mehâmîd ve fezâ'ildir."

³⁹⁰ Ibid, 4, 8, 15, 26, 28.

³⁹¹ Abu-Manneh, "Islamic Roots"; and Abu-Manneh, "Two Concepts of the State."

proper moral conduct of the men of the state, by remoulding the sources of tradition and presenting them in an easily digestible form. That he also extends this moral education program to children as well also fits with the concern with creating moral and obedient subjects from the New Order era.

Sadık Rıfat Paşa cites learning and science as of primary importance in moral maturity. Yet, as Alper Yalçınkaya also observes, the knowledge that is praised is the kind of knowledge “that should teach individuals the proper order of things and provide them with skills that will render them hardworking and productive,” hence making “the ruling elite fit to rule and transforms the ruled into disciplined and deferential servants.”³⁹² It is in this framework that Rıfat Paşa uses the concept progress (this time *terakkî* instead of *ilerileme*), celebrating the material achievements brought on by the advances in science:

Through the institution of beneficial laws and auspicious regulations for the administration of the affairs of the realms and the state and the improvement of prosperity, the civilization of the world has progressed and through the invention of regular military drills, gunpowder and cannons and various other devices and munitions of war many great conquests and events has come about, and these things have completely changed the original conditions of the world.³⁹³

He also cites the invention of compass, big ships, map making, steamboats, telegraph lines, railroads, big factories, development of arts and crafts and other material achievements and concludes that all these are possible thanks to the abilities granted by God to the humankind who is the most honored of all creation (*eşref-i mahlûkât*). By acquiring and honing these abilities one can create his own wealth and serve the state and the nation instead of drawing his sustenance from them.

A similar emphasis on the importance of knowledge and sciences in maintaining order and prosperity is found in Mustafa Sami Efendi’s *Avrupa Risâlesi*, published in

³⁹² Alper Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots: Debating Science, State, and Society in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 53-56.

³⁹³ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, “Zeyl-i Risâle-i Ahlâk”, 15, “*Idâre-i umûr-ı mülk ü devlet ve tezâyüd-ı ma’mûriyet-i memleket zımnında kavânin-i nâfi’a ve nizâmât-ı hayriye vaz’ ve te’sis ile an-be-an medenîyyet-i ‘âlem kesb-i terakkî itmiş ve ta’lîm-i cümüd-ı muntazama ve barut ve tob ve sâ’ir envâ’-ı âlet ve mühimmât-ı harbiyye gibi şeylerin icâd ve ihtirâ’ı sâyesinde dahî nice fütûhât-ı cesîmiyye ve vukû’ât-ı ‘azîme zuhûra gelerek bu şeyler bayağı ‘âlemin hâl-i aslisini bütün bütün bir başka şekil ve sûrete koymuşdur.*”

1840, just two years after *Avrupa Ahvâline Dâ'ir Risâle*.³⁹⁴ Sami Efendi describes in detail the value of learning and education and the development of arts in Europe and he is struck by the military strength, financial power (*kuvve-i mâliyye ve askeriyye*) and prosperity (*ma'mûriyyet*), and the general public order (*kâffe-i mesâlih ve umûrları*) which he resembles to the wheels of a clock.³⁹⁵ Similarly again, he establishes a connection between education and self-sustenance³⁹⁶, and order and education.³⁹⁷ And in a most curious passage, he attempts what Rıfat Paşa does not care or bother to do: justify the emulation of scientific practices with reference to his own tradition. He explains that development of science and knowledge with the Europeans was not due to their rituals and religion but due to their learning from the classical Muslim theoretical and philosophical literature on logic, medicine, engineering, math, chemistry, history and literature which they perfected gradually and complemented with geography, physics and other sciences.³⁹⁸ Then he naively suggests that since Muslim lands are more fertile and people more intelligent and perceptive, once those sciences are upheld as it once was, the Muslim country will achieve the level of Europe way faster than it took Europeans, hence coming up with a cliché to be repeated over and over in Ottoman-Turkish politics.³⁹⁹

Equation of progress with learning and advancement of economy and crafts seems to have been a settled policy issue even as Sadık Rıfat Paşa and Mustafa Sami Efendi wrote their treatises. A 1838 memorandum from the Committee on Public Works (*Meclîs-i Umûr-ı Nâfi'a*) published in the official newspaper *Takvîm-i Vekâyi'* cites ignorance and lack of learning as an obstacle to the people earning their sustenance and to the advancement of the crafts, and to loving one's nation.⁴⁰⁰ Again, as

³⁹⁴ See Fatih Andı ed., *Bir Osmanlı Bürokratının Avrupa İzlenimleri: Mustafa Sâmî Efendi ve Avrupa Risâlesi* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1996)

³⁹⁵ Ibid, 72.

³⁹⁶ Ibid, 75.

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 78.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, 79-80, "Avrupalların leyl ü nehâr cidd ü ihtimâm eyledikleri hikâye olunan ulûm âyin ü mezheblerine dâir demek olmayıp eslâfda bazı Islâm ü Arab-ı mükemmeli'l-edebîn vücûda getirip ba'dehû Avrupâlılar'ın diyârlarına nakl ile ân-be-ân hakâyıkını ikmâl eyledikleri ulûm-ı ri'yâziyye ve hikemiyyeden olan mantık ve hey'et ve tûb ve hendese ve cerr-i eşkâl ve ilm-i hisâb ve kimyâ ve târîh ve şiir ve inşâ misillü ilm ü hünerler ile sâir Avrupa hükemâsının refte refte vâkıf oldukları coğrafya ve fizika ve mâ'adâ fûnün u ma'ârifden ibâret idügi."

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 80.

⁴⁰⁰ "Mekteblerin Islahı ve Tahsil Mecburiyeti Hakkında Meclis-i Umûr-i Nâfi'a'nın Layhiasi," in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I: 1838-1865*, eds. Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün and Birol Emil (Istanbul:

Yalçınkaya argues, the nineteenth century Ottoman discourse on science is actually a discourse on proper citizenship which is evaluated on the basis of one's economic value to the state.

As I have argued above, the inspiration from Europe with regard to administrative, scientific and military technologies does not essentially mean a radical rethinking of politics. For instance, Rıfat Paşa frequently uses the word *politika* instead of *siyâset*, however the way he describes it is not, in essence, different than the Ottoman concept of *siyâset*, the art and craft of government:

The spirit and the basis of politics is the careful observation of the nature of humanity and the hearts of men; one who does not know the various dispositions of humans cannot ever be a master of politics. Men of rank fall into many errors and mistakes if they are concerned only about their own interest and seek to spend their time in pleasantries. Consequently, men of politics should judge the contemporary events by recalling and contemplating the past or deduce and balance the future by observing and analyzing the present conditions. Knowing what is best for the administration of the state, the country and the nation and seeking ways to produce these as well as understanding the essentials of order and administration appropriate for each nation are sine qua nons for men of politics.⁴⁰¹

Basically, *politika* is about knowing how to manipulate people and working for the state and the nation without succumbing to one's own pursuits. Before Rıfat Paşa, the word *politika* had already been introduced to Ottoman vocabulary by the late eighteenth century. For instance, Behiç Efendi of the New Orderists had noted that *politika* meant *siyâset* and the government of the city (*tedbîr-i müdîn*), equating it with the ancient Greek concept of city administration as it had been translated in the Islamic literature and objecting to the use of the word to mean trickery and deceit

Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1974), 15, "...ahâli cehl ü nâdânî ile muttasıf oldukları halde kâr ve kışblerinde usret çekeceklerinden başka, amelen tahsil eyledikleri sanâyi asla ilerilemeyeceği ve sayesinde oldukları devletin ve hubb-ı vatan ne olduğunu bilmeyecekleri..."

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 33-34, "Politikanın ruh ve esâsı tebayi '-i beşeriyeye ve kulüb-i insâniyyenin mudekkikâne mütâla 'ası olub emzice-i muhtelif-e-i insâniyyeyi tanımayan adam hiç bir vakitte politika-şinâs olamaz. Ashâb-ı menâsıb umûr-ı polikatada yalnız nefsinî mülâhaza idüb ahvâl-i hâzırasını hoşça geçürmek sevdâsında olur ise pek çok kusur ve hatâlara düçar olur. Binâen- 'aleyh erbâb-ı politikadan olan zevât sevâbık ahvâli tefekkür ve tahattur ile vukû 'ât-ı hâliyyeyi muhâkeme veyâhud ahvâl-i hâzırâyı tedkik ve mütâla 'a ederek ahvâl-i müstakbeleyi istidlâl ve muvâzene etmelidir. Idâre-i devlet ve memleket ve milletin en eyüsü ne olduğunu bilmek ve esbâb-ı isti 'malini aramak ve her milletin hâline çesbân olan şurût-ı nizâm ve idâreyi anlamak maddeleri politika erbâbına elzemdir."

(with reference to European diplomatic practices).⁴⁰² Rıfat Paşa's treatise also proposes politics and administration as primarily a moral science as is reflected in the conclusion:

If summarized, for the government officials there are two paths to follow: to gain fame by acquiring good reputation through spending one's time within the circle of moderation, justice and security or to be a disgrace by spending one's time restless in various deplorable acts and gaining bad reputation. Obviously, reason dictates selecting the former.⁴⁰³

Zeyl-i Risâle-i Ahlâk falls somewhere between the early modern Ottoman advice literature and a modern treatise on ethics, the content of moral argument remaining the same and the audience shifting from the sultan and the grand vizier to a broader cadre of administrative elite and in a simpler and more abstract style.

This is not to say that Rıfat Paşa ignores or downplays the sultan, on the contrary his final work on government titled *A Treatise Concerning Some Fundamental Principles of Administration of Government* actually switches his audience from the government officials to the sultan and addresses him directly. The work is a summary of his political thought overall, a non-systematic theory of decline, political order, material progress and their causes.⁴⁰⁴ Just like Kınalızade he starts by justifying the existence of the state and governments by pointing to the inevitability of collective life and the necessity of regulating it through exercise of power.⁴⁰⁵ He repeats his previous ideas on the necessity of prosperity and security, invoking the circles of justice, again without naming it and writes that it is the dissolution (*ihtilâl*) of this principle that leads to weakness and decline of states together with the

⁴⁰² Çınar, Ali Osman, "Es-Seyyid Mehmed Emin Behic'in Sevânihü'l-Levâiyih'i ve Değerlendirmesi" (MA Thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 1992), 37, "*Politika lafz-ı mezkûrî Frengî olup fî zemâninâ kizb ü hile ma'nâsında isti'mâl olunur ise dahî asl ma'nâsı umûr-ı siyâsiyye ve tedbîr-i müddün dîme'dir.*"

⁴⁰³ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Zeyl-i Risâle-i Ahlâk", 38, "*Me'mûrîn hükûmete göre hülâsa olundukda sülûk edecek iki yol vardır ki biri harekât-ı mu'tedile ve emniyet-i dâ'imede imrâr-ı ezman ile tahsil-i hüsn-i sayîd iderek makbûl-ı cihân ve diğeri etvâr-ı reddiye-i mütenevvi'a ile vaktini bî-huzûr geçirüb şöhret-i gayr-i marziyyeye giriftâr olarak rûsva-yı 'âlemiyan olmakdır. 'Âkil olan elbette evvelki sureti ihtiyâr ve tercih ider.*"

⁴⁰⁴ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, "Idâre-i hükûmetin ba'zı kavâ'id-i esâsiyyesini mutezamın Rıf'at Paşa merhumun kaleme aldığı risâledir," *Müntehabât-ı âsâr XI*, 42-64.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 42.

factional struggles between the ministers.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, he virtually revives the seventeenth century argument in the context of 19th century modernization, reflecting on Ottoman historical experience as a bureaucrat who lived through political turmoil. Elsewhere he reiterates the causes of decline:

The single reason of all the seditions and dissolutions that has occurred for long, is the lack of equity, that is, the issue of men of wealth and influence exceeding the bounds of moderation or those who are in need falling into extreme poverty. At all ages, comprehensive transformations and great revolutions come about due to acting in violation of the laws in effect, human honor and the common good. As such, those states which choose coercive force as the way of government instead of order and Sharia has come to fall into ruin.⁴⁰⁷

In this passage Rıfat Paşa nods not only to the Ottoman history but also the European one; “comprehensive transformations and great revolutions” that come about as a result of a gap between the wealthy and the poor is obviously a reference to the French revolution. His use of the word *müsâvât* (equity or equality) suggests a reference to French concept *egalite*, yet he does not use it to mean political equality as it will later be employed by the Young Ottomans. He explains *müsâvât* as economic inequality and balance between the elite and the commons and together with his earlier reference to the circle of justice, it is clear that he perceives the French revolution through the lenses of Ottoman historical experience and the circle of justice. Both dissolution of Ottoman order and great revolutions –expressed with same word: *ihtilâl*- are tied to the same causes: breakdown of economic order and balance (*i’tidâl*) between the estates. Berkes argues that the concept of *ihtilâl* changed with early nineteenth century chronicler Şânizade, from “dissolution of order” to “revolution”.⁴⁰⁸ However, what we see with Rıfat Paşa is a hybrid concept

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, 44, “Mülk ü devlet ve asker ricâl ile ve rical mâl ile bulunur ve mâl ahâli ve teba’adan husûle gelir. Ahâli dahî ‘adl ü hakkâniyet ile muntazamü’l-hâl olur. Cem’-i devlete ‘ârız olan za’af ve zevâl dâ’imâ bu esâsın ihtilâlinden ve beyne’l-vükelâ ihtilâflar zuhûrundan neş’et edegelmiştir.”

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 48, “Bunca zamândan berü zuhûra gelen fesâdât ve ihtilâlâtın sebebi müstakili ‘adem-i müsâvât ya’ni ya erbâb-ı servet ve nüfûzun hadd-i i’tidâlde hareket etmemesi veya ashâb-ı ihtiyâcın ziyâdesiyle düccâr-ı muzâyaka olmuş olması kazıyyesidir. Cemî’-i zamânda tebedülât-ı ‘azîme ve ihtilâlât-ı cesîme hukûk-ı mer’iyye ve ‘ürz ü nâmûs-ı insâniyye ve mesâlih-i ‘umûmiyyeye muhâlif hareket etmekden neş’et ider. Bu cihetle nizâm ve şerî’at yerine kuvva-yı cebriyyeyi medâr-ı hükümet ittihâz iden devletler muzmahill olagelmişlerdir.”

⁴⁰⁸ Niyazi Berkes, “Two Facets of the Kemalist Revolution,” *The Muslim World* 64:4 (1974): 292-306, translated and reprinted in Niyazi Berkes, *Atatürk ve Devrimler* (Istanbul: YKY, 2016): 153-175. Berkes’s observation might not be entirely false; Edhem Eldem has recently demonstrated how

in which Ottoman historical experience of dissolution informs the perception of French Revolution, and the threat of a revolution as a conclusion of injustice is included in the Ottoman political vision.

As argued above, progress also follows the same logic of economic and material well-being expressed mainly with the words prosperity (*ma'mûriyyet*), increase in happiness (*tezâyüd-i sa'âdet*) and quantity. Rıfat Paşa uses both *terakkî* and *ilerüleme* in his writings. *Ilerüleme* signifies advancement, horizontal movement in space, whereas *terakkî* denotes ascension, vertical movement in space. While, it is possible that he uses them interchangeably, the fact that *terakkî* catches on as the common option for the concept of progress later on suggests that vertical ascension was a better metaphor for political movement in the Ottoman imagination, as will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Rıfat Paşa emphasizes the necessity of moral conduct but just like Keçecizade he argues that without proper laws and order, the subjects will go corrupt: “What reforms and nurtures decency in people is only law and order, and moral refinement emerges from auspicious laws and order.”⁴⁰⁹ He then reiterates the conservative reformist principle:

How fortunate is that state where a just ruler emerges and succeeds in instituting a law in accordance with justice and that law is adopted as principle of action and need not be changed, violated and annulled at any time. But, in case there are some extant laws that need to be renewed, changed or adjusted to some degree, then common good, public security, justice and precaution has to be upheld in the regulations to be renewed.⁴¹⁰

Here, Rıfat Paşa's concept of law comes quite close to a concept of constitution, which will be explicitly advocated by the Young Ottomans (*nizâmât-ı esâsiyye*) two

Şanizade had plagiarized most of the introduction to his chronicle from Voltaire's article on history in the *Encyclopedie*. See Edhem Eldem, “Hayret'l-azime fî intihalatü'l-garibe: Voltaire ve Şanizade Mehmed Ataullah Efendi,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 237 (Eylül 2013). While plagiarism is a strong accusation in Ottoman case where a notion of reverence to sources was yet nonexistent, Şanizade's introduction still emerges as an exceptional case which should be evaluated in its own right.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 45, “İnsanı ıslâh ve terbiye iden ancak kânûn u nizâmât-ı ve tehzîb-i ahlâk ise kavânin ü nizâmât-ı haseneden tevellüd ider.”

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, 45-46, “Ol devlet bahtiyârdır ki bir hükümdar-ı 'âdil gelüb bir kânun-ı 'adâlet-makrûn vaz'ına muvaffak olarak hiçbir vakitte tegayyür ve ihlâl ve ibtâlîne hâcet mess itmeyerek ahkâmı düstûrî'l-amel ola ve fakat kavânin-i mevcûdeden iktizâ-yı vakte tatbîkan ba'zı mertebe tecdîd ve tebdîl ve ta'dili lazım gelen maddeler olur ise tecdîd olunacak nizâmât-ı faide-i 'umûmiye ve emniyet-i âmm ve ma'delet ve hazm ü ihtiyât kâ'idelerine ziyâdesiyle ri'âyet olunmalıdır.”

decades later, however, it is still expressed in classical terms as one foundational regulatory act of a just ruler as was expressed by the early seventeenth century authors (*kānûn-ı kadîm*). What is at work here is actually Sadık Rıfat Paşa reflecting on the Ottoman historical experience, reinterpreting it: A law is instituted; it is not to be violated or changed (*ihlâl, tegayyür*), yet it may be partially renewed (*tecdîd*) or adjusted upon necessity and adhering to the principle of common good. Tradition, stability and order are preserved, and at the same time possibility of reform and innovation is kept open through *tecdîd*.

In the same passage we observe another conceptual innovation: the reference to common good (*fâide-i umûmiyye*). Rıfat Paşa uses similar constructs to mean the same thing frequently throughout his writing such as *menfa‘at-i umûmiyye*, *fevâ'id-i umûmiyye* or *mesâlih-i umûmiyye* all translatable as either common good or public good.⁴¹¹ While it is possible that he picked the word up from his conversations in Vienna, the way he uses it in different constructs and the sense with which he employs it suggests parallels with the classical concept of *maslaha* from Islamic jurisprudence.⁴¹² Words derived from the same roots with *maslaha* and *menâfi‘* were common in Ottoman vocabulary before the nineteenth century,⁴¹³ yet the way Rıfat Paşa prioritizes it reveals what Mardin calls the “utilitarian taint” in his thinking.⁴¹⁴ He judges everything with reference to its contribution to overall material well-being of the state and the realms.

Rıfat also equates common good with justice; for instance, when he writes “Justice is the foundation of the state and justice is none other than the principle of the preservation of the common good of the realms and the nation.”⁴¹⁵ Again the main innovation here is not necessarily the content of the concepts of justice or the good but their objects; rather than the relations between the social groups and estates, both

⁴¹¹ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, “Zeyl-i Risâle-i Ahlâk”, 19, 35 and “İdâre-i hükûmetin ba‘zı kavâ'id-i esâsiyyesi”, 42, 44, 49, 51, 54, 59, 62, 63,

⁴¹² For a brief overview of the legal and political use of the concept see Asma Afsaruddin, “*Maslahah* as a Political Concept,” in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft*, ed. Mehrzad Boroujerdi (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 16-44.

⁴¹³ See for instance title of a work quoted in Chapter 2: *Kitâb-ı Mesâlihi'l-Müslimîn ve Menâfi-i Mî'minîn*.

⁴¹⁴ Mardin, *Genesis*, 182.

⁴¹⁵ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, “İdâre-i hükûmetin ba‘zı kavâ'id-i esâsiyyesi”, 42, “*Adâlet esâs-ı devlettir ve adâlet dahî mutlakâ menfa‘at-i umûmiyye-i mülk ve milletin hüsn-i muhâfazası kaziyyesidir.*”

concepts are associated with a loosely defined abstract collectivity: the state and the nation. Common good is about legal justice, material prosperity, and security. Yet it also includes one other thing, the survival of the state, which allows Sadık Rıfat Paşa to create an instance of exception when the moral imperative can be suspended for the sake of survival:

Rulers should prioritize and prefer the creation of the causes of the survival of the government over everything. All the states should properly secure not only their material power of the military but also their spiritual power of influence in order to ensure their survival and continuity and they should know that spiritual power and dignity is diminished by dishonor and lack of justice. Although it is imperative for a ruler to possess refined qualities such as affection, compassion, righteousness, perseverance, honor, determination and piety, he should also be able to decide acting in violation of those praiseworthy mores to preserve common good when and in case conditions and expediency call for it. For, with governments, the method for the administration of the subjects is much different from the mundane interactions taking place between the people... Rulers should observe that it is preferable to show compassion to the commons and cruelty to the elite rather than showing compassion to the elite and cruelty to the commons, and at times invest his heart to the way of constancy and compassion and, when necessary, to the way of trickery and deceit... If his power holds, he should never stray from benevolence and if his power does not hold, he shall choose the enormity of the elite for common good as it is expedient.⁴¹⁶

Trickery, deceit and cruelty were considered prerogatives of rulers in the classical moral-political literature as well; Kınalızade distinguished between trickery (*hile*) and cruelty (*gadr*) and considered the former a necessity and the latter forbidden.⁴¹⁷ Yet, he also considered dismissal or killing of the statesmen through trickery a potential necessity to fend off sedition and dissolution, and preserve order (*mûcib-i*

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, 44, “*Hükümdârlar bekâ-yı hükûmetin istihsâl-i esbâbını her ne şey’e olur ise olsun takdîm ve tercih itmeli. Her devlet bekâ ve devâmını muhafaza etmek için kuvva-yı zâhire-i askerîyesinden başka kuvva-yı ma’nevîye-i nüfûziyesini hüsn-i vikâye itmeli ve bu misillü kuvva-yı nüfûziye ve i’tibârîyenin hetk-i nâmus ve ve fîkdân-ı ma’delet ile zâ’il olacağına bilmelidir. Şefkat ve merhamet ve sıdk ü istikâmet ve ırz u nâmus ve salâbet ve diyânet gibi hasâ’il-i hamîdeye mâlik ve mazhar olmak bir hükümdâra şart ise de icâb-ı hâl ve iktizâ-yı maslahatda fâ’ide-i umûmiyye istihsâl-i ahlâk-ı memdûha-yı mesrûdenin hilâfında mu’âmele dahi karar virebilmelidir. Çünkü hükûmetlerde usûl-ı idâre-i teba’a beyne’n-nâs cârî olan mu’âmele-i âdiyeden pek çok farklı olub hükümdâr bulunan zevât...havâssa merhamet etmek için ‘avvâma gadr etmekden ise havâssa gadr ile ‘âmmeye merhamet eylemek beherhâl muraccâh bulunduğunu mülâhaza ile kah kalbini vefâ ve merhamet semtine ve lede’l-hâce kah hiyle ve desîse tarafına ihâle etmeli... iktidârı ta’alluk ider ise hayırdan hiç ayrılmamalı ve kudreti mütehammil olamaz ise icâb-ı hâl ve maslahata göre fâ’ide-i umûmiyyede şerr-i hâssı ihtiyâr itmeli.*”

⁴¹⁷ Kınalızade, 498.

intizâm-ı ahvâl ve dâfi ‘-i fitne vü ihtilâl).⁴¹⁸ Rıfat Paşa’s formulation is comparable; his distinction between the elite and the commons is a noteworthy update on the classical distinction which separates servants (*kul*) and the subjects (*teba‘a*), former to be in the disposal of the sultan and the latter to be protected and served. His frame of justification for deviating from moral conduct, on the other hand, becomes common good and survival of the state, novel constructs which reflect the early nineteenth century preoccupations of the Ottoman statesmen while still inheriting the classical concern with order.

Not surprisingly, Rıfat Paşa’s final work concludes with a summary description of the qualities required in a revivalist ruler:

Particularly the person who bears the auspicious intention of changing and adjusting the abysmal conditions of a state shall be just enough to win the confidence of the people, intelligent enough to convince them, and be wise enough to wake everyone from the slumber of hamartia. He shall administer the various issues thoroughly, wipe out the malintent and self-interest that pervades the statesmen and he shall be good-humored, attending to everyone with kindness and compliments and thus earning the satisfaction of the public.⁴¹⁹

Rıfat Paşa’s emphasis on kindness, good humor and compassion could be read as a commentary on Mahmud II’s rule which was associated with violence and tyranny and an effort to advice Abdülmecid, the still young owner of the Ottoman throne, in the ways of proper government in the classical fashion. Yet, it also indicates that despite the prevalent argument in the literature, the image of the sultan as a benevolent and wise ruler still held much currency even among “progressive” bureaucrats such as Rıfat Paşa. Like Koçi Beg or Katip Çelebi, after writing about order, decline and reform, he still causally related the concept of reform to the authority and power of the ruler. While the seventeenth century authors advocated iron rule, however, Rıfat Paşa emphasizes benevolence and justice.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, 470.

⁴¹⁹ Sadık Rıfat Paşa, “İdâre-i hükûmetin ba‘zı kavâ’id-i esâsiyyesi”, 64, “*Husûsan bir devletin ahvâl-i câriye-i reddiyyesini tebdîl ve ta’dîl itmek niyet-i hayriyyesinde olan zât halkın nazar-ı i’timâdını celb edecek sûrette ‘âdil ve halkı ilzâm eyleyecek mertebede ‘âkil ve herkesi hâb-ı gafletden uyandıracak derecede merd-i kamil olmalı ve mesâlih-i muhtelifeyi hakkıyla idâre ve beyne’l-me’mûrîn cârî olan ağrâz ve nefsâniyyeti izâle itmeli ve ashâb-ı hilm ve mülâyemetden olarak herkese rıfk ve nüvâziş ile mu‘âmele iderek hoşnûdî-yi ‘umûmîyi celb eylemelidir.*”

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that Tanzimat, that most intensive and extensive period of Ottoman structural transformation, was still motivated by and framed within the conceptual framework of Ottoman-Islamic tradition, at the same time appropriating the European concept of order and reform. In continuity with the New Order programme, Mahmud II's reign attempted and succeeded in curbing the influence of various power holders and sources of political influence in the Empire, and restoring the control to the palace once again. As also noted in Ch. 2, the early reign of Mahmud II bore the stamp of Khaldunian concepts and explanations of decline which had been proposed during the New Order debates. Debates following the abrogation of the janissary corps also followed the recurring debate between war and peace and the necessity of improving the material conditions of the realms. Accordingly, in the political texts of the era, New Order and Tanzimat were synonymous and continuous. These debates also included self-criticism of the Ottoman past as well as the problems of the reform project, its excesses and weaknesses. This criticism followed the trends in New Order era and further emphasized the moral vocabulary of Sharia in condemning the past Ottoman institutional setup.

The concept of Tanzimat also reflected the response of the Ottoman bureaucrats to the immediate consequences of this restoration project. The human and material cost of reforms and particularly the transition to mass conscription and the institution of the new standing army created widespread dissent and dissatisfaction within the Empire which forced the Ottoman bureaucrats to emphasize the economic and legal aspects of reform. In the political language this emerged as a reformulation of the classical conceptions of ruler-subject relations, particularly the trope of circle of justice which was enriched by the example of the post-Napoleonic European emphasis on peace and domestic order. The reception of European model, however, was mostly limited to technologies of government and administration. As we observe particularly with Sadık Rıfat Paşa, politics, government, morality and reform were framed within the margins of traditional formulas with the concepts expanding and acquiring the experience of the Tanzimat problems.

CHAPTER IV

TERAKKI: REFORM IN BETWEEN DECLINE AND PROGRESS

In this chapter I deal with the concept of progress (*terakkī*) as it was used in the reform debates during the late Tanzimat particularly between a group of dissident bureaucrats, the Young Ottomans, and the central bureaucracy. While the latter claimed to continue Tanzimat reforms, the former were dissatisfied with the undelivered promises of Tanzimat and particularly corruption, financial crisis and the lack of freedom and justice. The major difference from the previous eras, however, was the unprecedented access to European thought and culture on both sides, which made the concept of “progress” central to reform debates. Reform debates were carried over both through rewriting the narrative of Ottoman decline and reform and by reinterpreting the sources of Islamic tradition, with the Young Ottomans taking over the banner of Sharia and using it in their political opposition. The chapter starts with the context, goes on with various meanings of the word progress in Ottoman political writing and ends with competing interpretations of Islam and tradition in political argumentation.

4.1 Late Tanzimat Context and Concepts of Reform

The Tanzimat Era saw a drastic transformation in the Ottoman government, owing to the efforts of reformist and pro-Western bureaucrats led by Mustafa Reşid Paşa who had gained the upper hand after Tanzimat and had rooted out the powerful and “Euro-sceptic” figures of the old regime in a series of corruption trials in early 1840s.⁴²⁰ The Ottoman bureaucracy and diplomacy were gradually synchronized with the European system. Parallel to this institutional synchronization, the palace

⁴²⁰ See Kırılı, *Yolsuzluğun İcadı*.

and the sultan were reduced to a virtually symbolic authority; while the sultan still retained the power and privilege to appoint high ranking bureaucrats, Ottoman government was overseen by a cadre of bureaucrats who maintained a monopoly over administration through their expertise on diplomacy and government. With the abolishment of Janissary corps and curbing down of the political influence of ulema, the Ottoman bureaucracy stood practically unchallenged in its power over government and diplomacy.

The Late Tanzimat, roughly the period following the Reform Edict of 1856 up to the suspension of the first Ottoman constitution in 1876, witnessed an unprecedented amount of diplomatic, cultural and intellectual interaction between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. However, it was the Crimean War of 1853-56 and the Ottoman alliance with France and England against Russia which speeded up this process by bringing an influx of British and French officers and diplomats as well as investors to Istanbul. These people introduced European social practices and habits to the city's population. Cevdet Paşa complains how, at the time, not only did European wealth flowed into Istanbul and initiated a revival in the economy, but also residents of Istanbul up to the Sultan himself started adopting leisure habits and even sexual preferences from the Europeans.⁴²¹ The Reform Edict of 1856 promised equality of legal status to all the subjects of the Empire on the eve of Paris Conference which ended the war and recognized the Empire as part of the European alliance. Hence, it both accelerated the process of interaction and also initiated a wave of resentment within both the Ottoman bureaucracy and the population at large due to scepticism of Europe, and concerns over the legitimacy and the direction of countless reform initiatives.⁴²² The Ottoman Empire received its first of a series of loans from European bankers in 1854 and due to high interest rates and the maladministration of Ottoman economy, this would lead to bankruptcy in 1874 and eventually the establishment of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration in 1881 under European oversight.

⁴²¹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Maruzat*, ed. Yusuf Halaçoğlu (Istanbul: Çağrı, 1980), 6-10

⁴²² For an analysis of reactions to Westernization and its political and economic reasons see 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*, eds. Peter Benedict, Erol Tümtürk and Fatma Mansur (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 403-446.

Mehmed Emin Âli and Keçecizade Fuad Paşas took over the reins of government from Reşid Paşa in early 1856. They would practically rule the Empire during the reigns of Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz until Âli Paşa's death in 1871 and become the primary target of political opposition and resentment. As noted by Mardin as well, the two were not "entirely indifferent" to the pressure of providing representative institutions to the Empire's administration, however, they considered most of the population as unfit for such advances and they were not fond of opposition either evident in their constant attempts to suppress the opposition and censure the press.⁴²³ The first real manifestation of this resentment was the infamous Kuleli Incident of 1859, which was an assassination plot to overthrow Abdülmecid who was accused of being too westernized.⁴²⁴ An alliance of bureaucrats, military officers and religious figures led by a Naqshi sheikh had formed a secret society called the Society of Martyrs (*Fedailer Cemiyeti*) to establish a government based on Sharia. The plot was uncovered before taking action, however, and several ringleaders were arrested and exiled.

1860s witnessed the emergence of the first organized opposition to the government of Sublime Porte from within itself, the Society of Young Ottomans which was composed of a loose group of learned mid-ranking bureaucrats.⁴²⁵ Associated mainly with Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa and Ali Suavi, a triumvirate, the Young Ottomans had mostly came from the Translation Bureau of the Sublime Porte which had been established to replace the non-Muslim dragomans of the government with educated Muslim bureaucrats familiar with European languages and culture. They heavily criticized the Sublime Porte for arbitrary rule, tyranny, corruption, nepotism, favouritism, economic fraud, waste of the sources of the nation, piling up of financial

⁴²³ Mardin, *Genesis*, 20.

⁴²⁴ Recorded for a long time as a mundane reactionary revolt, there has emerged considerable scholarship regarding the incident in the last decade. See particularly Forian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2010), 12-25; Burak Onaran, "Kuleli Vakası Hakkında 'Başka' Bir Araştırma," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 5 (Spring 2007): 9-39 and "Kuleli Vakası suikast planlarının politik anlamı", in *Sultan Abdülmecid ve Dönemi (1823-1861)*, eds. Kemal Kahraman and Ilona Baytar (2015), 258-267.

⁴²⁵ A more literal translation of the group's name would be New Ottomans, however I prefer Young Ottomans since this translation has been well established in the literature. By now there exists considerable literature on the Young Ottoman ideas. For major scholarship see Mardin, *Genesis*; Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: Ib Tauris, 2010); M. Kaya Bilgegil, *Yeni Çağ Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatı Üzerine Araştırmalar I: Yeni Osmanlılar* (Ankara: Baylan Matbaası, 1976).

debt of the Empire and overall failure in reform. While the group had considerable disagreements among themselves on a variety of issues, they all advocated the institution of what they called “principle/method of consultation” (*usûl-ı meşveret*) which was an umbrella term for popular and constitutional government, a parliamentary system with separation of powers and a legal framework based on Islamic law, namely Sharia.

Familiar though they were with European democratic and liberal ideas on government, the Young Ottoman opposition relied heavily on Islamic scripture and tradition, coming up with a liberal interpretation of these sources. As I have argued in the previous chapter, Sharia as an abstract set of principles had emerged as a framework which enabled both criticism of the past Ottoman practices and potential borrowing from Europe. Young Ottomans adopted this language which had marked the Tanzimat Edict and used it to demand the fulfilment of the promises of Tanzimat as well as advocating a liberal constitutional political system. In principle, they saw no contradiction between tradition and reason (*nakl ve akl*); they believed in the truthfulness of the core teachings of Islam and criticized many existing Ottoman practices as superstition and innovation. They also imagined a civic Ottoman nationhood under which different ethnic and denominational subjects of the Empire would be united and preached a romantic notion of history and the nation.⁴²⁶ After a brief exile in Europe, where they produced their most erudite political writing in the late 1860s, leading members of the group returned to Istanbul individually and finally, under the political leadership of Midhat Paşa, Namık Kemal and Ziya Paşa were directly involved in drafting a constitution for the Empire. Prince Abdülhamid was persuaded for the throne in place of the dethroned Abdülaziz and, after, Murad V, in return for the promise to establish the first Ottoman constitution in 1876. The first Ottoman experiment in constitutional government, however, was cut short when Abdulhamid dissolved the parliament and suspended the constitution indefinitely after a mere six months and Midhat Paşa was exiled while Namık Kemal was sent away from Istanbul as a district governor.

⁴²⁶ For the romantic interpretation of Ottoman history in Young Ottoman literature see Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation, 1869–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

The period between the Reform Edict of 1856 and 1876 was unprecedented in Ottoman history in the amount of intellectual production and particularly political writing. While official censorship still seriously limited open public discussion, two things have dramatically changed the nature of political argumentation during the era and left its imprint on Ottoman prose in general: political writings of the Young Ottomans and the appeal of historical works as a means to advance political argumentation. The novel prose of the Young Ottomans combined journalism with political philosophy, thus making it possible to advance focused and contextualized arguments which had their roots in both Western ideas and Ottoman/Islamic tradition, whereas the emerging genre of survey histories of the Empire made it possible to discuss politics without directly engaging in contemporary polemics⁴²⁷.

Reform (*islâh*) and its plural *islâhât* emerged as core concepts during the period, used in each and every policy decision by the government, even leading to retrospective association of the New Order Era and the Tanzimat with the concept in modern scholarship. Although, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, *islâh* was used as a generic and ordinary concept for correction and reform (particularly in the singular form to denote individual policy items), emergence of *islâhât* as an umbrella term for all previous reform attempts and policies occurred after 1850s. For instance, Cevdet Paşa's history of the Empire covering the period between 1777 and 1827 has been quite influential in the retrospective labelling of the period as an era of reform (*islâhât*) and the literature produced as reform tracts (*islâhât layihaları*). One reason for the over-abundance of the words *islâh* and *islâhât* during the period must be the translation of the words for reform from European languages (particularly French word *réforme*) as *islâh*, thus combining the semantic content of Ottoman concept of reform and increasing European demands from the Empire for the transformation of Ottoman legal and political structure. A major example of this is the Edict of 1856 which was known simply as the Hatt-ı Hümayûn, *Imtiyâzât Fermanı* (edict of concessions) or *Müsâvât Fermanı* (edict of equality). The Edict only later came to be

⁴²⁷ For the polemical nature of Ottoman historical writing at the time see particularly Christoph Neumann, *Araç Tarih Amaç Tanzimat: Tarih-i Cevdet'in Siyasi Anlamı* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), 3.

known as *Islâhât Fermanı* (Reform Edict), which may have helped counter its negative reception in Ottoman public.⁴²⁸

Reform, however, is a vague term by itself and especially so when it is used so ubiquitously as to mark an era. What kind of past conditions reform assumes and what kind of an end result it projects is revealed in relation to other concepts. When *islâh* was used in the seventeenth century, it was coupled with *ihtilâl-i nizâm*, dissolution of social and political order, and came to mean its repair and restitution, whereas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century it pointed to *tecdîd* and *tanzîm*. During the late Tanzimat, *islâhât* stood semantically between *tedennî* (decline) and *terakkî* (progress or development). *Ilerileme* and *geri kalma* – the former coined during the New Order and the latter used for the first time in 1830s – were still used occasionally for progress and belatedness, yet, *terakkî* seems to have been preferred as the better translation for progress, and *tedennî*, being the exact antonym of *terakkî*, though less frequently used, must have become the obvious alternative to *geri kalma*. Admittedly, this preference may be simply due to affinity of Ottoman bureaucrats to words derived from Arabic roots, however, there is also a difference between *ilerileme-gerileme* and *terakkî-tedennî*, which, I argue, is meaningful.

While *ilerileme* and *geri kalma* denote horizontal spatial movement, *terakkî* and *tedennî* denote vertical movement in space and could as well be translated as *ascension* and *decline*. It is entirely plausible that vertical movement seemed like a better metaphor for Ottomans, since similar vertical vocabulary were quite common in, and formed the basis of, moral and political thinking. Before the nineteenth century *terakkî* was a term used for promotion in the ranks of bureaucracy and the subsequent increase in salary. Also, Islamic moral vocabulary, and particularly the Sufi doctrine which permeated most of Ottoman intellectual tradition, was based on the idea of a vertical movement from the base earth to heavens, a ladder which one climbs as one attains moral maturity and spiritual purity. Since it was assumed that

⁴²⁸ Although I have not been able to locate exactly at what point the Edict of 1856 was labeled *Islahat Fermanı*, I have gone through Ottoman newspapers and diplomatic sources of early 1856 which mention the Edict for another research project. The research revealed no instance of the word *islahat*; instead the edict is simply referred to as *Hatt-ı Hümayûn*.

there was a metonymical (and even causal) relationship between the order of heavens and the social order, one would traverse the social order as one would explore the spiritual. Of course, these metaphorical meanings probably underlying the concepts *terakkî* and *tedennî* would still be at least partly underscored by the translated semantic content of the word progress as it was used in the European context.

While *terakkî* was almost ubiquitous in the texts of the period, *tedennî* was by no means the only word used to denote Ottoman decline. The central concept of the previous ages, *ihtilâl* (dissolution), gained a new semantic content when it started to be used for revolt and revolution (most probably after it comes to be used for the French revolution) both in a way close to the modern concept and also retrospectively for many revolts during the history of the Empire. Instead of *ihtilâl*, *izmihlâl* (withering away), *inhitât* (decline or age of decline), *inkırâz* (break down, collapse or death) were frequently used to denote general and particular aspects of Ottoman decline.

As in the previous eras of reform, in the late Tanzimat too, debate over reform took the form of a debate over what Ottoman-Islamic tradition entails and endorses. In the writings of the members of the central bureaucracy reform came to mean mainly infrastructural and economic development and although several political institutions were established gradually in order to provide representation these were not justified with reference to any clear principle and presented as simply bestowals and gifts of the Sultan to its subjects in way of prosperity and wellbeing, preserving more or less the classical schema of state as dispenser of justice and prosperity and subjects as passive receivers. Ibn Khaldun's *Mukaddime* kept its place as a prominent source of inspiration and interpretations of Ottoman history and reform refashioned the Khaldunian schema to integrate the concept of progress, as an index of material development and advancement of sciences and knowledge. Due to this limited concept of reform and probably partly due the censorship, members of the central bureaucracy did not cite maladministration and hence political reform as a solution to it in their writings.

With the Young Ottomans who were dissatisfied with Tanzimat reforms and called for a broader project which would amount to no less than a revolution of Ottoman political institutions, however, reform brought with it a parallel interpretation of

Ottoman and Islamic tradition. Sources of Ottoman history were devoured by Young Ottoman thinkers in order to salvage a history of political protest, representation and constitutionalism; particularly the early modern Ottoman state was presented as an exemplary constitutional monarchy despite all its shortcomings. Beyond that Islam and Sharia emerged as the foundation of all political principles and the primary basis of reform and the constitution that it would bring. While Young Ottomans found much inspiration in the liberal European thought, particularly Rousseau, Montesquieu and several other major enlightenment figures, overwhelming part of their writing was devoted to analysis of Ottoman and Islamic history and making sense of it in modern context. And most of their demands in reform reflect the continuity in the problems observed from the previous eras and particularly Tanzimat.

4.2 Terakki as Economic Development and Problem of Moral Economy

A brief imperial edict by Abdülaziz following his visit to Europe in 1867 in order to address Ottoman subjects says much about how he perceived reform and progress:

The sweetest reward for the efforts of rulers to advance security and public wealth is the response of his subjects with utmost love and loyalty... Without doubt and as is observed everywhere, the visible causes of balance of states are all about the spread of sciences and beneficial knowledge among the population, proliferation of roads and passages, regulation of land and naval forces, and securing the financial affairs. Thus, we pledge to focus on progress and proliferation of these items as we have done before....⁴²⁹

Thus the Sultan, in principle, repeats the promises of Tanzimat Edict for security, wealth and regulation of the army in return for loyalty and love from his subjects, thus once again reinforcing the schema of circle of justice as it was understood in the first half of the nineteenth century. Many memoranda and essays by various Ottoman

⁴²⁹ Munir Aktepe ed. *Vak'a-Nuvis Ahmed Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi XI* (Ankara: TTK, 1989), 114-15, “*Hükümdârânca en tatlı mükâfat, terakkî-yi âsâyîş ve servet-i umûmî için masrûf olan mesâ’îlerine, teba’aları taraflarından kemâl-i muhabbet ve sadâkat ile mukâbele görmek maddesidir... Beyândan müstağni olduğu ve her tarafda görüldüğü veçhile medâr-ı kıvâm-ı düvel olan esbâb-ı zâhiriyye ki, beyne ’l-âhâli ulûm ve ma’arif-i nâfi ’anın intişârı ve turuk u me’âbirin tekessürü ve kuvve-i berrîyye ve bahriyyenin intizâmı ve umûr-ı mâliyyenin te’min-i i’tibârî husûslarından ibâretidir. Bunların bir yandan terakkî ve tevessü’üne tarafımızdan kemâ-kân himmet ve ikdam olunacağı...*”

bureaucrats in the 1850s and 1860s, also, were basically reform proposals detailing these policy items as progress.

In a memorandum to the Sultan dated 1864, Suphi Paşa (d. 1886) talks about the progress of sciences, technology and industry in Europe.⁴³⁰ One lecturer in the Imperial Maritime Academy brings up the issue of improving the road networks in the empire as a necessity for the progress of both agriculture and trade.⁴³¹ In addition to improving the road network, building of railroads and improvement of sea transportation emerge as major concerns, since shortening of distances through modern means of travel was seen as a key sign of progress.⁴³² Basiretçi Ali, the editor of the newspaper *Basiret*, cites both education and road networks as equal prerequisites of improvement of trade, accumulation of wealth and hence happiness and progress (*husûl-ı saadet ve terakki*).⁴³³ Another bureaucrat emphasizes the formation of companies as both central to the progress of civilization (*medeniyetin terakkîsi*) and its necessary consequence.⁴³⁴ Formation of companies as a means to economic development seems to be a major concern in general; Basiretçi Ali again brings up the issue quite frequently in the early 1870s.⁴³⁵ The word *terakkî* is used so pervasively and frequently through the literature of the period that virtually every policy issue from agriculture to urban development to education of girls is considered as an item in the agenda of progress and virtually every single piece of writing uses the word at least once. Besides being used to denote individual reform items, *terakkî* is also frequently used in a broad sense to talk about the general development of civilization in the world and particularly the Western world (*terakkî-i beşer, terakkî-i medeniyet*).

As such, *terakkî* is used to denote material and particularly economic achievements observed in Europe and their importation and implementation in Ottoman society is

⁴³⁰ “Suphi Paşa Layihasından” in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, eds. Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün and Birol Emil (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1974), 19-20.

⁴³¹ Mehmed Sa’id, “Fevâid-i Turûk” *Mecmua-i Fünûn* 5 (Cemaziyelahir 1279) in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, 211.

⁴³² Ibid, 209, 218.

⁴³³ Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları*, ed. Nuri Sağlam (İstanbul: Kitabevi 2001), 13.

⁴³⁴ Vahan, “Fevâid-i Şirket,” *Mecmua-i Fünûn* 8 (Şaban 1279) :343-353 in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, 213.

⁴³⁵ See Basiretçi Ali Efendi, 143-45, 196, 218-19.

seen as an emergency for the Empire. While, as will I discuss later, with Young Ottomans like Namık Kemal, who were dissatisfied with and critical of contemporary Ottoman policy, progress was a dialectical combination of both political maturity (understood as enlightenment and liberalization in a broad sense) and material growth, for the majority of the bureaucratic writing of the period progress was simply material and economic development brought on by acquisition of knowledge and sciences whose example par excellence is the urban order and prosperity observed in European cities. In this formulation, it is little more than the three pillars of European civilization as had been identified by Sadık Rıfat Pasha before: well-being of the subjects and the realms (*ıstırâhât-ı teba'a ve mülkiye*), richness of the treasury (*vefret-i hazîne*), and military strength (*kuvve-i askeriyye*) (See Ch. 3). Already in the mid-1830s a committee had been established with the guidance of Mustafa Reşid Paşa, with the declared goal of doing research and producing ideas for the advancement of agriculture, crafts, industry, infrastructure and trade.⁴³⁶ It is no wonder, then, progress was most commonly used to denote these policy items.⁴³⁷

Ottoman bureaucrats became familiar with liberal economic ideas and cameralism from 1830s onwards through British and German diplomats.⁴³⁸ These ideas had led to a desire to improve economic efficiency in the Empire and increase reliance on domestic sources in an effort to reclaim the past grandeur of the Empire vis-à-vis Europe, particularly through heavy investment in military technology and industry which ironically undercut development.⁴³⁹ Thus, the *gaza* spirit still survived in a way alongside with a desire to focus on domestic reform and improve infrastructure. A corollary of this was that the level of material progress in the Empire also became a way of reflecting on the differences between the Empire and the West, a measure of success in competition: the gap between the level achieved by Europe and the

⁴³⁶ *Takvim-i Vekayi* 167 quoted in Şerif Mardin, *Türkiye'de İktisadi Düşüncenin Gelişimi (1838-1918)* (Ankara: Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1962), 11, “Devlet-i Aliyyenin vesail-i tabiyye ve arziyye ve hurefiyye mesailinin tetkik ve münazarasına ve alelhusus ziraatin ve emr-i ticaretin ve enva-i sanayi ve hurefin tervici mütalaasına ve muvazene-i esbâb-ı lâzimenin müzakeresine hasr-ı efkâr-ı dakikaya mezun kılındı.”

⁴³⁷ For a summary of the Ottoman economic ideas during the Tanzimat see Deniz T. Kılınçoğlu, *Economics and Capitalism in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 12-41.

⁴³⁸ Mardin, *Türkiye'de İktisadi Düşünce*, 15-19.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, 26.

situation of the Empire was a ubiquitous concern. “While all the civilized peoples on the face of the earth are riding the flood of progress and flowing with it be it willingly or unwillingly, one wonders if we will be able to withstand this flood?” asks Ziya Paşa (d. 1880) of the Young Ottomans.⁴⁴⁰ However, it is the explanation of this gap that reveals much about how causes of progress, and its lack thereof, is understood. While the Ottoman bureaucrats observed the achievements of Europe and perceived the difference with the dismal situation of the Empire, the way they framed the causes of this difference still bore the weight of Ottoman history and its indigenous problems as much as what they observed in Europe. Hence, the concept of belatedness (*geri kalmak*) was entwined with the concept of overall decline (*tedennî, inkirâz*); the causes of Europe’s progress reflects upon Ottoman concept of decline and narrative of Ottoman decline was used to explain Europe’s progress. This equation can be observed as early as 1852 in Safvet Paşa’s (d. 1883) speech concerning the establishment of *Darü’l-fünûn*, the first Ottoman university:

If the reverence for science and knowledge and the respect and sponsorship for the men of skill and technique seen at the inception of the Ottoman State for two hundred years had continued for another two centuries and correspondence had been established with the civilized nations of Europe, thus walking the path of progress together with them, today, the domains of the Ottoman State, too, would be in a different condition, the industrial and scientific progresses of other nations having been perfected here as well.⁴⁴¹

Hence, the reverence (or lack thereof) for knowledge and sciences was a variable explaining not only the Ottoman economic crisis in the nineteenth century but also the post-sixteenth century demise of the Empire. The causal relationship between learning and progress in this passage is the most common causal explanation for decline of Ottoman crafts and economy. In an 1862 treatise on child education, Münif Paşa (d. 1910) attributes the stasis (*hal-i vukûf*) of crafts and industry in the

⁴⁴⁰ “Ziya Paşa’nın Çocukluğu,” in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi II*, 151, “Rûy-i arzda bulunan akvâm-ı medenîyenin cümlesi bir seyl-i terakki önüne düşüp, ister istemez akıp, giderken biz bu selin karşısında gerilip dayanabilecek miyiz?”

⁴⁴¹ Safvet Paşa, “Darü’l-Fünûnun Açılışı Dolayısıyla,” in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, 146-47, “Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniyye’nin bidâyet-i teşekkülünde, ikiyüz sene müddette ulûm ve fûnûna gösterilen râğbet ve ashâb-ı hüner ve’ma’lûmat haklarında izhar olunan muamele-i teşvik ve hürmet, bir o kadar müddet dahi devam etmiş ve Avrupa’nın milel-i mütemeddinesiyle dahi ihtilât ve münasebet hasıl edilerek, onlarla birlikte terakki yoluna gidilmiş olsaydı, bugünkü gün memâlik-i Devlet-i Aliyye dahi daha bir başka halde bulunarak, memalik-i sâirenin terakkiyât-ı ilmiyye ve sinâiyyesi bizde dahi kemale ermiş olurdu.”

Empire to the mere imitation of masters in vocational education and disregard for the wisdom and sciences behind these crafts such as engineering, chemistry and mechanics.⁴⁴² Ziya Paşa laments the lack of men of knowledge and science in the last two, three centuries as opposed to their abundance in the early centuries of Islam (e.g. Abu Hanifa, Farabi, Al Ghazali, Muhiddin Arabi) and during the advent of the Ottoman Empire (e.g. Molla Gürani, Ebussuud, Ibn Kemal) concludes that it is an issue of education and morals (*terbiye ve ahlâk*) that deprived Muslims of such people.⁴⁴³ Again in an 1868 article titled “The Causes of Decline in Turkestan,” Namık Kemal attributes decline almost exclusively to pedagogical and scientific reasons, blaming the slow and bulky traditional education system which had failed to endow the youth with necessary knowledge about the world.⁴⁴⁴

This emphasis on education and knowledge implied an underlying concern with creating ideal moral subjects which would create wealth for the Empire, particularly with industriousness and productiveness, as observed by Şerif Mardin.⁴⁴⁵ As was the case in the previous eras, decline was still perceived as a moral problem, even if it was restricted to economic and material terms. For instance, in an 1862 article, one bureaucrat inquires into the reasons of why the idea of trade (*efkâr-ı ticaret*) and formation of companies had not developed properly in the Ottoman and Muslim lands and provides an answer based on different moral inclinations between Christians and Muslims.⁴⁴⁶ Hence, the first reason is that Ottoman people are modest and frugal and hence do not produce more than they need for their livelihood, being content with their sustenance although by command of God every person has to work hard and progress in his choice of vocation (*bulunduğu meselekte mümkün mertebe kesb-i terakkî ve kemâle mecbur olub*). Second, although there exist men of trade in the Empire, with a few exceptions, they do not comprehend the rules and intricacies of trade and hence cannot compete. And finally, men of craft and industry are conservative and consider it a grave sin to venture beyond the traditional means and

⁴⁴² Münif Paşa, “Ehemmiyet-i Terbiye-i Sıbyân,” *Mecmua-i Fünûn* 5 (Cemaziyelahir 1279) in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, 178.

⁴⁴³ “Ziya Paşa’nın Çocukluğu,” in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi II*, 152-53.

⁴⁴⁴ “Türkîtan’ın Esbâb-ı Tedennîsi,” *Hürriyet* 5, July 27, 1868 and “Devlet-i Aliyye’ye Bâis-i Tenezzül Olan Maarifin Esbâb-ı Tedennîsi,” *Hürriyet* 6, August 3, 1868.

⁴⁴⁵ Mardin, *Türkiye’de İktisat Düşüncesi*, 30.

⁴⁴⁶ Vahan, “Fevaid-i Şirket”, 215-16.

methods of their vocation to increase their productivity, which prevents not only the progress of crafts and industry but also trade (*hiref ve sanâyi ve sâirenin ilerlemesine mâni olduğu gibi ticâretin dahi adem-i tevessü'üne sebep*).

Selflessness, ascetism, altruism, hard work and discipline are frequently put forward as prerequisites of progress and opposite values such as greed, selfishness and laziness are presented as causes of decline.

Similarly, in a memorandum to the Sultan dated 1864, Suphi Paşa (d. 1 886) locates the causes of progress of sciences and industry in Europe and its lack thereof in the East to the pressure of the necessity of provision and livelihood (*zıyık-ı mâişet*).⁴⁴⁷ This necessity had forced the Europeans to engage in sciences and engineering in order to increase their supplies whereas in the East people always had vast fertile lands to feed them many times over thus hindering the advancement of industry and crafts (*hiref ve sanayi'in tahkîm ve terakkîsi*). Several other essays by different bureaucrats at the time also emphasize hard work and productivity (*say' ü amel*) and consider it a primary prerequisite of advancement of civilization.⁴⁴⁸ As such economy is seen as primarily a moral problem, a problem of having proper subjects who can create wealth and preserve it. In this context it is also revealing that the Ottoman title of one of the first text on economy to be translated into Ottoman, Jean Baptiste Say's *Catechisme d'Economie Politique* was translated as *İlm-i Tedbîr-i Menzil* which was the concept for economy in the traditional works on ethics which repeated the Greek classification of care of the self, economy and politics. (See Ch. 2). Hence, translation inserted modern economic concepts into traditional frameworks, thus making them legible to interlocutors and also expanding the old semantic structures.

The emphasis on morality in a way parallels the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century debates where political and economic decline were seen as primarily moral problems whereby the moral standing of bureaucrats and forging of the population into obedient subjects were central concerns. The concern for economic development

⁴⁴⁷ “Suphi Paşa Layihâsından” in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, 19-20.

⁴⁴⁸ See for instance Ohannes Efendi “İlm-i Servet-i Mîlî,” *Mecmua-i Fünun* 6 (Cemaziyelahir 1279): 243-49 in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, 220-23 and Mehmed Şerif, “Lüzum-ı Say ü Amel,” *Mecmua-i Fünun* 8 (Şaban 1279): 333-37 in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi I*, 224-26.

and alleviation of poverty follows the concern for centralizing the government and eliminating contestation for authority in the New Order era and re-establishing state-society relations during the Mahmud II's reign. Moreover, we see certain patterns of moral arguments being recycled during the late Tanzimat this time for economic problems. For instance Cevdet Paşa blames the changing consumption habits and excessive spending following the increased contact with Europe particularly during the Crimean war in the mid-1850s.⁴⁴⁹ In his chronicle cum memoirs, *Ma'rûzât*, he argues that Ottoman state was used to arrange its spending according to its income and its bureaucrats would spend only after they received their salaries. However, when the Empire became part of the path of civilization, they started indulging in luxury and waste (*israf u sefâhat*), spending excessively on horse cars, women and leisure, which eventually led to repeated loans from Europe and financial crisis of the Empire. Emphasis on luxury consumption as a cause of economic decline is not surprising for Cevdet who was an avid student of Ibn Khaldun and a prominent historian of the Empire –as will be explored further below- though he forgot, or wilfully ignored, the fact that complaints of luxury spending was a constant in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century political writing as well.

Moral-political criticism over economic issues and particularly excessive spending was also used quite frequently at the time by the Young Ottomans in their opposition to Sublime Porte and particularly Âli and Fuad Paşas. In a series of articles in *Hürriyet*⁴⁵⁰ Young Ottomans deal with the causes of poverty and financial decline in the Empire, identifying costly wars, waste of treasury and embezzlement by bureaucrats. Although they cite liberal theories of economics and the importance of trade and advancement of crafts, industry and agriculture are highlighted as cause of economic progress and wealth accumulation. It is not misimplementation of these measures but the mainly moral lack of the high-ranking government officials and corruption that lead to economic demise and bankruptcy through loans. As also observed by Christiane Czygan “not the economy itself but the moral criticism of the

⁴⁴⁹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Maruzat*, ed. Yusuf Halaçoğlu (Istanbul: Çağrı, 1980), 6-10.

⁴⁵⁰ “Untitled,” *Hürriyet* 7, August 10, 1868; “Mülkümüzün Servetine Dair Geçen Numerodaki Makaleye Zeyl,” *Hürriyet* 8, August 17, 1868 and “Sekizinci Numeromuzdaki Maliye Bendine Zeyl,” *Hürriyet* 10, August 31, 1868.

political elite was the main motivation of the Young Ottomans.”⁴⁵¹ They used quite detailed and graphic descriptions of poverty and suffering of both the agrarian population in the provinces and the mid to low range clerical staff in the urban centres to accuse the high ranking pashas of corruption and incapacity in government.⁴⁵² Moreover, by analysing budget reports they display the unaccounted deficits in the treasury and report on the personal wealth of Âli and Fuad Paşas listing the precise number of grants and gifts they received from treasury on illusory pretexts.⁴⁵³

While it has been argued that some of these allegations were exaggerated by the Young Ottomans, certain facts reveal much about the problems of Ottoman bureaucratic apparatus. For instance despite the efforts to establish a modern bureaucracy like the European example, the salaries of Ottoman high ranking pashas and diplomats were so staggering as to surprise their European counterparts which demonstrates the existence of traditional and novel practices together in the Ottoman bureaucracy. This also explains why corruption and waste of treasury as political moral and political arguments held currency as much as more technical criticisms. As I argued in the previous chapter, both the problems of administration and the language and framework used to challenge it presented a high degree of continuity. European models and concepts inspired policy, however, their reception and implementation had to be reconciled with existing problems and concepts; eventually the indigenous concepts expanded to address the contemporary problems and novel approaches.

In his analysis of Ottoman official correspondences between the centre and the periphery of the Empire during the Tanzimat, Maurus Reinkowski observes that in

⁴⁵¹ Christiane Czygan, “On the Wrong Way: Criticism of the Tanzimat economy in the Young Ottoman Journal *Hürriyet* (1868/1870),” in *The Economy as an Issue in the Middle Eastern Press (Neue Beihefte zur Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes)*, eds. Gisela Prochazka and Martin Strohmeyer (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2008), 49.

⁴⁵² Czygan states that Young Ottomans focus on sufferings of peasants in Anatolia only, however this is probably due to her analysis being limited to main articles in *Hürriyet*. Dozens of letters from urban centers published in the newspaper report abundantly on the urban centers as well. See for instance “Mülâhaza: İhtilâfî ümmetî rahmetün,” *Hürriyet* 2, July 6, 1868; “Untitled article” *Hürriyet* 11, September 7, 1868; “İstanbul’da bulunan muhbirlerimizden birinin birinci mektubu – fi 14 Cemaziyelahir,” *Hürriyet* 18, October 26, 1868.

⁴⁵³ See for instance “Umûr-ı Nâfia nazırı Davud Paşa’nın Viyana’dan akdedeceği istikrâz,” *Hürriyet* 33, February 8, 1869.

the writings of civil servants and military commanders we can observe the perseverance of two cyclical images of order: the circle of equity and the alternation of order-disorder-restoration.⁴⁵⁴ Order is understood as primarily prosperity and wellbeing of subjects, which is interrupted by evil-doers. He concludes that Tanzimat political rhetoric was still “deeply embedded in the tradition of Ottoman patrimonial rhetoric.”⁴⁵⁵ A parallel pattern can be observed with regard to the reinterpretation of Ottoman history and particularly the concepts of rise and decline in the historical writing of Tanzimat central bureaucracy.

4.3 *Terakkî* as part of the Khaldunian “Cycle”

The later years of Tanzimat came with a heightened interest in Ottoman history overall. Many prominent intellectuals and bureaucrats started producing general and specific works on Ottoman history. Parallel to the translation of literary works from European languages –particularly French- one can observe a heightened interest in Ottoman and Islamic classics, which is generally ignored in the scholarship on the period. Quite a few of the political and historical literature produced during the late sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were published by Ottoman printing presses in this period. Katip Çelebi’s *Düstûrî’l-Amel*, Koçi Bey’s *Risâle*, Ayn Ali’s *Kavânin*, chronicle of Naima and several other early modern Ottoman classics were among those published by the Ottoman printing presses, usually via government sponsorship through the *Encümen-i Dâniş* (a “privy council” for cultural affairs) established by the efforts of Mustafa Reşid Paşa. Commissioned by the *Encümen*, Cevdet Paşa completed the translation of Ibn Khaldun’s *Mukaddime* in 1859.⁴⁵⁶ His ten volume history of the Empire from 1777 to 1827, the famous and most celebrated *Tarih-i Cevdet* also followed a Khaldunian approach to history in an attempt justify, legitimize and defend Tanzimat reforms, as explored in detail by Christoph Neumann.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Reinkowski, 203-6.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, 211.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibn Haldun, *Mukaddime: Osmanlı Tercümesi*, xxvii.

⁴⁵⁷ See Neumann, *Araç Tarih Amaç Tanzimat*. Neumann’s work on *Tarih-i Cevdet* is a brilliant and exemplary work of intellectual and conceptual history and it has guided me in my research from its onset. Since there is still no reliable edition of *Tarih-i Cevdet* and reading the bulky volumes would be

Neumann's analysis of *Tarih-i Cevdet* produces three main conclusions: First, the work is not the pioneer of modern historiography as celebratorily argued by many; it is instead a polemic with the tradition of chronicle writing with the explicit goal of producing a morally informative narrative (better than any previous one) for the statesmen.⁴⁵⁸ Second, although progress is a recurring concept in Cevdet's work, it is not a driving concept and history is presented as a sequence of events within an updated Khaldunian narrative of rise and decline of states, driven by a combination of causality, divine providence and the personal characters of rulers.⁴⁵⁹ Finally, *Tarih-i Cevdet* is a narrative in defense of Tanzimat through an interpretation of the reform period from 1770s to 1827. Thus, in the case of Cevdet's history, Neumann brushes aside the pervasive argument that nineteenth century Ottoman literature is decisively shaped by the influence of Western genres and ideas. Instead, he argues that it is a product of Cevdet's engagement with the Ottoman historiographical tradition wherein a translated concept such as progress is at made to fit in acquired and revised schemas. Progress, in Cevdet Pasha, is not an irreversible and linear advancement of humankind towards a better future; instead, it is simply the existence, in any given period in the history of a state, reverence and support for knowledge and sciences whose natures do not change.⁴⁶⁰ While the emphasis on learning and knowledge as an indicator of prosperity and good order of the state is an item in political writing observed since the late eighteenth century, Cevdet integrates it in a schematic narrative.

Cevdet's history has been an authoritative text in Ottoman historiography on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, particularly regarding the successes and failures of the reform attempts, both immediately after its publication and in modern historiography after the republic. Its conservative yet state-centric official narrative of reform, its emphasis on the agency of the rulers instead of the structural problems and challenges from below, its schematic reading of the Empire's history as an

immensely time consuming, I consider it fitting to rely mostly on Neumann's analysis to complement my own reading of the concepts of the period. Needless to say, I question some of his general conclusions in the light of my own reading.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, 3, 160-62, 167. Cf. Ahmed Vasif, the eighteenth century historian in Menchinger, "A Reformist Philosophy of History."

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 147-50, 161-62, 171, 174, 177.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, 147.

almost natural process of growth and decline has been picked up and reproduced infinitely. It served both conservative and radical reformists of the Empire and the Republic since it condemned the Empire's recent past at the same time tacitly justifying the reform process leading up to the Tanzimat. Thus it became a critical link between the earlier reform tracts (particularly of the memoranda for the New Order which he cites at length) and modern historiography, perfecting and integrating the diffused and fragmented narratives of the former into a coherent whole.

However, this schema whereby an updated Khaldunian framework infused with a modified concept of progress was by no means restricted to Cevdet's work. Khaldun's work seems to have continued to entertain considerable popularity among Ottoman literati, with alternative translations appearing⁴⁶¹ and being included in the standard curriculum for the education of bureaucrats in the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* (an institution of higher education for training bureaucrats).⁴⁶² Mustafa Nuri Paşa's (d. 1879) survey of Ottoman history up to Tanzimat, *Netâyicü'l-Vukû'ât* (written in 1870s) starts with a critical revision of Ibn Khaldun. Intending to write the history which covers "the causes and consequences of ever changing political administration, regulations and customs of the empire," he challenges Khaldun's 120 year limit to a state and argues that 120 year cycle should be taken to mean the approximate duration of different stages identified by him: birth, maturity, decline each of which is marked by a wholesale transformation of custom and procedures of state.⁴⁶³ As such, he divides Ottoman history into six eras, each roughly covering a hundred years.

⁴⁶¹ For instance a certain Subhi Bey of the Council of the State (*Şura-yı Devlet*) is said to have his own translation of *Mukaddime* (ca. 1860s) in the introduction of which he is reported to claim the science of history to be comprehensive of all other sciences, see "İstanbul'dan diğer mektup, fi 26 Ramazan," *Hurriyet* 31, January 25, 1869. Subhi Bey apparently is at the center of a minor scandal in the Council of State and as such he is subject to some gossip in *Hurriyet*. I have not been able to locate his translation though.

⁴⁶² See Namık Kemal, "Memur [ve Tedris]," in *Osmanlı Modernleşmesinin Meseleleri: Bütün Makaleler I*, ed. Nergiz Yılmaz Aydoğdu and İsmail Kara (İstanbul: Dergah, 2005): 181.

⁴⁶³ Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Netâyicü'l-Vukû'ât: Kurumlarıyla Osmanlı Tarihi*, ed. Yılmaz Kurt (Ankara: Birleşik, 2008), 18, "...Müverrih Ibn-i Haldûn her devlete sinn-i nümuvv ve sinn-i vukûf ve sinn-i inhitât isbât ve a 'mâr-ı düveli ekseriyâ yüz yirmi sene olmak üzere îrâd edüb halbuki kendisi sekiz yüz sekiz sene-i Hicriyye'sine kadar mu'ammer olmak hasebiyle ... bu da 'vâda bulunması: Her üç karnda

Terakkî appears as a central concept in *Netayic*; particularly after describing the events of the first three eras –stages of rise and expansion in the Khaldunian schema– Nuri Paşa opens subchapters titled *te'sîsât ve terakkiyât* (institutionalizations and progresses) where he speaks of the establishment of military and administrative institutions and growth of sciences (*terakkiyât-ı ulûm ü fûnûn*) and material power.⁴⁶⁴ Particularly the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror is described as “the age of blossoming and a time of rise and progress” (*zaman-ı neşv ü nemâsı ve hengâm-ı terakkî ü i'tilâsı*) to the point of attributing an organic inevitability to the rise of the Empire.⁴⁶⁵ Nuri Paşa criticizes the chroniclers of the period for trying to attribute some external cause to each and every conquest (e.g. the death of a Serbian king) and argues that it is a natural imperative that any state in the right conditions would expand its borders (*her devlet ve millet vakt ü hâli müsâ'id buldukça tevsî'i memâlikden gerü durmamak emr-i tabî'i olub*).

Such organic and naturalistic explanations recur throughout Nuri Paşa's narrative and particularly during the discussion of the problems of the seventeenth century. The Celali revolts of the period are argued to have caused the decline of the previous prosperity of Anatolia (*Anadolu'nun ma'mûriyet-i sâbıkasını tedennî eyledi*).⁴⁶⁶ Nuri Paşa immediately interprets this decline with reference to the Khaldunian schema:

The power of the age of youth in a state counteracts the negative consequences of the errors of administrators, while as old age curbs its power even small mistakes cause dire consequences. The quality of this [old age] was such that whenever the reins of government were in able hands the state's glory shone to frighten its enemies and whenever it was in the hands of idiots all kinds of problems arose.⁴⁶⁷

Nuri Paşa reinforces this narrative when he cites Murad IV and the Köprülü viziers as instances of recuperation for the Ottoman state, thus repeating similar arguments

sûl ve âdât-ı devlet külliyyen mütehavvil ve mütegayyir olur demeğe mahmûl olub...” See also Neumann, 183.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid, 35, 83, 178.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 64-65.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid, 273.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, 273-74, “Devletin unfüvân-ı şebâbından kuvve-i neşv ü nemâsı idârece olur-olmaz uygunsuzlukların asâr-ı muzırasını mahv ü izâle eder iken kuvâ-yı meleke şeyb ü herem ârız oldukda cüz'î hatâlar büyük yaralar açmağa sebep olageldiği cihetle bu 'asrın havâssından olmak üzere idâre-i umûr-ı devlet ehl ü erbâbı eline geçdikce heybet ü azameti dehşet-bahşâ-yı yâr ü ağıyâr ve sebûk-magazânın yed-i bi- iktidârına düşdükce envâ' müzâyaka ü müşkilâta giriftâr olmağa başladı.”

from the late eighteenth century scribes. As such, although his history is supposed to be a history of the institutions and customs unlike the chronicles of the past, individual sultans and viziers are still the driving force of Ottoman historical narrative within Khaldunian schema of rise and decline: able rulers enable progress whereas bad ones cause ruin, as much as the particular era, youth, maturity or old age, allows it.

A similar entanglement is observed in Ahmed Vefik Paşa's (d. 1891) work on the discipline of history, *Hikmet-i Tarih* (1863), in which he combines Muslim historiography –particularly through Katip Çelebi's seventeenth century work *Takvimü't-Tevarih*- with the developments in the Western historiography and archaeology and proposes a world history which starts with Adam ca 6000 years ago, is divided into two (*ezmine-i mütekaddime* and *ezmine-i müteahhire*) with the birth of Muhammad and emergence of Islam.⁴⁶⁸ While recognizing and employing new periodizations in Western historiography such as Middle Ages (*ezmine-i mutavassıta*) and new ages (*ezmine-i cedide ve mu'ahhara*), he still uses the categories of youth (*şebab*), maturation (*nümuvv*), stasis (*vukûf*) and decline (*inhitât*) to describe the stages of life of different states in each age. However, he also envisions humanity to be endowed by God with the capacity for perfection and progress (*nev'-i beşere 'inâyet-i Râbbanîye olan kâbiliyyet-i kemâl ve terakkî*)⁴⁶⁹ which he claims to be the subject of the study of history: “the knowledge gained from contemplating the causes, consequences and succession of events and the capacity of the human kind and its step by step progress and completion is the wisdom of history.”⁴⁷⁰ Yet quite similar to Cevdet Paşa, he also associates progress simply with the existence and dissemination of sciences, knowledge.⁴⁷¹

In all these histories written by the high ranking Paşas of the Ottoman bureaucracy this almost automatic distinction between the material, scientific and the economic realm and the political and moral seems to be the standard. Freedom, political rights,

⁴⁶⁸ Ahmed Vefik Paşa, *Hikmet-i Tarih*, eds. Remzi Demir, Bilal Yurtoğlu and Ali Utku (Konya: Çizgi, 2013), 9-11.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, 38.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, 29, “...vukû 'âtın esbâb ve neticesi ve teselsül ve telâhukı ve nev'-i beşerin şaffet-i kâbiliyyeti, hatve hatve terakki ile istikmâlini mülâhazadan hâsıl olacak 'ilm, hikmet-i târîhdir.”

⁴⁷¹ Ibid, 32, 42.

representation and other associated concepts are not even mentioned. While the word *islâh* is frequently used to refer to legal amendments in order to settle the problem of non-Muslim populations and their status within the Empire, the issue is mostly framed as a concession to the pressures of the European powers and is never associated with progress. This is most obvious in Reşid Paşa's memorandum (1856) written in criticism of the declaration of the Reform Edict, in which he uses *islâh* to refer to what the Edict does with regard to the non-Muslims.⁴⁷² It is again in the same context that he uses the concept of political rights (*hukûk-ı politikîyye*), a dangerous concession to the foreign powers, a grounds for intervention into the Empire's domestic affairs through non-Muslim subjects. While Reşid Paşa's attitude is attributable to his grudge against Ali and Fuad Paşas who had retired him from his position while they themselves rose to power, this still demonstrates the vulnerability of novel political vocabulary to domestic conflicts and factional disputes: even Reşid Paşa who has been hailed as the vanguard of liberal ideas in the Empire could retreat to a conservative position when he considered it detrimental to Empire's standing or simply, if he considers it a useful tool in polemic. The concept of reform had many limits.

This distinction between the material and the political inherent in the concept of progress was overcome for the first time by Young Ottomans who associated reform and progress with grand political change as well in their campaign for an almost utopian Ottoman government and society.

4.4 Terakki as Political Liberation

In an 1872 article titled "Terakkî", Namık Kemal describes progress, drawing a lengthy verbal portrait of nineteenth century London.⁴⁷³ After arguing that London was the peak of what the civilized world had achieved through progress (*âsâr-ı terakkî*), he goes on to describe the parliament building which is the epitome of wisdom and justice and the supreme manifestation of public opinion, schools where

⁴⁷² Mustafa Reşid Paşa, *Reşid Paşa Merhûmun Ba'zı Asâr-ı Siyasiyyesi* (Istanbul: Kütüphane-i Ebuzziya, 1305 [1887]), 53-60.

⁴⁷³ Namık Kemal, "Terakkî", *İbret* 45, Ramazan 3, 1289 in Namık Kemal, *Osmanlı Modernleşmesinin Meseleleri: Makaleler I*, ed. Nergiz Aydoğdu and İsmail Kara (Istanbul: Dergah, 2005), 212-20.

children of all age receive excellent education, museums which bring together marvels of the world, zoos, libraries with hundreds of thousands of books, steam technology, giant factories, large streets, immense wealth, great buildings, mines which reach to the deepest corners of the earth, perfect bridges and endless tunnels, all with a vocabulary reminiscent of the descriptions of wonderlands in old tales. While Kemal highlights justice, political wisdom, popular representation and morality and recognizes minor flaws in European civilization here and there, the celebratory language and the description of the city reveals the degree of fascination for Western material culture and prosperity held by the Ottoman bureaucrat. “In what we call the civilized countries, the human nature has almost dominated the nature of the world,” Kemal concludes.⁴⁷⁴

However, while Young Ottomans were enamoured with material achievements of European civilization emphasizing economic development and dissemination of sciences and learning at least as much as the central bureaucracy they opposed, they were unique in the overtly political meaning they attributed to the words such as *terakkî* and *islâhât*. In their quest for freedom (*hürriyet*), legitimacy (*meşrûiyet*), rights (*hukûk*), equality (*müsâvât*) and justice (*adâlet*), they came up with unique interpretations of Ottoman political history and the previous reform attempts. Young Ottomans both produced extensive and numerous essays and books on Ottoman history, most notably Ziya Paşa’s history of Muslim emirate of Andalusia and Namık Kemal’s collection of essays on Muslim history titled *Evrâk-ı Perişan*.⁴⁷⁵ However, beyond these works which they produced later in their lives a considerable number (virtually more than half) of their earlier articles in various newspapers and most particularly *Hurriyet* were discussions of Ottoman and Islamic history.

As opposed to the bureaucrats cited above and their historical accounts Young Ottomans did not consider Ibn Khaldun or the cyclical accounts to be satisfactory in explaining Ottoman decline. At one point Namık Kemal openly objects to Khaldunian postulate that a state is an organic body and hence has a limited life; the

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, 218, “*Memâlik-i mütemeddine dediğimiz yerlerde tabiat-ı beşer bayağı tabiat-ı aleme tahakküm etmiş.*”

⁴⁷⁵ See Iskender Pala ed., *Namık Kemal’in Tarihi Biyografileri* (Ankara: TTK, 1989)

state is a body but it is a spiritual body and hence can be healed indefinitely.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, Kemal occasionally takes issue with Khaldunist bureaucrats, for instance when he sardonically remarks that reading *Mukaddime* and the law of commerce would not be enough to educate able bureaucrats in the *Mülkiye*⁴⁷⁷, or when he mocks one certain Subhi Bey for claiming the science of history to be comprehensive of all sciences in his introduction to the translation of Khaldun's *Mukaddime*⁴⁷⁸. Young Ottomans themselves mixed narration of history with political argumentation, questioning the legitimacy of Ottoman rule at different periods and discussing causes of decline, and following from that, the road to progress once again thus building a seamless narrative of history.

A typical example is another 1869 essay titled "Progress" by Ali Suavi in which he argued that the last hundred and fifty years of Ottoman reform was a gradual political progress towards more freedom, equality and legitimacy.⁴⁷⁹ Condemning the government of the Ottoman Empire up to the twelfth century AH (seventeenth century AD) as a form of domination-slavery (*hâkimiyet-mahkûmiyet*) and hence illegitimate (*gayr-ı meşrûa*), Suavi argues that the foundations of *ıslâhât* was built by Köprülü Fazıl Mustafa Paşa on three pillars: security of life, honor and property for all subjects, equal taxation for all subjects and military service. Probably, fearing misassociation of the word, he sees it necessary to add that *ıslâhât* means not religious reform but political transformation (*inkılâb*).

However, this reform which was recorded in histories as *nizâm-ı cedîd* was cut short with the Paşa's death, he argues, only to be continued by Selim III whose reforms were basically about renewing (*tecđîd*) these three issues and revival (*ihyâ*).⁴⁸⁰ Mahmud also spent a lot of effort personally to revive the New Order but it was only

⁴⁷⁶ Namık Kemal, "Hasta Adam," *Hürriyet* 24, December 7, 1868, "Hayır, devlet bir şahıstır; ama şahs-ı manevîdir; Ibn-i Haldun'un dediği gibi öyle ömr-i tabiisi falan yoktur."

⁴⁷⁷ Namık Kemal, "Memur [ve Tedris]", 181.

⁴⁷⁸ "İstanbul'dan diğer mektup, fi 26 Ramazan," *Hürriyet* 31, January 25, 1869.

⁴⁷⁹ Ali Suavi, "Terakki," *İttihâd* 1, May 15, 1869. For the transcribed text see also Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi* (Ankara, Kültür Bakanlığı, 1993), 180-83 and M. Kaya Bilgegil, *Yeni Çağ Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatı Üzerine Araştırmalar I: Yeni Osmanlılar* (Ankara: Baylan Matbaası, 1976), 125-28.

⁴⁸⁰ It is curious that Ali Suavi is able to trace Nizam-ı Cedid to Fazıl Mustafa Paşa whose taxation policies, as noted in Chapter 3, were indeed called as such when one considers it was forgotten at the time and even in modern historiography. Suavi must have read *Tarih-i Raşid*, the only source which cites Fazıl Paşa's *nizâm-ı cedîd*, thoroughly since it was published in print in 1865.

in the reign of Abdülmecid, with the Edict of Gülhane that it was finally given birth and the three issues were written and promulgated. The Reform Edict of 1856, Abdülaziz's coronation speech five years later, the regulation of provincial administration (*vilayet nizamnamesi*) in 1864 which instituted election for local administrators, and finally the establishment of Council of State (*Şura-yı Devlet*) in 1867 were all steps that furthered and completed the promise of Tanzimat and made the Ottoman government a constitutional one (*hükümet-i meşrûta ve mukayyede*) in Suavi's argument. He even compares the Imperial decree which promulgated the Council of State to Magna Carta in securing freedom. Thus, out of the two hundred years of Ottoman reform process he makes a Whiggish narrative of Ottoman progress toward freedom and constitutionalism.

Similar narratives were produced by other Young Ottomans with variations in dating of decline and progress. For instance in a 1869 article⁴⁸¹ Namık Kemal proposes a summary narrative of decline and reform where he argues that until the end of Ragıp Paşa's grand vizierate (1763), Ottoman state was in alternating stages of progress and stasis (*kah terakkî kah vukûf*) with occasional decline due to loss of territories (*tedennî*) and occasional victories. However, after that date the consequences of decline (*eser-i inhitât*) became evident. The cause of decline was Europe's new military order being better than the Ottomans' and while European New Order was progressing each day (*terakkî*), even the old order of Ottomans was in decline (*tedennî*). While there were attempts at reform (*islâh*) these were not based on principle (*kaidessiz*) and definitely not permanent; and people kept indulging themselves in peace until an external threat emerged or a military defeat happened. Half-hearted measures proved ineffective and caused revolts until Mahmud II did away with the janissary corps, which reformed the military. Yet, the contemporary dismal situation of the Empire is no different than it was before the destruction of Janissaries; then it was the disorder of military (*askerin intizamsızlığı*) which caused decline (*inkıraz*), and now it is the disorder of the administration (*idarenin intizamsızlığı*). Kemal claims the reform measures are as half-hearted and as uninformed as they were before. The solution is to reform the administration by

⁴⁸¹ Namık Kemal, "Burhân-ı Tecrûbî [Evidence from Experience]," *Hurriyet* 40, March 29, 1869.

instituting a parliamentary system (*usûl-ı meşveret*) just as military had been reformed by abolishing janissary corps and establishing organized military.

Both Suavi and Kemal come to the conclusion that while earlier reform attempts were shouldered by wise (*hikmetli*) and virtuous (*fazıl*) individuals early on and by European influence after Tanzimat, however, neither is accepted by the Ottoman ummah anymore; the ummah desires progress with his own collective effort (*heyet-i mecmua*).⁴⁸² And this could only be possible through *usûl-ı meşveret*, which in the vocabulary of the Young Ottomans, stood for limiting arbitrary rule through popular representation and a Sharia based constitution. In their argument against arbitrary rule, the Young Ottomans also came up with their most intriguing contributions to the interpretation of Ottoman decline: reading the frequent Janissary revolts of the early modern period as a reaction to the tyrannical and totalitarian tendencies of Ottoman Sultans and arguing Sharia to be a limit and constraint to the sultans' authority.

Regarding the Janissaries, Namık Kemal, for instance, argued that the Ottoman Empire was ruled with the will of the ummah (*irâde-i ümmet*) and *usûl-ı meşveret* until the abolishment of the corps, whose barracks were a kind of people's councils (*şura-yı ümmet*); instead of delegating their will to a parliament the people exercised it directly.⁴⁸³ In another article, he insinuates that what caused the weakness of the popular resistance afterwards and submission of people to the oppression and maladministration was the terror caused by the thousands of Janissary bodies rotting in the Golden Horn.⁴⁸⁴ Similar arguments for the balancing power of Janissaries was a running theme throughout the issues of *Hürriyet*⁴⁸⁵, however, this does not amount to a glorification of the Janissaries. On the contrary, the unruliness of the Janissaries and their violent actions are still cited frequently among the causes and effects of decline. A series of articles by Ziya Paşa on Ottoman political history highlight both

⁴⁸² Ali Suavi, "Terakki."

⁴⁸³ Namık Kemal, "Usûl-ı meşveret hakkında...", *Hürriyet* 12, September 14, 1868. See also Namık Kemal, *Makâlât-ı Siyasiye ve Edebiye*, ed. Erdoğan Kul (Ankara: Birleşik, 2014), 161.

⁴⁸⁴ Namık Kemal, "Hubbû'l-vatan mine'l-iman," *Hürriyet* 1, June 28, 1868, "Vâkıa bir vakit idarenin her zulmüne tahammül olundu, lakin halkın asab-ı asabiyyetine o zaafı getiren bir illet idi ki binlerce yenigere ecsâmının İstanbul Haliç'inde çürüyüşünden hâsıl olmuştu."

⁴⁸⁵ Namık Kemal, "Usul-ı meşverete dair mektupların üçüncüsü," *Hürriyet* 14; "Mesele-i Müsavat," *Hürriyet* 15; and "İz'âr-ı Mevhûme," *Hürriyet* 35.

the harm caused by Janissary revolts and their function as barriers to the over-exertion of sultanic authority.⁴⁸⁶

Regarding the role of Sharia in limiting Sultanic authority, again, Young Ottomans cite several historical examples where prominent religious scholars challenged sultanic decrees⁴⁸⁷ and highlight the fact that even in their moral decline, the ulema stood with the Janissaries against the palace as opposed to the obedient ulema of the late Tanzimat.⁴⁸⁸ To sum up in Namık Kemal's words:

... at the time, from the outside our state seemed like a government of personal rule, yet, in actuality it was a constitutional government which had excessive degree of freedom. Ulema would pass judgment, sultan and the viziers would execute, and the armed populace would oversee the execution.⁴⁸⁹

While this interpretation of early modern Ottoman polity was quite radical at the time, as also noted by Mardin, it was by no means off the mark, Young Ottomans were relying heavily on received accounts of Ottoman history from the extant chronicle and political writing as evident in their quite detailed narrations from all periods of Ottoman past, forging them into a meaningful narrative in light of the political wisdom they received from Europe.⁴⁹⁰

Moreover, while this alternative narrative of history was later forgotten and shadowed by official narratives, particularly that of Cevdet, with the emergence of revisionist historiography in the late 1970s, virtually the same narrative was put forward by successive scholars: Idris Küçükömer who noted the Janissary-Ulema alliance as a democratic force as early as 1969⁴⁹¹, Şerif Mardin who formulated this alliance as an element of the "tacit contract" between the state and society based on

⁴⁸⁶ "Yirmi beşinci numeroda olan hatıraya zeyl," *Hürriyet* 28, January 4, 1869; "Hatıra-i Sâniye," *Hürriyet* 34, March 1, 1869. Although they are unsigned Kaya Bilgegil attributes these articles to Ziya Paşa.

⁴⁸⁷ Namık Kemal, "Hasta Adam."

⁴⁸⁸ "İz'ar-ı Mevhûme."

⁴⁸⁹ Namık Kemal, "Hasta Adam." "... bizim devlet vaktiyle her ne kadar zâhiren hükümet-i müstakile suretinde görünüyor ise de hakikat-i halde bayağı hürriyetin derece-i ifrâtına varmış bir hükümet-i meşrûta idi. Ulema hükmeder, padişah ve vüzerâ icra eyler, ahali silah derdest olarak bu icraya nâzır bulunurdu."

⁴⁹⁰ Mardin, *Genesis*, 133-34.

⁴⁹¹ Idris Küçükömer, *Düzenin Yabancılaşması: Batılılaşma* (Ant Yayınları, 1969).

justice in 1988⁴⁹², and finally Baki Tezcan who proposed a radical rethinking of the Empire's seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as an age of proto-democratization marked by ulema control over government and janissary politicization⁴⁹³. Parallel to these studies, arguments for constitutionalist trends in early modern Ottoman political thought have been made and Tanzimat constitutional demands have been, though loosely, linked to these earlier trends.⁴⁹⁴

It should be emphasized, however, that the Young Ottomans only had a limited number of Ottoman chronicles and political writing -which they read critically- from the earlier centuries at their disposal. The overwhelming majority of these sources unanimously presented a monarchy in decline. Hence, the Young Ottoman argument for previous Ottoman constitutional governments was based on an intuitive understanding of the politics of previous centuries with the help of European political ideas and on a new understanding of what Sharia could propose to politics, rather than on a thorough historiographical endeavour. Particularly, finding themselves facing a government, which, though weak, ruled over an even weaker society which had almost no means or modes of voicing dissent or challenging authority in stark contrast to pre-Tanzimat era, Young Ottomans must have realized the power dynamics of early modern Ottoman politics in a lasting moment of epiphany, which, then, they reflected on to their historical narratives.

However, beyond that, they had a complex though at times self-contradicting narrative of the Empire's history and its decline; they could glorify a certain sultan or vizier for his devotion to reform and in other article heavily criticize him for failure.⁴⁹⁵ Parallel to this they did not agree among themselves as to when Ottoman society was in progress and when it was in decline. At first glance, this challenges

⁴⁹² Şerif Mardin, "Freedom in an Ottoman Perspective," in *State, Democracy and Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, eds. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Berlin, New York: W. De Gruyter, 1988), 23-36.

⁴⁹³ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*.

⁴⁹⁴ See particularly Hüseyin Yılmaz, "Containing Sultanly Authority: Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire before Modernity," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* XLV (2015): 231-64; Erdem Sönmez, "From kanun-ı kadim (ancient law) to umumunkuvveti (force of people): historical context of the Ottoman constitutionalism," *Middle Eastern Studies* 52:1 (2016): 116-34.

⁴⁹⁵ One example is Murad IV whom they criticized for his brutal crackdown on tobacco consumption see "İstanbul'dan verdikleri haberlere göre...", *Hürriyet* 5, July 27, 1868. Another one is Reşid Paşa who takes credit for Tanzimat but is criticized for his nepotism and extravagance, see "Untitled Editorial," *Hürriyet* 19, November 2, 1868.

Mardin's observation that for Namık Kemal progress was irreversible and linear as part of a faith in European science and achievements.⁴⁹⁶ However, this contradiction is itself a part of Young Ottoman thought which was not definitively resolved. It was a tension between the linear understanding of world history as a move towards greater knowledge and more freedom and the experience of Ottoman and Islamic history which seemed to be in decline despite "clear" evidence of progress in earlier times.

The Young Ottomans tried to synchronize the indigenous narrative of Ottoman historical experience with the "universal" narrative of progress of the West, which was further complicated with the expressed desire of the Young Ottomans to renew the Empire's former glorious state (*eski Osmanlı şanının tecdidi*).⁴⁹⁷ The desire for reform, renewal and victory (*ıslâh, tecdîd, tanzîm*) of the Ottoman Empire which could not be separated from the story of its decline on one hand, and the acknowledgement of European political and material progress on the other. As explained above, with the more conservative bureaucrats in administration, this problem was simply resolved by separating the material and the political and conceptualizing progress as the former and reducing reform to infrastructural and economic reform. However, for the Young Ottomans who desired a comprehensive political revolution and establishment of a constitutional regime, political reform could not be simply built on a shaky foundation as historical experience. It needed to be grounded on something immutable, eternal and universal, namely Sharia which they conceptualized as way more than Islamic law to mean broad teaching of Islam on whose exegesis they built their political doctrine. In utilizing principles of Sharia for both criticism of Ottoman practices and legitimation of European models, they followed the trend among reformists from the late eighteenth century onwards going further and proposing a more radical politics.

4.5 Reform and Islam: Competing Interpretations

⁴⁹⁶ Mardin, *Genesis*, 319-21.

⁴⁹⁷ Namık Kemal, "Hubbû'l-vatan."

In an 1869 essay in *Hürriyet*, we find a summary list of Young Ottoman demands for reform which I will quote at length:

holding ministers responsible for all their actions by founding a People's Parliament [Şura-yı Ümmet] whose members will be chosen by the people and in proportion to the population...; reforming the Sharia courts and restitution of their former dignity of which they were unjustly stripped; introduction of an easier method of education and regulation of the neighborhood schools and junior high schools; writing all officially announced regulations, orders to the civil servants and other such official communications in a plain language accessible to all; providing our subjects security of law – like the foreigners – and state subsidization and assistance in all matters so that our currently ruined trade and industry may be revived; improving the penal code and making sure everyone is subject to its binding laws be it the grand vizier or a common person; commending those civil servants whose morals, uprightness and good service has been proven as well as severely punishing those whose crimes and wrongdoing have become apparent without any possibility of interference from any vizier for leniency or pardon; preventing removal from duty of officers in the provinces without due investigation, just because a foreign embassy, a consulate or a patriarchate demanded so; selecting officers for provincial service from among those who are literate, familiar with the affairs of the state and the nation, experienced, tested and straightforward, not from among those who belong to the retinue of a vizier or protégé of a man of influence for favoritism; relieving the poor people from the oppression of the council members, village governors, usurers and feudal lords who are known to be local magnates; regulating and collecting all kinds of taxation in adherence to the principle of justice; improving and making the drafting procedure more equitable and including the non-Muslims in the conscription via some legislation since the exclusivity of the burden of military service to Muslims decreases their population with each passing year; and keeping the issue of economy under close watch at all times and most vitally erasing the pestilent idea that the state cannot survive without foreign debt from our minds, and striving to make good use of the domestic treasures of our land and prevent theft and excessive spending, and balancing the budget by ascertaining the sources of revenue and prioritizing the spending.⁴⁹⁸

When boiled down to basics, these demands were about justice and security, prosperity, fair taxation and conscription, the main tenets of Tanzimat edict, with the added item of putting the bureaucracy in a state of order and efficiency by regulating appointments and removals and making them subject to oversight. In a way, as observed by other scholars as well, Young Ottoman basically demanded the

⁴⁹⁸ “Thtilâfu ümmetî rahmetün,” *Hürriyet* 51, June 14, 1869.

fulfilment of promises of Tanzimat⁴⁹⁹, and continued the tradition of the likes of Ahmed Resmi and Keçecizade Izzet Molla (See Ch. 2 and 3) in their criticism against the hypocrisy of the central bureaucracy. They demanded regulation, order and stability against arbitrary government, however, unlike the bulk of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century reformists who connected order to strong central rule, they sought it in the rule of law, which they associated with Sharia understood broadly as principles of Islam rather than Islamic law as practiced by ulema.

Young Ottomans perceived Sharia as the ultimate source of political principle and considered it as the source of Ottoman greatness as long as it was heeded. One unsigned essay compares Sharia to European law:

European states are Christian and Sharia is non-existent in Christianity, hence their government is based on principle of law. Since Europeans have suffered much from the intrusion of priests into the affairs of state and since they are ignorant about the commandments of the Sharia of Islam, they attribute the enormities they observe in our domestic administration to Sharia and strive to change it by separating religious affairs from political business. They do not know that what has befallen us is due to deviation from Sharia and we succumb to decline whenever we give up on its principles... This state was established on Islam and whenever this basis is changed the body will be left in danger.⁵⁰⁰

Thus teachings of Islam is established as an inviolable and unchanging (*tegayyürden masûn*) basis on which law, political and moral reasoning on which reform can be based.⁵⁰¹ Moreover, Young Ottomans reproduce the medieval argument in Islamic literature which recognizes different governments based on reason, Sharia and caprice while still upholding Sharia as the best option. In another essay, they remind that with the interpretive capability its tradition allows, what Sharia can present to

⁴⁹⁹ The clearest evidence of how Young Ottomans glorified Tanzimat Edict but were disappointed with its unsuccessful execution can be found in Ziya Paşa, "Hâtıra-yı Sâniye," *Hürriyet* 34, March 1, 1869.

⁵⁰⁰ "Devlet-i Aliyye'yi Bulunduğu Hâl-i Hatarnâktan Halâsın Esbâbı," *Hürriyet* 9, August 24, 1868, "Avrupa devletleri Hristiyan ve Hristiyanlık'ta şeriat namevcut olduğundan esas-ı hükümetleri kanuna müsteniddir. Avrupalılar mukaddemâ papazların umûr-ı devlete tegallübü hasebiyle bin belâyâ uğrayıp canları yanmış olduğu ve şeriat-ı Islâmîye'nin ahkâmından haberdâr olmadıkları cihetle bizim idare-i dahiliyemizde gördükleri fenalıkları şeriatın âsârı zu'm ile bu esasın tağyürine, yani umûr-ı mezhebiyye ile ahkâm-ı siyasiyenin birbirinden ayrılmasına sa'y ederler. Bilmezler ki bize ârız olan uygunsuzluk hükümetimizin esas ve mebnâsı olan şeriatın ahkâmına riayetsizlikten husûle geldi ve her ne zaman biz bu esası bırakır isek muzmahil oluruz... Zira bu devlet Islâmîyet üzere kurulmuş olduğundan her ne zaman esasına tegayyür gelirse vücudu muhâtara da kalır."

⁵⁰¹ Namık Kemal, "Usul-ı meşverete dair...", *Hürriyet* 12, September 14, 1868.

any time and place in the name of justice and law is bound to be above and beyond any such thing to be found in civilized states.⁵⁰² Ali Suavi also argues for the supremacy of Sharia in guaranteeing equality and popular sovereignty over European models, since it also ensures fear of God and hence good morals in people.⁵⁰³

The Young Ottoman's devoted most of their literary abilities and time to interpret the scriptures of Islamic tradition –both Quran and prophetic traditions- as well as medieval classics of Islamic literature in advocating justice, representative government, constitutionalism, limited authority, equality before law and freedom. Thus the Quranic verse "... and seek their counsel in the matter" (3:159) became the basis of principle of consultation⁵⁰⁴, another verse "God commands you justice and good morals" (16:90) became an opportunity to reflect deeply on justice, punishment and due process of law⁵⁰⁵; the hadith "disagreement in my ummah is a blessing" became a basis for plurality in politics⁵⁰⁶ and another hadith "you are all shepherds and you are all responsible for your flock" was interpreted as an argument for political accountability and universal enfranchisement⁵⁰⁷. Ali Suavi set out to propose a comprehensive treatment of the problem of sovereignty distinguishing between God's authority and political sovereignty discussing republicanism with reference to Islamic law.⁵⁰⁸

In their interpretive efforts, Young Ottomans were very skilful and they made quite creative use of established exegetic methods and principles. A fine example is their interpretation of the verse on obedience to authority in such a way to make obedience conditional up on adherence to principles of Sharia and justice, by referring to rules of Arabic grammar.⁵⁰⁹ These pieces of tradition that they reinterpreted were not

⁵⁰² "Untitled editorial," *Hürriyet* 23, November 30, 1868, "*Ondan iltikât olunacak kanun adaletçe ve icab-ı vakt ü hale mutabakatça belki düvel-i mütemeddinede mevcut olan kavânînin hepsine muraccâh olacağında şüphe mi edilir?*"

⁵⁰³ Ali Suavi, "El hâkimu hüvallah," in Ali Suavi, ed. Hüseyin Çelik (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1983), 204-231.

⁵⁰⁴ Namık Kemal, "Ve şâvirhüm fi'l-emr," *Hürriyet* 4, July 20, 1868, also in Namık Kemal, "And seek their counsel in the matter," in *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, ed. Charles Kurzman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁵⁰⁵ "Innallâhe ye'muru bi'l-adli ve'l-ihsân," *Hürriyet* 30, January 18, 1869.

⁵⁰⁶ "Thilâfî ümmetî rahmetün," *Hürriyet* 51.

⁵⁰⁷ "Küllüküm râ'in ve küllüküm mes'ûlün an râyetih," *Hürriyet* 13, September 21, 1868.

⁵⁰⁸ Ali Suavi, "El hâkimu hüvallah."

⁵⁰⁹ "Thilâfî ümmetî rahmetün," *Hürriyet* 51.

simply vague or obscure references; rather they had been frequently invoked in classical and medieval political texts albeit with different interpretations. Besides reinterpreting common reference points in Islamic scriptures, the Young Ottomans also invoked exempla from Islamic history and medieval literature to prove their argument for constitutional government. Kemal invoked caliph Harun al-Rashid (d. 809 AD) and his just relationship with his subject to argue for accountability⁵¹⁰ and Ali Suavi highlighted the perfect equality and fraternity between early Muslims to argue for democracy and popular government.⁵¹¹

As briefly noted in Ch. 4, a culture of dissent towards, and suspicion of, rulers was not absent in classics of Islamic tradition and had been invoked by Sadık Rıfat Paşa. Kemal's reference to the stanza from Saadi Shirazi's *Golestan*, which proposed the ruler as simply a servant of the people, was incidentally taken from an exempla in which a dervish wilfully disrespects a sultan and his vizier and instructs them to be humble and know their place.⁵¹² Saadi's *Golestan* had several similar exempla and the work itself was not alone among medieval Islamic classics in putting forward a highly sceptical and cynical vision of monarchical institution. While Sadık Rıfat Paşa had refrained from exploring such arguments fully and was content with simply implying a rethinking ruler-subject relations in favour of the subjects, Young Ottomans did not hold back and explored the possibilities offered by Islamic classics as much as they could.

The Young Ottoman interpretations of Sharia and Islamic tradition as synonymous with modern concepts of equality, justice and constitutional government, however, did not stand unchallenged. We can observe a continuum of different interpretations of and attitudes towards Islamic tradition at the time in which Young Ottoman approach plays one, yet obviously major, part. A quite revealing example is an interesting correspondence between Namık Kemal and anonymous objector on the legitimacy of principle of consultation with regard to Sharia and its applicability,

⁵¹⁰ Namık Kemal "Devlet-i Aliyye'ye Bâis-i Tenezzül Olan Maarifin Esbâb-ı Tedennîsi," *Hürriyet* 6, August 3, 1868.

⁵¹¹ Ali Suavi, "Demokrasi, Hükümet-i Halk, Müsavat," in *Ali Suavi*, 232-246.

⁵¹² Namık Kemal, "Küllüküm"; *The Golestan of Saadi*, 46-47.

which was serialized in *Hürriyet* in a total of eight letters.⁵¹³ After a series of objections the anonymous objector finally puts forward his own solution to Ottoman problems:

Europe's deal with us is motivated by two items, the first of which is the matter of religion; all the Christian states work to destroy Ottoman dynasty. The second is the matter of politics and trade: it is not possible to divide this country between the great powers since leaving its administration to Christian population would inevitably lead to Russian invasion and takeover. Moreover, it is not possible to keep the current trade going and since it is the Ottoman produce and cash feeding Europe, it is entirely conceivable that at one point politics and trade will gain over religion and they will invade our country and institute an allied government. As such, what Ottomans need today is not carrying out justice [*icrâ-yı adâlet*] but accumulating power [*istihsâl-i kudret*] which calls for a *sâhib-i zuhûr* who will hide his restorative measures [*tedâbir-i müceddidâne*] from the gaze of the world and rule with great force and perseverance.⁵¹⁴

In this most succinct passage, the objector suggests the Empire's situation to be a state of emergency and exception, which necessitates an exceptional leader who will favour accumulation of power over implementation of justice.⁵¹⁵ The trope of a strong ruler to set things right seems immensely familiar within the Ottoman political tradition. The particular term, *sâhib-i zuhûr*, was an ancient title in Ottoman political writing; as derived by Cornell Fleischer from the sixteenth century historian Mustafa Âli's writings, it was used for those rulers "who take power by force of arms, and whose right to rule is indicated simply by their success, which demonstrates that they are possessed of divine favor."⁵¹⁶ Koçi Beg's call for iron rule in the face of dissolution order and Katip Çelebi's *sâhib-i seyf* (a man of sword) who could restore balance to the disrupted social order invoked more or less the same trope (See Ch. 1). Moreover, the use of the word restorative (*müceddidâne*) bears striking parallel to the trope of the restorer (*müceddid* or *sâhib-i mia*) used in the late eighteenth century in reference to the doctrine of cyclical reform (See Ch. 2).

⁵¹³ For a transcript of all the letters see Namık Kemal, *Makâlat*, 159-96. While there is a possibility of this correspondence being a fictitious one and the objector a straw man devised by Namık Kemal, it is still significant in revealing competing attitudes toward reform with which Young Ottomans were responding to.

⁵¹⁴ Namık Kemal, "Usul-ı meşverete dair geçen numerolarda münderic mektupların altıncısı," *Hürriyet* 18, October 26, 1868.

⁵¹⁵ For an essay in which I briefly analyze this exchange see Alp Eren Topal, "Türk Tipi Başkanlığın Arkeolojisi," *Birikim* 325 (May 2016): 39-43.

⁵¹⁶ Felischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 280-81.

However, in all these cases the expected figure was not dissociated from the concept of justice; yet, in the case of the objector justice is seen as an obstacle, an impediment to power which is sought for its own sake. This points to a gradual separation of rule and justice, and a remarkable shift in the concept of justice from a notion of balance in society to one associated with rights and freedoms. The state of emergency requires exception which means suspension of “politics” in favour of rule and power. Unmistakably, such a concept of ruler comes as close as possible to Carl Schmitt’s “sovereign”⁵¹⁷, yet it is also the last step in the evolution of the emphasis on iron rule, central authority and obedience from the late eighteenth century onwards which manifested itself the most in Mahmud II and his reign. Hence, it would be safe to argue that, for the anonymous objector, reform is a triviality in the face of external threat and progress is about accumulation of power and promise of victory against enemies. Kemal dismisses the expectation that such a figure will arrive as a stupid dream (*mâlihülya*) and argues that it is justice which procures power; if at all, a *sâhib-i zuhûr* should be like the Caliph Omar, and not like Al-Hajjaj (d. 714 AD) or Tamerlane both of whom preferred power to justice.

Once again, the discussion of politics and reform emerges as inseparable from tradition and its multiple pathways: justice or power, Caliph Omar or Tamerlane. Ironically, a decade after this correspondence Abdulhamid II would suspend the constitution for the declaration of which he had been enthroned by the Young Ottoman coalition and rule as an exemplar and devious monarch for thirty years.

For another attempt at managing the state of exception, albeit in a more balanced fashion, we should also note *Mecelle*, the ingenious Ottoman attempt to codify tenets and procedures of Islamic law, which was prepared between 1867 and 1878 by a commission led by Ahmed Cevdet Paşa.⁵¹⁸ In response to gradual transformation of Ottoman judicial system and the increasing duality of lay courts and Sharia courts, Ottoman government was divided between the choice of directly adopting a civil

⁵¹⁷ See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Scwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005)

⁵¹⁸ For a brief summary of the emergence of *Mecelle* see Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 30-32. For a brilliant exposition of the social, political and legal context of *Mecelle* see Şerif Mardin, “Some Explanatory Notes on the Origins of the Mecelle,” *The Muslim World* 43 (1961): 189-96, 274-79.

code from a European example or codifying one anew from the Sharia tradition; the camp led by Cevdet Pasha defending the latter gained more votes. Mardin identifies three pressures or tensions leading to the drafting of the *Mecelle*: the increasing pressure from Europe for regulations in matters of commerce and finance, the increasing role of the Sultan and later the state in legislation parallel with the subjection of the ulema to state control, and duality of institutions, thus placing Cevdet Paşa “between hammer and anvil, between the criticism of the *ulema* and that of the “Europeanists.”⁵¹⁹ Although eventually dismissed by Abdulhamid II, the *Mecelle* turned out to be a success, being used as a reference in many Ottoman provinces in traditional courts even after the fall the Empire and inspiring dozens of commentaries in its wake.

The first part of the *Mecelle* is quite interesting in that it presents 99 principles (*küllî kâideler*) derived from traditional sources of Islamic law which make up the meta-rules and principles to be followed in legal reasoning, interpretation and innovation.⁵²⁰ These principles, formulated in short aphoristic axioms, do not apply simply to the practice of interpretation but also reveal much about the mind-set of a traditionalist reformer like Cevdet Paşa who was torn between his traditional education as a doctor of Islamic law and his duties as a conscientious statesman.

Some of these principles attribute a major status to tradition (*kadîm*) and custom (*örf, adet*) in interpretation: “It is a principle that something stays the way it is”; “ancient (*kadîm*) is left as it is”; “something established at one time is considered eternal until contrary evidence arises”; “there is no room for interpretation in matters of dogma”; “custom (*adet*) is reinforced”; “what is rejected by custom is rejected in principle”. Some others, however, are intended to manage exceptions: “necessity makes permissible what is forbidden”; “the lesser of two evils is preferred”; “it cannot be denied that rulings (*ahkâm*) change (*tegayyür*) with the change of time”. While it should be kept in mind that most of these principles were derived from already accumulated experience of legal interpretation in Islam, still, they would acquire new meaning in the context of Tanzimat when the tension between innovation and

⁵¹⁹ Mardin, “Some Notes.”

⁵²⁰ See Mustafa Yıldırım, *Mecelle'nin Külli Kaideleri* (Izmir: Tıbyan Yay, 2008)

tradition became highly contested. The fragmentary and non-systematic –as well as non-hierarchic- nature of the principles also would make it quite vulnerable to contestation and politicization; what would be considered necessity, what would trump custom, what would be the lesser evil?

As Mardin concludes, though *Mecelle* was a “*tour-de-force* in an era when the rationalizing forces of modern civilization exerted pressures which the *Şeriat* could not meet”; Cevdet’s synthesis “showed signs of already being overtaken by what he liked to term ‘the necessity of times’”.⁵²¹ Hence, in an attempt to draw a line between tradition and reason, Cevdet was partly freezing the tradition and giving room to increasing instances of exception, as opposed to Young Ottomans who, by uncovering comprehensive and “universal” moral principles behind the tradition, reached back to sources to make them more alive and in sync with the times, thus avoiding the double-bind of making exceptions.

Still, there were those who advocated more radical political ideas while maintaining a stronger hold on tradition. While Young Ottomans did not object to a dynastic ruler as long as he was limited by a constitution and even upheld the Ottoman dynasty as an indispensable heritage of the Ottoman past, there is evidence of more radical models of democracy being advocated among other dissident parties again with reference to Sharia and even defended by religious figures. A curious yet significant example is *Tanzîr-i Telemak*⁵²², a treatise written in early 1870s as a response to the Ottoman translation of Fenelon’s *Telemaque*, which was popular enough among Ottoman high bureaucracy to be translated twice, first by Yusuf Kamil Paşa in 1859 (printed in 1862) and later by Ahmed Vefik Paşa. Translation and popularity of *Telemaque* was meaningful in itself within Ottoman literary tradition; being an example of advice literature it resonated with the Islamic *adab* genre and it preached a kind of enlightened constitutional monarchy, which made it timely for late Tanzimat bureaucrats, bringing “the ideal and practical together”.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Mardin, “Some Notes”, 279.

⁵²² First study on this treatise and partial transcriptions can be found in Mehmet Kaplan, “Tanzir-i Telemak,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 3:1-2 (November 1948): 1-20, also see Mardin, *Genesis*, 199-201.

⁵²³ Mardin, *Genesis*, 241-42.

Written in the form of a dialogue *Tanzîr* expresses its motivation as exploration of the causes and conditions of the emergence, expansion and collapse of religious communities.⁵²⁴ The text credits Tanzimat with nothing but moral and religious corruption and decline, heavily criticizing Âli and Fuad Paşas particularly for succumbing to their thirst for power and their base desires and eventual corruption of the state. What it proposes in almost a utopian fashion is a rule of ulema and peasantry to abolish all hierarchical rule:

Since, in government by religion, it is the holy book and traditionally licensed labourers and servants [of it] who are the rulers; there shall be no use any more for expressions like “caliph or saint or magistrate or judge ordered as such” and the apostasy of government shall be completely forgotten... There shall be no difference between the people and men of government save there will be more holes and patches in the robes of men of government and in their homes will be found less provisions and simpler garbs.⁵²⁵

Clearly motivated by the widespread poverty and a demand for extreme equality, the author is also strictly anti-Western, believing the fall of Western civilization to be near due to moral corruption. While the identity of the author was initially a mystery, he was later revealed to be Mehmed Sadık Efendi (d. 1874), a respected religious scholar and a Khalidi Naqshibandi preacher in Istanbul whose sympathy with Young Ottomans was evident in his copying certain passages from Kemal’s articles.⁵²⁶ He was arrested in 1869 for criticizing the government openly in his sermons in Istanbul and was exiled to Acre with his followers. Interestingly his activities and his trial is reported in extreme detail in the issues of *Hürriyet* by Young Ottomans who hail him as “the most learned of the ulema of the time” (*a’lem-i ulemâ-yı zaman*).⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ Kaplan, 4.

⁵²⁵ Ibid, 7, “Çünkü mahâkeme-i diyânette hakim kütüb-ı mukaddese ve kâdim ehliyetli amele ve hademe olmak hasebiyle iklîm içinde halîfe veya veli ve emir ve kâdî emretti tabiri kalkıp irâde-i mülûkâne gâile-i şirki bütün bütün unutulacaktır... Millet ile ricâl-i hükümet beyninde fark kalmayıp ancak hükümet ricâlinin hırkalarında yama ve delik daha ziyade olup hânelerinde havâyic-i zâhire bir kaç adedden nakıs olacaktır ve daha ziyade sade kıyafet bulunacaktır.”

⁵²⁶ In a later article Kaplan identifies the author through another extant manuscript, see “Tanzir-i Telemak,” *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 6 (1954): 71-82. Mardin cites the author as synonymous and although he mentions Sadık Efendi as a sympathizer of Young Ottomans and author of a treatise on *Telemak* does not establish the connection between the author of *Tanzir* and Sadık Efendi, see Mardin, *Genesis*, 224-25.

⁵²⁷ “İstanbul’dan Mektub, fi 10 Ramazan,” *Hürriyet* 29; “İstanbul’dan Mektub, fi 23 Ramazan,” *Hürriyet* 31, “Untitled report,” *Hürriyet* 34; “Yeni Mevkûfların Tafsîl-i Ahvaline Dair İstanbul’dan Beyannamedir,” *Hürriyet* 35. The trial and exile seems to have become famous at the time as Hoca

In the case of Hoca Sadık Efendi, we see another radical interpretation of politics and historical narrative of states, which, while sharing with Young Ottomans a strict adherence to Sharia, goes further in democratic demands than them and proposes strict anti-Westernism. As noted by Mardin such a radical position from a member of the religious establishment is not surprising considering the decline in social, political and material status of the ulema⁵²⁸, however, Sadık Efendi's Naqshbandi affiliation also establishes a pattern when considered together with the Kuleli Revolt of 1859, which had also been led by a Naqshbandi leader, Sheikh Ahmed Efendi. The Naqshbandiyya who had vehemently supported revivalist project of New Order (See Ch. 2), rewarded with abandoned Bektāşi properties after the abolishment of Janissary corps and later influenced Tanzimat Edict (See Ch. 3) seems to have been gradually alienated from the political establishment due to observed laxity in adherence to religious principles and "Westernization" of institutions.⁵²⁹ Lacking any strong basis for material struggle against the government they seem to have allied themselves with dissident ulema and bureaucrats including Young Ottomans and joined in on defending a popular democracy through Sharia. Young Ottomans also held such figures from the ulema and Naqshbandiyya in high esteem. In a personal letter from Magosa written in 1873, Namık Kemal cites Sheikh Ahmed of Kuleli Incident with whom he shared his exile as a respectable scholar who was unjustly oppressed for his just actions; and in another letter he refers to him as the "sheikh and leader of men of freedom" (*erbâb-ı hürriyetin şeyhürreisi*).⁵³⁰ In his essay on democracy and equality, Ali Suavi cites another popular Naqshi leader of the nineteenth century Ziyaeddin Gümüşhanevi as a figure who understands how Sharia endorses the democratic ideal.⁵³¹

Sadık Efendi Affair and even reported in European newspapers as well. For a summary of the affair see Ahmet Şamil Güner, "Tanzimat Döneminde Hoca Sadık Efendi Vakası," *Turkish Studie* 9:7 (Summer 2014): 41-50.

⁵²⁸ Mardin, *Genesis*, 225.

⁵²⁹ The shifting patterns of interaction between the Naqshbandiyya and the political establishment since 1800 up until 2000s is admirably explored in Şerif Mardin, "Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture and Reconstruction in Operational Codes", *Turkish Studies* 6 (2005): 145–65.

⁵³⁰ Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *Namık Kemal'in Hususi Mektupları I: İstanbul, Avrupa ve Magosa Mektupları* (Ankara: TTK, 1967), 240, 256.

⁵³¹ Ali Suavi, "Demokrasi, Hükümet-i Halk", 237.

In a lecture on political thought Marshall Sahlins argues that Western political thought from ancient Greece to modern Europe is underlied by a distinct assumption on human nature, an opposition between nature and culture.⁵³² This assumption postulates nature as savage, wild and predatory; associates basic human drives with nature as such and reaches the conclusion that this wild, selfish and greedy nature in human needs cultivation to be civil. Both Hobbesian case for absolutism and republican idea is based on this very same idea of human nature as savage. Both are motivated by a desire to cultivate this wild human for civil life: one through iron rule and the other through pitting wild urges against each other in a carefully calibrated and indomitable game. Sahlins argues this assumption to be unique to Western intellectual tradition, however, as demonstrated in Ch. 1, early modern Ottoman political thought defended monarchy on a quite similar idea of human nature which would go inevitably astray if left unattended.

Not surprisingly both Ziya Paşa's Ottoman history serialised in *Hürriyet* and Hoca Sadık's *Tanzîr* start with comparable expositions of human nature. Ziya Paşa considers humans to be a kind of animal, albeit endowed with heightened sensation and a marvellous ability for reason.⁵³³ However, in return he is by far more prone to corrupting influences than other species and unique in his capacity for shedding the blood of his own kind; also he is unique in attributing immense value to seemingly valueless things like gold, most of the time being deluded in his conception of where his real interest and benefit lies. *Tanzîr* also began "with a description of the wickedness of man along classical Islamic lines but highlighted the struggle of man with his environment and his own kind."⁵³⁴ Both authors took this human condition as a grounds for heavily mocking the Tanzimat government and particularly Âli and Fuad Pasha's. For Hoca Sadık religion was the pure solution with its moral imperatives to set man straight; he did not imagine an elaborate political system save imagining a utopian community of believers. Whereas for Ziya Paşa, a liberal government and a complex system of institutions, again based on Sharia, were needed to preserve order and justice among humans. Such elaborations on human

⁵³² Sahlins, *The Western Illusion of Human Nature*.

⁵³³ Ziya Paşa, "Hâtıra-yı Evvelî," *Hürriyet* 25, December 14, 1868.

⁵³⁴ Mardin, *Genesis*, 200.

capacity for wickedness as well as role of religion and Sharia in keeping those in check were quite common in Young Ottoman writing.

With the anonymous objector to Namık Kemal, however, we observe an even more cynical view of human nature which leads to dismissal of any affirmative conception of politics in favor of a struggle for power and survival under the banner of an absolute leader, hopefully bearing divine favour. With conservative reformers like Cevdet Paşa, we witness a case for continuation of reform along the lines established during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. His two major achievements, the *History* and codification of Islamic law in *Mecelle*, are both testaments to the effort he put into preserving the “tradition” in the face of inevitable change while surrendering the necessity of making exceptions.

4.6 Conclusion

All the engagements with and contestation of Islamic tradition during the late Tanzimat was a response to the dire situation of the Empire particularly with respect to Europe. The problems identified were not novel; financial deficit, corruption, nepotism, clientelism, abuse of office, lack of justice, oppressive conscription and taxation policies, extravagance etc. Tanzimat Edict had identified and addressed these problems with the promise of a return to Sharia, law and order. But two decades later the situation satisfied no one; reform was never able to deliver upon its promises. Yet, as in early nineteenth century, during the late Tanzimat as well, the Empire’s problems gained a new dimension and meaning with the gradual discovery of the European progress and how it may have been otherwise. And what Europeans called progress gained a new meaning in Ottoman language being entangled with the Ottoman narratives of decline and its causes.

Islâhât became a key concept in this period; it was used way more frequently than previous eras with the gradual growth of the Ottoman state control over all aspects of the society. With the state-centralization and removal of middle-men from the equation, the government had to directly control and develop all items in the agenda of development from agriculture, to education and transportation infrastructure. Reform had gained a new goal, not simply revival/renewal but also progress. For many, progress was above all about economic development and spread of learning

among the population, which would again foster economic development. The overall understanding of political morality was largely unmoved. And not surprisingly this would be the most widespread and long-lasting meaning of progress in Ottoman. A short pamphlet published in 1890 titled “Progress Everywhere” would describe the travels of the author in the countryside where he admired the progress of the nation manifest in railroads, large buildings, lots of construction, a vibrant economy in the bazaars and schools where children learn French.⁵³⁵ The author attributed all those to the sultan Abdulhamid II.

Thus, in its mainstream usage progress was simply prosperity, material development (*mamuriyet*) and dissemination of learning and knowledge understood not as a broad Enlightenment of humanity but as a practical necessity towards further development. The two way relationship between the state and society, provision of security and prosperity in return for obedience stayed more or less intact. Cevdet Paşa and like-minded conservative reformers basically revised received schemas of politics and history to accommodate this concept of progress within the history of decline and reform of the Empire. They revised the Khaldunian narrative of history and maintained a careful distance to European thought, selectively appropriating certain sources. Like Sadık Rifat Paşa, they valued order and prosperity above else and saw the maintainance of these two items in good administration instead of participatory politics and representation.

Parallel to the popularity of the concept of progress, the decline of the Empire gained new names beyond *ihtilâl*; words like *tedennî* and *tenezzül* approached closer in meaning to the modern historiographical category of decline. The historical work of Cevdet Paşa produced a history of reform which set the general outlines of Ottoman history for the late Ottoman and early republican historians.

In the writings of the Young Ottomans reform and progress came to include not only material development but also transformation of the whole political system towards greater freedom and representation. The concern for political progress did not come with a wholesale rejection of the Ottoman past, however; rather it inspired a novel

⁵³⁵ Halil Salim, *Anadolu ve Rumeli'ye Küçük Bir Seyahat yahud, He Yerde Terakkî* (Konstantiniyye: Istepan Matbaası, 1308 [1890])

interpretation of Ottoman history as a constitutional monarchy. They also presented the history of Ottoman reform as a teleological process towards greater freedoms and a political system more in line with the premises of Sharia as they interpreted it.

The criticism of Ottoman past and emphasis on Sharia by the Young Ottomans, however, should not be seen as a sudden onset of Enlightenment; rather it was the conclusion of a process which had started in Ottoman bureaucracy in the late eighteenth century. Both during the New Order era and early Tanzimat there was an emphasis on puritanical morals and obedience to authority which were justified with reference to Sharia. Parallel to this emphasis on Sharia understood as moral principles, with figures such as Keçecizade İzzet Molla and Sadık Rıfat Paşa, there had emerged a criticism of the Ottoman past practices which went beyond the pitfalls of reform process. Young Ottoman outcry against the Sublime Porte and Ottoman patrimonial system should be considered a consequence of this double process in Ottoman bureaucracy, leading to a Sharia based criticism of the past and the present of Ottoman politics.

CONCLUSION

In order to make sense of the Empire's transformation from the late sixteenth century onwards and provide pro-active solutions, Ottoman bureaucrats made use of the rich sources of the Islamic corpus on history, morality and politics and in each era came up with creative conceptualizations. In their vocabulary reform came to mean preservation of the boundaries between social estates, restoring balance to the elements of the society and administration, restoration of power to the centre and extraction of obedience, renewal and reinvigoration of religion, a problem of moral economy, reinstitution and reconfiguration of state-society relations, provision of prosperity and wealth or institution of representative institutions to politics or a combination of several of these items in one concept. Not only reformist bureaucrats but also their interlocutors relied on the vast corpus of Islamic tradition for defending or opposing these various conceptualizations. Moreover, in each era they rewrote the history of decline and reform in a way to suit their contemporary problems and motivations.

As often repeated in the revisionist literature, the Empire was not much different from the European states in the administrative, economic and social problems it faced. It appears that in the course of the transformation from an early modern polity to a modern one, the conceptual innovations and intellectual debates in the Empire were also comparable to the European ones. While further research is needed to demonstrate the similarities and differences between Ottoman and European social and political concepts during the long process of state formation and centralization, we can observe debates on monarchy, debates on moral economy in Khaldunian terms, and a pietist emphasis on religion and morals as a way to social control which provide points of comparison.

Therefore, I disagree with Şerif Mardin's conclusion regarding the "failure of conceptual tools available to the Ottomans."⁵³⁶ He observes as particularly problematic the usage of explanatory and justificatory terms such as "human agency" (*irâde-i cüz'îyye*) for exactly opposite purposes by different actors. This "frustrating" quality of Ottoman-Islamic tradition, in which, "same theoretical schemes or concepts" could be used for different purposes in entirely different contexts is noted by Marinos Sariyannis as well.⁵³⁷ This quality, however, is not unique to Ottoman-Islamic tradition; it is a quality observable in other broad hermeneutical traditions. By providing the actors with a common vocabulary, tropes and postulates with which they can argue their relative positions, tradition makes politics possible. The uniqueness of Islamic tradition should be sought not in this quality but in the historical lack of any scripturally endorsed final authority on interpretation, which makes orthodoxies weaker and more vulnerable to contestation by allowing a greater room for more actors to seek their own interpretive framework in political argumentation.⁵³⁸

In fact one could identify a set of binary concepts in Islamic tradition that seem to come up recurrently in political rhetoric. Tension between renewal (*ihyâ, tecdid*) and innovation (*bid'a*), tension between reason (*akl, rey*) and tradition (*nakl, nass*), tension between predestination (*kader*) and free will (*cüz'î irade*) seem to be particularly prone to contestation in politics. Sunni doctrine (particularly Maturidi theology) refuses to take a final stance on these tensions, always opting for a middle ground instead. However, this vague middle ground position allows these tensions to easily spill into political discussion to be recycled over and over never being resolved.

As I argued in the introduction, and as extensively demonstrated by Shahab Ahmed, there is a tendency in the broad field of Islamic studies to rely on a static and monolithic concept of Islamic tradition which associates it with more orthodox interpretations. This reliance itself mirrors the concept of tradition defended by the

⁵³⁶ Mardin, "The Mind of the Turkish Reformer", 436.

⁵³⁷ Sariyannis, "Ruler and State", 125-26.

⁵³⁸ For a beautifully argued case for this quality of Islamic tradition and its influence on orthodoxy formation see the quite recent work: Shahab Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 3-6.

modern fundamentalist actors. We take this fundamentalist concept of Islam as given, without much effort to define its contours, and then we use it as a yardstick to judge the sincerity of claims which deviate from it. It is a surprisingly common mistake in the study of Ottoman political thought to emphasize the legitimization aspect of the traditional rhetoric –usually in a negative way- and attribute various underlying and veiled motivations to actors, which are more in line with the modern historiographical categories. This is particularly visible in the case of conceptualizing westernization and secularization.

It is a fact that from the late eighteenth century onwards Ottoman state selectively emulated and appropriated first military technologies and later administrative practices of the Europeans. It is also a fact that these transformations met with serious social and political resistance since they either drastically threatened or outright disrupted the social and political consensuses that had been somehow achieved in the early modern period. Accusation of “Westernization” in a negative sense was the most direct expression of discontent against the reform policies; reformers were accused of “donning the French garb” during the New Order era or they accused each other of over-Westernization during the late Tanzimat. However, the reformers had to constantly justify and legitimize their policies with reference to tradition, containing it within an established semantic framework.

That the traditional vocabulary was used for justification and legitimation, however, does not readily imply an actual intention to westernize which is, then, “veiled behind” a traditional jargon, just as “westernization” as accusation on the part of the opponents of reform does not imply an objection purely in principle. Both sides use the vocabulary and arguments of a tradition, which is immediately legible and recognizable to, and hence rejectable by the interlocutors. During this process, traditional concepts are expanded, adopted, transformed or rearranged in different constellations, as in the case of adaptation of Khaldunian schema to adopt European emphasis on science and learning.

I propose a similar problem with regard to the framing the role of religion in the light of reform debates. In the seventeenth century, Ottoman scribes relied more on Islamic philosophical tradition, which they considered completely Islamic, although oppositional groups such as Kadıazadeli’s and Sunna-minded preachers advocated a

competing interpretation of Islam which relied more on the legal tradition and advocated puritan values. A parallel problem, the coexistence of sultanic law, *kānûn*, and the law practiced by legal scholars, Sharia, had been interpreted as secularism. However, recent scholarship emphasizes that there was nothing to be associated with secularization in the post-enlightenment sense, and different spheres were justified differently although they challenged the legitimacy of others' occasionally as part of a social and political conflict.⁵³⁹

During the New Order era, I demonstrate the absorption of the language of the more Sunna-minded approach to Islam into the bureaucratic discourse and usage of *kānûn* and *Sharia* primarily together as part of the same exercise of power. Reform was justified as renewal in religion and it was objected for being nothing short of heresy by the opposition. An interpretation of Islam which emphasized obedience to authority and personal piety suited the needs of the reformers better; whereas cries of wrongful innovation was a powerful tool for the opposition. While ulema was cautious if not divided in its attitude towards reform, certain religious groups such as Naqshbandiyya and Mevleviyye supported the reforms wholeheartedly. Further research is needed to establish the full set of causes that led to this convergence, however, we could initially cite the argument for confessionalization and sunnification of the Empire through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as the motivation of the reformers to monopolize the language of tradition by taking it from its guardians, the ulema who were the partners in crime with Janissaries in times of revolt. Also as emphasized by other scholars, the language of New Order highlighted obedience to authority as part of proper piety, which was in line with the motivation for centralization and restoration of the monopoly of political power to the centre. Finally, vocabulary of Sharia was instrumental in both criticism of extant Ottoman practices and legitimation of borrowing European models.

New Order era set the stage and the example in presenting social and political reform as inseparable from religious revival by invoking the ancient doctrine of periodic renewal in Islam. This trend continued during the reign of Mahmud II and early

⁵³⁹ See Saryannis, *Ottoman Political Thought*, 61; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 45; and Ahmed; and for a brilliant conceptual discussion of this duality see Ahmed, 457-60.

Tanzimat as well and state monopoly over religious discourse was established particularly with the isolation of the ulema from their previous bases of power. Reforms leading up to the Tanzimat and the Edict was justified in again the language of renewal, while as we have seen particularly with Keçecizade, more fundamentalist conceptions of reform were rejected. Condemnation of Ottoman past through eternal and immutable principles of Sharia reached its peak during this period with the Edict proclaiming the overhaul of old ways in favour of Sharia and renewal. Naming this process Islamic modernization or politicization of Islam does injustice to the fluidity of the Ottoman-Islamic tradition by implying a reduction of Islam to newly emerging orthodoxies. Instead, one might see this process as a transformation of Islam, and formation of new orthodoxies as well as rooting out of alternatives. However, although Mahmud's restoration was quite successful in rooting out dissident elements and instilling fear in society, it did not have the means to fully eradicate alternative interpretations; from the Kuleli Incident to the Young Ottoman opposition we witnessed the emergence of a vocabulary of dissidence drawing on both Sharia and the long history of protest and revolt in the Empire.

Late Tanzimat witnessed a major bifurcation within the Ottoman bureaucracy; members of the central bureaucracy continued to imagine reform along the lines drawn by Tanzimat as provision of security and prosperity to the society in return for obedience, whereas Young Ottomans called for democratization, representative institutions, constitutionalism, common good, progress, rule of law, humanity, advocating all of these principles to be understood as compatible with and endorsed by Sharia. In the face of fast-paced change, more conservative actors tried to preserve what they considered Islamic tradition drawing a distinct line between the West and Islam. Young Ottomans, however, embraced both the tradition and enlightenment values, justifying their position with reference to different sources of Islamic corpus reinterpreting them in the process.

As such, I conclude that reception of European political models and concepts does not happen as direct translation or transfer of ideas. It occurs as a complex process of appropriation, engagement with tradition and reappropriation. Ottoman bureaucrats had engaged with their tradition in different ways up to the nineteenth century and reception of European practices and concepts triggers another wave of engagement

through which Sharia emerges as central to political language. Advocacy of liberal and constitutional politics is surely a rupture from the Ottoman medieval and early modern thought, however, we need to be cautious in arguing for secularization considering this emergence and significance of religion for political legitimation. Medieval Ottoman and Islamic political literature rested on Aristotelian metaphysics and Galenic medicine which were considered quite compatible with Islam, and modern scholars considered them as such. What we observe in the nineteenth century is an Islam based on the Enlightenment metaphysics and modern biology; shall we, then, consider it wholly unislamic? Shall we deny the nineteenth century actors the novel ways they chose to engage hermeneutically with their tradition, as Shahab Ahmed would put it?

Secularization should be sought not in a break from religious discourse per se, but in the emergence of different ways religious discourse interacts with politics such as dissolution of the quasi-autonomous status of ulema, and adoption of moral-religious vocabulary by the state for modernizing reforms and creation of moral subjects. Religion becomes political in a multitude of different ways. As a consequence of this process, by the end of nineteenth century we start to observe explicitly un-religious and even avowedly secular discourses emerging with the materialists, and later reduction of religion to one among several competing discourses with the republic. These could also be considered points of rupture, with the reservation that we need to be cautious in our categories and levels of analysis, paying particular attention to how we define secular and religious. For, as I have demonstrated throughout the dissertation reform discourse does not develop in opposition to and in spite of religion and tradition, it happens through and with the transformation of religious discourse and tradition.

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