

**Crisis of the Reformist Ideal:
A Critique of Ottoman Narratives of Crisis on 1875-1876**

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A thesis presented to the

Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
at Boğaziçi University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

May 2022

Approvals

“Crisis of the Reformist Ideal: A Critique of Ottoman Narratives of Crisis on 1875-1876,” a thesis prepared by Ayşenur Alper in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, has been approved on 5 May 2022 by:

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Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.



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Abstract

Crisis of the Reformist Ideal: A Critique of Ottoman Narratives of Crisis on 1875-1876

Ayşenur Alper, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute
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Professor Cengiz Kırılı, Thesis Advisor

This study aims to analyze the narratives of Mithat, Cevdet, Mahmud Nedim Pashas, and Ahmet Mithat Efendi regarding the economic, political, and international crises of the Ottoman 1875 and 1876 as founding narratives of the Hamidian Era. It suggests that in these narratives ideological bifurcations of the Tanzimat era were reconstructed to shape the following political regime, since, at the time, the current political status quo was shattered within the empire and the international arena.

Based on political treatises, memoirs, and chronicles, it discusses the intertwined nature of the internal political struggles of the Empire after the death of Ali Pasha in 1871 and the rivalry between a liberal Britain and a monarchist Russia in the international arena. It shows that the political figures of the period who saw the crisis period as an opportunity for promoting their political ideals reconstructed these crises through their narratives. Thus, the main goal of this thesis is to show that the essential crisis of the period of 1875-1876 was a regime crisis that emerged from the shattering of the Tanzimat status quo within the empire parallel with the shattering of the European balance of power.

25,000 words

Özet

Reformist İdealin Krizi: 1875-1876 Dönemine Dair Osmanlı Kriz Anlatılarının Bir Eleştirisi

Ayşenur Alper, Yüksek Lisans Adayı, 2022

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Profesör Cengiz Kırılı, Tez Danışmanı

Bu çalışma, Mithat, Cevdet ve Mahmud Nedim Paşalar ile Ahmet Mithat Efendi'nin Osmanlı'da 1875-1876 döneminde yaşanan ekonomik, siyasi ve uluslararası krizlere dair anlatılarını II. Abdülhamid döneminin kurucu anlatıları olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. İmparatorluk içindeki ve uluslararası arenadaki siyasi statükonun çözüldüğü bu dönemde, Tanzimat döneminin ideolojik çatallanmalarının, bu anlatılarda, bir sonraki siyasi rejimi şekillendirme amacıyla yeniden inşa edildiğini öne sürmektedir.

Çalışma; siyasi incelemelere, hatıralara ve kroniklere dayanarak, Ali Paşa'nın 1871'deki ölümünden sonra imparatorluğun iç siyasi mücadeleleri ile uluslararası alanda liberal bir İngiltere ile monarşist bir Rusya arasındaki rekabetin iç içe geçmiş doğasını tartışmaktadır. Dönemin siyasi figürlerinin, kriz dönemini kendi siyasi ideallerini öne çıkarmada bir fırsat olarak görerek yaşanan krizleri bu doğrultuda metinleri aracılığıyla yeniden inşa ettiklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bakımdan çalışmanın temel amacı, 1875-1876 döneminin esas krizinin, Avrupa güç dengesinin sarsılmasına paralel olarak Tanzimat statükosunun çözülmesinden doğan bir rejim krizi olduğunu öne sürmektir.

25,000 kelime



To my mother and father...

AYŞENUR ALPER



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Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude for my thesis advisor Prof. Cengiz Kırılı for his classes that encouraged me to write a thesis on Ottoman history and his patience for my long writing process in which I lost my focus so many times trying to understand the crises of the Ottoman 19th century. His critical interventions were essential for me to complete my thesis. I thank to Prof. Seda Altuğ and Prof. Uğur Bayraktar for participating in my jury and for their comments. I want to thank Prof. Yaşar Tolga Cora for our inspiratory discussions on history and politics that motivated me to keep trying to understand and for his supportive, understanding, and kind friendship.

During the long writing process of this thesis, the world we live in has been through a “period of crisis”, a transformative stage. I, personally, also have been through a transformative stage in my life. I am deeply grateful to my dear friends Sabahat Petek, Duygu Öksünlü Beytur, Halil İbrahim Binici, and Evren Çakıl for always being there in my moments of crisis. I am also grateful to my dear friend and colleague Savaş C. Tali for his patience, support, and motivation that accompanied me through the most intense stages of my writing process. I will be forever grateful to “the one and only” Prof. Faruk Birttek for his illuminating guidance in understanding not only the Ottoman-Turkish state and society, but also life, family, and friendship.

And most of all, I am grateful to my parents Naciye Alper and Ömer Mahir Alper and my siblings whose love and prayers have always been the essential source of my resolution.

NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made detailed recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, syntax, and style of this thesis.

Introduction

In the 1870s, the Ottoman Empire faced a severe turbulence. In such a short period of time, people from every segment of the Empire had to deal with some unprecedented consequences of famine, revolts in the Balkans, bankruptcy, a coup d'état, a constitutional crisis, and a disastrous defeat in the war against Russia.

Considering the conditions of the period, scholars seem to agree on the fact that the Ottoman state was indeed in a catastrophic situation. Roderick Davison defines the period between 1871 and 1875 as a “period of chaos”, and 1876 as “the year of the three sultans”.¹ In analyzing the process of delegitimation of Sultan Abdülaziz’s sultanate and the rise of opposition within the empire against him, Florian Riedler refers to the conditions of the period and remarks that there was an “atmosphere of crisis.”² Edhem Eldem comments on the conditions of the period stating that they constituted “one of the deepest crises of the empire” when he introduces the documents and writings of Selahaddin Efendi, the only son of Sultan Murad V who was one of the “three sultans” of the year 1876. Parallel to the analyses of the scholars who study on the roots of Abdülhamid’s authoritarian regime, Eldem shares the idea that his regime was shaped in the shadow of this eventful period.³

This study is constructed by the observation that the unprecedented events that took place in between the death of Âli Paşa on September, 1871 and the empire’s defeat in the war against Russia in March, 1878, consti-

¹ Roderick Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, (Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 270.

² Florian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire*, (Routledge, 2015), p. 45.

³ Edhem Eldem, *V. Murad’ın Oğlu Selahaddin Efendi’nin Evrak ve Yazıları*, (İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019), p.5.

tuted a crucial era in which we can trace not only the roots of the successor regime's (the regime of Abdülhamid II) strategic policies and political mindset but also some main political concepts and approaches that determined the modern Turkish political arena for more than a century. In the defense of this argument, I appealed to Colin Hay's concept of crisis as a moment where political agents perceive a need for "decisive intervention" in order to determine the direction of political transformation and change through promoting their accounts on the nature of crisis.⁴

According to Hay, different interpretations regarding the moment of crisis provide the actors with the opportunity of promoting their political trajectories. I find it striking that, parallel to Hay's suggestion, in the eventful period between 1871 and 1878 plenty of political manifestos, pamphlets, articles and memoirs were written and published in an effort to construe this eventful period and seek an opportunity to change the flow of Ottoman policy in the direction of the authors' political trajectories.

The significance of this period manifests itself in three levels. First of all, it was a period of practical catastrophes in the economic, diplomatic, and social spheres of the Empire. The Ottoman Empire was no longer be able to find foreign or internal debts to pay the annual interests of its previous debts and ended up with the moratorium decision in 1875.⁵ It was a critical decision to cause the alienation of British public opinion in a time that the Empire needed British support against Russian aggressions (as in the Crimean War of 1853) after the escalation of Herzegovina uprising of 1875 into a diplomatic crisis⁶ followed by the infamous Andrassy Note, the 1876-77 Constantinople Conference, and finally the Russo-Ottoman

⁴ Colin Hay, "Crisis and the Structural Transformation of the State: Interrogating the Process of Change", in *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 1, no. 3 (1999).

⁵ For the activities of Ottoman bankers at the debt crisis, see Haydar Kazgan, *Galata Bankerleri*, (İstanbul: Türk Ekonomi Bankası, 1991.)

⁶ For the process of the culmination of the uprisings, see Milos Kovic, "The Beginning of the 1875 Serbian Uprising in Herzegovina: The British Perspective." *Balkanica*, no. 41 (2010): 55-71.

War of 1877. On the other hand, the Ottoman public opinion which equally hurt by the moratorium decision was also quite agitated (or “provoked” from Mahmud Nedim’s point of view) regarding the submissive policy of the Sublime Porte (i.e., Mahmud Nedim) vis-à-vis the rebels and the foreign intervention in the Balkan crisis. At the end, the discontent among the Ottoman Muslim public, which was “provoked and manipulated by certain statesmen” (such as Mithat), escalated into the Softa Incident of 1876 which caused the dismissal of Mahmud Nedim from the grand vizierate.

This was the case in the Ottoman Empire in the years 1875-76. In that sense, what is suggestive about Colin Hay’s theory of crisis regarding this period is its emphasis on the discourses through which the critical events of the period were formulated and narrated by the significant political figures of the time. It was a period in which the foundational crises of the 19th century Ottoman Empire were thoroughly discussed by Ottoman statesmen who held different political views and construed in an attempt to participate in the reshaping of the following political regime. This thesis deals with these discourses and narratives put forth by political figures from different point of views.

The second level is emphasized by Abu Manneh in his remark on the period after the death of Âli Pasha. He argues that it was a period that witnessed the “rise of a current in Ottoman politics that had been suppressed in the 1860s, when Ali and Fuad dominated the Porte.”⁷ It was the rise of the critiques of the Tanzimat regime and its ideal state structure. Indeed, as Abu Manneh argued, Mahmud Nedim’s critiques of Bâb-ı Âli and the ascendancy of bureaucracy in the Ottoman state structure, that he formulated in *Âyine-i Devlet* (1862), could not be able to come to light until his appointment to the grand vizierate after the death of Âli in 1871.

⁷ Butrus Abu-Manneh, “The Sultan and the Bureaucracy: The Anti-Tanzimat Concepts of Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Pasa”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 3 (1990): 257. For a discussion on the dominance of Ali and Fuad Pashas in the Bâb-ı Âli, see Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Âlî ve Fu’ad Paşaların Bâb-ı Âlî’deki Nüfuzlarının Kökleri”, in *Tanzimat*, edited by Halil İnalcık-Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, trans. Fatih Yeşil (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2006), 344.

Again, as Colin Hay argued, it was a time in which ideological bifurcations were activated and revealed since the current political status quo was shattered and the opportunity to shape the following political status quo has arisen.

What is striking about the historiography of the period and about studies of intellectual history dealing with the political bifurcation in the late Tanzimat era is that two political treatises written by the man who was declared as the sole responsible of the catastrophes of the period were simply ignored. Regarding the analysis of *Âyine-i Devlet* (1862), Butrus Abu Manneh (1990) and Gökhan Kaya (2015) have been two exceptions in a quarter of a century. *Müdafaanâme*, on the other hand, was totally ignored until Uygur Aydemir's meticulous PhD dissertation (2017). Thus, I compared and contrasted Mahmud Nedim's critiques of the ascendancy of bureaucracy in the Tanzimat period and his arguments on the ideal state structure for the Ottoman Empire. In my view, Mahmud Nedim's suggestion of ideal state structure for the Empire was the opposite of the Tanzimat ideal and this was the essential cause of him being declared as the scapegoat of the calamities of 1870s and demonized by his contemporaries.

The third and final level that the significance of the period manifested is the changing international balance of power parallel to the changing political regime in the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, I discussed the intertwined nature of the internal political struggles of the Empire and the rivalry between a liberal Britain and a monarchist Russia to replace France's position regarding the Ottoman Empire, after France's diminishing influence on the Empire due to her defeat against Prussia in 1870. I tried to highlight the diplomatic implications of Mahmud Nedim's political position through analyzing his remarks on the international position of the Empire and his critiques of the diplomatic policies of pro-Tanzimat pashas.

In other words, the aim of this study is to demonstrate the three-level significance of the period between the death of Âli in 1871 and the establishment of Abdülhamid's regime and to bring the political narratives

written throughout this period into the discussion with a different emphasis. Especially through bringing Mahmud Nedim's so far neglected political treatises into the discussion, I hope to bring a new attention to the period as a medium in which the foundational problems of the 19th century Ottoman Empire were thoroughly discussed and different suggestions on the ideal state structure for the Ottoman Empire became apparent.



The Reformist Ideal: Autocrats vs. Liberals?

To Roderick Davison, whose study after more than a half-century from its first appearance still remains one of the most thorough sources of information on the period between 1856 and 1876, the death of Âli Paşa in 1871 was the ultimate sign before doomsday:

On September 6, 1871, he died. The next day *La Turquie* appeared with black borders. It was generally recognized that a great man was gone. Some, among European observers particularly, used language tinged with a sense of tragedy like that used in 1890 when Bismarck was dropped from office by the young kaiser; the great stabilizing influence was gone. But Âli was criticized also in the obituaries that appeared. And within the empire interest centered on the question of who would succeed Âli. Mahmud Nedim, at the moment of minister of the navy once the candidate of some of the New Ottomans, was the one whom Sultan Abdülaziz appointed. But Abdülaziz himself seems desirous of exercising a greater influence within the administration. In reality there was a sort of political vacuum, now that Âli was gone and French influence had declined. No single individual could fill Âli's shoes. And his policy of gradual secularization, of pursuit of Osmanlılık, of

general modernization, received a setback. In its place came a re-nascent Islamic sentiment and a rising anti-Europeanism which colored the events of the next few years.¹

Davison's *Reform* provides us with highly detailed descriptions of the period using a large amount of primary sources.

§ 2.1 Critiques of the Historiography of the Reformist Ideal

As Davison's elegy for Âli Paşa indicates², for Ottomanists who studied after the Second World War and drew the historiographical framework of the late Ottoman Empire nearly for a half-century, the Ottoman Empire was in a process of modernization through reforms carried out by a small group of enlightened actors. They were reformist statesmen who were attuned to western influences and convinced that the westernization of state institutions was the sole remedy for the Ottoman state to protect its shattering political and territorial integrity. From this point of view, the major conflict of the Ottoman 19th century emanated from the opposition between those enlightened state actors who turned to the West and "the defenders of Islamic tradition", a group which consisted not only of other statesmen but also of large segments of the society. Accordingly, the death of Âli Paşa and the lack of any "single individual" that could "fill his shoes" caused such an impact on the empire that it doomed the whole process of "secularization", "modernization", and the creation of an Ottoman identity ("Osmanlılık") to failure, i.e. a rising "Islamic sentiment" and "anti-Europeanism."

As it is indicated, this particular framework lays the foundations for one of the basic assumptions of late Ottoman historiography, i.e. 19th century Ottoman modernization is based on a major cultural and ideological

¹ Davison, "Reform in the Ottoman Empire," 268-269.

² It is a striking fact that in direct contrast to Davison's elegy, the masses gathered in the funeral of the Âli Paşa remained silent when they were asked what they thought of the deceased as part of the traditional ceremony. See, Kemal Beydilli, "Âli Paşa." *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* 2 (1989): 425-26.

bifurcation between the above-mentioned groups rooted in the late Ottoman society, which was also transmitted to and even consolidated in modern Turkey.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, as an extension of the worn-out decline paradigm, the problem of “the impact of the West” on Ottoman modernization continued to be one of the major predicaments of late Ottoman historiography. In order to break with the early historians’ interests and approaches which were primarily devoted to accounting for the acceleration of the modernization process under “the Western influence”, scholars tended to look for alternative ways to transform “the formation of the question”. In this chapter, I will try to explore these alternative ways as they are developed vis-à-vis the premises of the preceding paradigm.

In order to demonstrate how theoreticians of Ottoman modernity understood the 19th-century reforms from the 1950s to 1980s, Olivier Bouquet breaks down their approach into three parts. He argues that three premises, i.e. “no modernisation without westernization, as the two concepts were employed interchangeably during that period”, “modernization is primarily an affair of institutions” and “no positive social change without modernization by the state”, constitute the backbone of their approach.³ Bouquet’s three premises are in line with my observation that the problem of “the impact of the West” approach have dominated Ottomanist scholars’ understanding of the 19th century reform process. They lead us to the highly criticized state centrality of late Ottoman historiography. I will try to explore the alternative approaches in terms of how they responded and revised these three foundational premises.

The post-1945 period, marked by the Cold War and following decolonization processes, played a critical role in the shaping of social sciences. The emerging modernization approach of the period constructed the Western modernization process as a uniform and progressive path towards achieving national unity and consolidating nation-states, and suggested it as the ideal path for the non-Western world to replicate. On the

³ Olivier Bouquet, “Is it Time to Stop Speaking About Ottoman Modernization,” in *Order and Compromise: Government Practices in Turkey from the Late Ottoman Empire to the Early 21st Century*, ed. Marc Aymes, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 48.

other hand, this approach was not only the ideal model for the future development of non-Western societies, but it also provided the main theoretical framework for the analysis of their past.

According to this framework best formulated by Bernard Lewis, the major aim of the Ottoman central bureaucracy was to save the state from collapse through top-down Westernizing reforms, a process which is generally referred as the Tanzimat.⁴ The state apparatus was not the only target, but the transformation of the Turkish society was equally crucial to eliminate reactionary responses that fettered the state endeavor. Therefore, the political opposition to the efforts of state bureaucracy from the societal level was formulated as the reactionary response of the bigoted masses. On the other hand, as argued by Niyazi Berkes, the imperial bureaucracy and political elites were divided into two opposing camps, i.e. reformists and traditionalists.⁵

Another point which I would like to draw attention to is the utmost gravity of exploring new primary sources in order to break with the weary analyses on the Ottoman reform period, in addition to approaching commonly-used primary sources with a different point of view. For new sources, in a sense, most probably have the opportunity of leading scholars and researchers towards new methodologies and authentic approaches best suited for the study of themselves. I believe that Carter V. Findley's *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History*⁶ and Olivier Bouquet's *Sultanın Paşaları*⁷ are two distinguished studies of their field in which the two critical merits of exploring almost untouched primary sources and developing authentic approaches for the study of the reform period comes together.

⁴ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

⁵ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964).

⁶ Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History*, (Princeton, Guildford Princeton University Press, 1989).

⁷ Olivier Bouquet, *Sultanın Paşaları: Osmanlı Devlet Ricali Hakkında bir Deneme (1839-1909)*, trans. Devrim Çetinkasap, (İstanbul İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2016).

In his study, Findley employs Foreign Ministry's personnel record regarding the data on over 300 officials of the late Ottoman bureaucracy and compares the Ministry's records with diverse evidence he gathered from memoirs, biographies and novels. On the one hand, he analyzes Ottoman civil bureaucrats in broad categories that he constructed based on the quantitative data regarding their social, educational and religious backgrounds, i.e. traditionalist Muslim, modernist Muslim, and non-Muslim⁸. On the other hand, he goes through analyses of single individuals based on his use of qualitative data. What seems striking to me in his study is that, he constructs Ottoman mid-level bureaucrats not as monotypic parts of an impenetrable machine which steamrolls the society, but instead individual, flesh and blood human agents who reflect the social, cultural, religious, intellectual, and educational particularities and transformations of various segments of the society. Not only the professional lives of Ottoman civil officialdom in a period of transformation from scribal corps to a modern civil service, i.e. how was their daily routine in the office, how their professional environment looked like, and how they came to their posts and how they promoted, were meticulously "uncovered" by Findley through the exploration of archival material. But he also constructs a sociological analysis based on his primary sources in which he demonstrates how a class of modern bureaucrats with similar socio-economic backgrounds emanated from a broad segment of civil service officials, how they participated in the modernizing "social mood" of the late 19th century Istanbul, and how they eventually became a significant part of the cosmopolitan socio-cultural life of the Ottoman capital.

Parallel to Findley's archival exploration and sociological approach, Olivier Bouquet goes through a painstaking examination of 282 pashas recorded in the *Sicill-i Ahval Defterleri*, a collection of career records of Ottoman high bureaucrats compiled by the *Sicill-i Ahval Komisyonu* beginning from the 1879. Based on this extremely productive archival material, Bouquet reconstructs the image of an Ottoman Pasha, the highest-

⁸ For a critique of Findley's categorizations and his Weberian approach, see Olivier Bouquet, "Is it Time to Stop Speaking About Ottoman Modernization", 50-56.

level statesman, in the European and the Turkish republican minds through analyzing their social backgrounds, how they acquired their education, and their careers in the office. Bouquet's study covers the Tanzimat period, as well as the Hamidian era; includes the portraits of pashas who served in the imperial center as well as in various provinces of the Empire. Thanks to the variety of its cases, Bouquet's study serves as an antidote to the very concept of the "19th century Ottoman state" whose decision-makers strangely possess a uniformity of thought, of way of life, and of world-view.

These evidence based studies with their sociological approach, not only help us to overcome the false barrier which separates the Ottoman state from the Ottoman society and positions them as adversaries but also clearly demonstrates that the Ottoman state agents, whether they be high-level or mid-level officials, were the epitomes of complex social phenomena, and therefore cannot be understood within the limited framework of dyadic categorizations. In his later article, *Is It Time to Stop Speaking Ottoman Modernization*, that we partly discussed above, Bouquet beautifully describes the fallacy in this point of view:

Historians who take up the modernist/traditionalist typification do not only apply it to the domain of ideas and opinions to develop *post hoc* rationalisations of a range of behaviours or to analyse the modes of interaction between the various actors concerned. They also use it to define social being in its entirety, on the basis of the objectification of a single segment of the self - the presence of a piano or of central heating in a pasha's residence means this pasha was a thoroughgoing reformist, his knowledge of the French language predisposed him to subscribe whole heartedly to importing European institutions as models lock, stock, and barrel.⁹

⁹ Ibid, 62.

To me, his sociological approach helps him to develop a from-within-point of view and explore a different, and most probably a more illuminating understanding regarding the Ottoman state agents in the reform period:

In the same way, ought we not to envisage the possibility that Ottoman reformers experienced successive and even simultaneous loyalties to contemporary ideologies? Could we not emphasize that whilst these ideologies may have been viewed as antithetical by regimes, by western diplomats, and by the reformists themselves, they were not necessarily considered this way by the men who considered and included them within their modes of action?¹⁰

Although the premises of the modernization and decline approaches have been heavily criticized by the revisionist historians as being over-occupied with the “high politics” in the imperial center, the participants and agents of the nineteenth century Ottoman political body remained being treated in the dyadic understanding of these approaches, i.e. the reformists versus traditionalists. It can be argued that this old dichotomy of reformist bureaucrats and reactionary traditionalists essentially stems from the teleological reading of the reform process of the late Ottoman Empire as a predetermined journey towards becoming a modern nation state in the form of the later Turkish Republic. On the other hand, the question of why this dichotomous approach and the intellectual categories entailed it remained intact for a significant part of the nineteenth century Ottoman studies, leads us to the search for a new paradigm. Accordingly, in this chapter, I will try to present a critical review of a number of studies which engage in such a search for a new framework for the Ottoman history so as to help us with developing new analytical concepts in understanding the Ottoman nineteenth century.

¹⁰ Ibid, 63.

In his review of Baki Tezcan's *The Second Ottoman Empire* Alp Eren Topal claims that it is crucial to build alternative paradigms to be able to go beyond the limits of the decline paradigm and the premises of the modernization approach.¹¹ Without such an attempt, he argues, it is not only impossible to undermine the status of these approaches as the dominant perspective in the Ottoman historiography. But also, the lack of alternative paradigms would leave contemporary and future studies with revisionist approaches in danger of being "a sequence of fragments which would not provide a true meaning when they were put together". Concerning the 19th century, Topal argues that critiques of the demise paradigm fail to provide us with alternative viewpoints to understand the reasons behind why the Ottoman Empire had relatively failed to answer the "crises" of the century.¹²

Moreover, and maybe more importantly, he argues that the intellectual categories built in the framework of former approaches are mostly inherent in revisionist studies. What he emphasizes among these categories, and what is crucial for our study to draw attention, is that Ottoman policies in the 19th century are still considered as a "sequence of reactionary attempts determined and limited by the confrontation of a monolithic state apparatus with the West". Like Quataert,¹³ Topal sees this scheme as a general intellectual formulation upon which almost any study in the field is constructed, whether it be explicit or latent. He suggests two reasons behind this categorical determination, and thus two resolutions to undermine it. First of all, he argues that the intrinsic conceptualization of the 19th century Ottoman state as a "monolithic apparatus reacting to a conceived West" stems from considering the so-called

¹¹ Alp Eren Topal, "Osmanlı Tarihine Yeni Bir Çatı İnşa Etmek: Baki Tezcan ve İkinci Osmanlı İmparatorluğu", *TYB Akademi* 8 (2013): 151-164.

¹² Ibid, p. 153. For other studies emphasizing the importance of building alternative paradigms see Barbara Weinstein, "History Without a Cause? Grand Narratives, World History, and the Postcolonial Dilemma," *International Review of Social History* 50, no. 1 (2005): 71-93; Margaret Jacob, "Thinking Unfashionable Thoughts, Asking Unfashionable Questions," *American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 494-500.

¹³ Quataert, Donald. "Review: Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective by Karen Barkey." *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (Apr. 2009): 413

classical and early modern centuries of the empire as static and free from social and political conflicts or inner dialectics which would otherwise constantly transform and cumulate on the 19th century and thus, shape it. Secondly, the volume of energy and intellectual effort invested in the decline paradigm and modernization approaches is not yet exceeded. All available historical sources and documents, incidents and actors were subjected to an intense teleological reading which was headed to the inevitable demise and dissolution of the Ottoman empire, and followingly the construction of a modern-nation state modeled on the French version.¹⁴

In this framework, our resolutions seem to fall into basically two categories. On the one hand, it is crucial to subject the Ottoman state formation to a structural class analysis considering its bureaucratic formation and diplomatic relations in an ongoing transformation over the centuries which stems from the conflicting interests, agendas, and trajectories of different groups operating in its “substructure”. Moreover, in order to construct Ottoman state formation as a dynamic structure rather than a static, monolithic, and unaffected apparatus, it is necessary to break down the imaginary conceptual barrier that separates the Ottoman political body from the social, economic, and cultural life of the Ottomans. On the other hand, scholars need to approach the commonly-used primary sources from different points of view, and they also need to explore new material which may lead them to develop alternative methodologies.

The conceptual framework built around the constitutionalist-absolutist opposition, on the other hand, seems to degrade the political trajectory of the New Ottomans in the late 1860s and the 1870s to a mere defense of parliamentary constitutionalism. In fact, determining the ideological affiliations of 19th century actors, whether they be high-office bureaucrats or figures of oppositional movements, within a framework of binary concepts fail to provide us with an account of their dealing with the most crucial problems and circumstances of their historical period.

¹⁴ Alp Eren Topal, “Osmanlı Tarihine Yeni Bir Çatı İnşa Etmek,” 153-154.

In that sense, Nazan Çiçek demonstrates that beginning from the Cretan insurrection of 1866, the empire's politics of the Balkanian peninsula became the primary agenda for the New Ottomans.¹⁵ Sönmez points out the period between 1871-1876 emphasizing the absolutist camp's prevail as Mahmud Nedim Paşa had become the grand vizier after the death of Ali Paşa in 1871.¹⁶ On the other hand, Çiçek builds her account around the exacerbation of the Eastern Question at the same period and focuses on the New Ottoman's dealing with the "controversial issues" of their period. Considering the 1870s had multiple "crises", Çiçek analyzes their reaction towards, and discourses on these diverse crises of the period. In other words, rather than focusing exclusively on New Ottomans' ideological affiliations and the origins of their constitutionalism, she extends her analysis to include their views regarding the dire economic situation of the Empire,¹⁷ the revolts in the Balkans as part of the Eastern Question, and the reflection of these crises to the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the empire.

§ 2.2 Crisis of the Reformist Ideal: Analyzing a Period of Crisis as a Moment of "Decisive Intervention"

Therefore, an analysis built around conceptual categorizations and focuses on historical writings inevitably needs to be strictly embedded in the economic, social, and international circumstances of the period as a whole. Considering the 1870s, it seems even more crucial. For, the Ottomans had to simultaneously deal with the catastrophic situation in the

¹⁵ Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

¹⁶ Erdem Sönmez, (2016) "From Kanun-ı Kadim (Ancient Law) To Umumun Kuvveti (Force of People): Historical Context of the Ottoman Constitutionalism", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 52, no. 1 (2016): 122.

¹⁷ For the economic situation of the Ottoman Empire after the 1873 crisis, see Şevket Pamuk, *Uneven Centuries Economic Development of Turkey since 1820*, (Princeton University Press, 2018), 134-156.

Balkans, a financial crisis which caused the state to declare bankruptcy, and an extensive opposition against Abdülaziz's rule which has escalated into significant social unrest and eventually a coup d'état involving some highest bureaucrats of the state¹⁸. To make the situation even more catastrophic, all these particular crises had their profound connections, in terms of their roots and consequences, to the international context.

Introducing his book in which he analyzes "the applied legitimization policies" in the Hamidian era, Selim Deringil puts the basic premise of his approach as follows:

The emphasis will therefore be on giving 'voice' to the late Ottoman elite. What was the worldview of the Ottoman elite? How did they see the problems of their state and society, and what solutions did they propose? The first thing to be noted is that like elites everywhere, the Ottoman service elite was not monolithic. Those who served were very different internally when it came to cliques, coteries, cabals, and corruption. Some were more conservative, others more progressive, although hard and fast categories and facile labeling have led to much historically inaccurate stereotyping.¹⁹

As discussed in the previous sections, for several decades, revisionist scholars have challenged the reductionist approach that regards Westernization and modernization as identical processes through demonstrating that there are a variety of modernization experiences and of modernizing ideals. Deringil's questions are crucial, in that sense, in defining our methodology for approaching the Ottoman political actors, elite or not. His questions challenge the modernization theorists' approach which categorizes a variety of thoughts and perspectives based on their supposedly supportive or reactionary character towards "Westernization". Therefore, focusing on their narratives regarding a period of crisis will open up a window towards how they saw the problems of their

¹⁸ Davison, "Reform," 270-357.

¹⁹ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 2.

state and society and how they addressed them in the contemporary political atmosphere.

I will argue that this methodology is critical to go beyond the state-centrality of the modernization paradigm, for in its framework, state is defined and treated as it is constituted of formal structures, institutions, and legal arrangements. On the contrary, in order to understand what gives the state its true agency, it is essential to focus on the worldviews and political mindsets of the decision-making political elite of the Ottoman state. Similarly, I will argue that an integrated analysis of the financial, international, political, and social crises of the period will provide us a necessary methodology in order to be able to understand what the political elite had experienced. For, they were entangled in such problems that could not be treated separately. Most importantly, I will argue that this methodology will contribute to the analysis of the patterns of dominant political discourses at the period that remained their significance in the Republican Turkey. The interconnected nature of these individually crucial events necessitates an integrated discussion, rather than analyzing them separately, without which the profound impact they had together on the Empire would hardly be understood.

In doing so, I will appeal to Colin Hay's theorization of the concept of crisis in times of political transformation and change in order to develop my theoretical tools in the analysis of the period with an integrated approach.²⁰ Hay's definition of the concept of crisis is based on the perceived need of a "decisive intervention" in periods of conjuncture.²¹ His emphasis on the perceived need and urgency of decisive intervention entails two analytical consequences which is also fundamental for my periodization. First, the concept of crisis as a moment of decisive intervention distinguishes crisis from what Hay defines as moments of "contradiction", i.e. when a need for "decisive intervention" is not perceived. Secondly, he argues that this conceptualization of crisis necessarily entails

²⁰ Hay, "Crisis and the Structural Transformation".

²¹ Ibid, 323.

the analysis of the conditions under which such a need for intervention is perceived.²²

These two consequences of Hay's crisis definition is critically important for my analysis of the period between 1871 and 1878 for it enables me to divert from a descriptive historiography of the period and analyze the density of events and the contradictory nature of contemporary narratives and responses regarding it. Therefore, Hay's concept of crisis as "a moment of decisive intervention" will help me to develop an integrated approach with necessary conceptual tools.

Hay's definition which has a fundamental emphasis on the importance of the perception that a decisive intervention is possible and also necessary during a conjuncture period draws the attention to the problems of agency and experience, fundamental concepts of modern historiography which are interestingly neglected in the historiography of late Ottoman state. As Donald Ouataert points out, the nineteenth century Ottoman state is generally being referred to in historiography as a "monolith". He highlights the necessity of reading Ottoman history "with an eye for the competing elements within state decision-making bodies." He underlies the anomaly in assuming a "uniformity of thought and policy within Ottoman imperial decision makers" which we cannot find in other empires.²³ Aysel Yıldız emphasizes that the history of contradictions, crises, and rebellions in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire is generally dealt with within the framework of the established historiographical discourse of "modernization/ Westernization versus reaction".²⁴

Parallel to that, the historical periodization of the nineteenth and twentieth century Ottoman Empire is based on the dyadic contradiction of periods of reform and periods of regression following each other.

In that sense, Hay's theory of decisive intervention emphasizing the importance of "agents" who are "capable of making a response" to crises

²² Ibid.

²³ Quataert, "Review: Empire of Difference," 414.

²⁴ Aysel Danacı Yıldız, *Crisis and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire: The Downfall of a Sultan in the Age of Revolution*. (London: I.B.Tauris, 2017), 1-16.

they perceive to exist, draws the attention towards the agency of actors and their contradictory perceptions and narratives of crisis. Therefore, the identification of a moment of crisis by the actors, and how they perceived and narrated it become an internal part of the process of state transformation. This approach that brings forward the importance of agency, perception, and experience in a process of state transformation will help us in dealing with the above mentioned problems of late Ottoman historiography. First, it will help us to develop the analytical tools to identify and analyze the contradictory political mindsets and competing state projects of Ottoman agents, crystallized in this moment of crisis which provided them with the opportunity for a decisive intervention. Secondly, Hay's theorization can provide us with an integrated approach to see periods of structural transformation in the late Ottoman Empire as responses to moments of crisis rather than ruptures, anomalies, or deviations.

There is an additional advantage with this approach that the contemporary sources such as chronicles, memoirs of politicians, and political pamphlets can be read with an eye for "contending narratives of crisis". It cannot be a coincidence that there are many contemporary sources of this sort which were devoted to the analyses of the many critical events of the period with an ambition of analyzing their causes, consequences and prominent actors as well as defending the political positions of their authors. On the other hand, in the general historiography these contemporary sources were either neglected or treated as primary sources rather than subjective reflections of rival state projects and contending political mindsets.

Therefore, as Hay argues, establishing the conditions that gave rise to the perception of crisis in cathartic moments is crucial to understand the "subsequent evolution and transformation of the state".²⁵ He suggests three basic formulations to categorize the conditions that can be perceived as crisis; "i) the territorial integrity of the state is threatened by

²⁵ Hay, "Crisis and the Structural Transformation," 322.

war; ii) the social and political stability of the state is threatened by internal unrest; iii) the structural continuity and legitimacy of the state is threatened by state and economic failure.”²⁶ I will argue that Hay’s three formulations can all be applicable for the period that this thesis is concerned.

On the other hand, an additional point needs to be made to Hay’s formulations which is the perception that the norms that legitimize the activities of the state have been violated by state actors. In that regard, the significance of the 1870s, particularly the period between 1871 and 1876, was brought to attention by Butrus Abu Manneh in one of his latest articles published in 2013, five years before he passed away²⁷. He points out a socio-political polarization in the 1870s which according to him led to the “end of the Tanzimat” by violating the basic principles or norms on which the Tanzimat state had been built. He traces the roots of this polarization in the two different and oppositional generations of Tanzimat bureaucracy represented in the leading figures of Mahmud Nedim and Hüseyin Avni Pashas.

In another of his late articles, contrary to general understanding of the Tanzimat period, Abu-Manneh claims that the Hatt-i Şerif of Gülhane launched in 1839 and the Hatt-ı Hümayun of 1856 (Islahat Fermanı) initiated two different phases of the 19th century reform period and paved the way for the formation and prevail of two different fractions of Ottoman statesmen and bureaucrats who hold different concepts of state²⁸. To him, the socio-political crisis of the 1870s was the final battle between these two groups to hold control of the state, a battle in which neither

²⁶ Ibid., 322.

²⁷ Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Mahmud Nedim and Hüseyin Avni Pashas and the End of the Tanzimat”, in *Osmanlı’nın İzinde: Prof. Dr. Mehmet İpşirli Armağanı*, eds. Feridun M. Emece, İshak Keskin and Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, 29–44, (İstanbul: Timaş, 2013).

²⁸ Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Two Concepts of State in the Tanzimat Period: The Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane and the Hatt-ı Hümayun,” *Turkish Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (2015): 117–37. doi:10.1163/18775462-00602007.

side secured their dominant position, but rather caused irreversible damages to the Tanzimat regime with their choices of actions.

Abu-Manneh claims that the “traditional upper class” of the Ottoman statesmen participated in the launching of the Tanzimat in order to “ensure the supremacy of the shari’a and kanun in the state and to end absolute rule of the sultan and arbitrary acts of the governors.”²⁹ On the other hand, the outbreak of Crimean War caused the demise of the traditional upper class who emphasized the reestablishment of the roles of shari’a and kanun in the state affairs, and paved the way for the prevalence of a new elite of young bureaucrats. Represented in the political characters of Ali and Fuad Pashas, these young bureaucrats were of modest social origin and educated in the new schools which Mahmud II established during his reign.

Contrary to the traditional upper class, these young bureaucrats were subjected to a more secular education, and learned foreign languages, especially French, at the expense of Arabic and Persian³⁰. Therefore, Abu-Manneh positions the Hatt-i Humayun of 1856, which was granted the legal and civil equality between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the empire in violation of the shari’a and facilitated the interference of Western states, parallel to the socio-political trajectory of this new elite. Accordingly, he points out the Hatt-i Hümayun of Gülhane as the representation of the traditional upper class’ emphasis on the shari’a and kanun.³¹

As the Crimean War caused the loss of power and prestige for the traditional upper class, the death of Ali Pasha in 1871 without any political heir equal to him caused a political turbulence. Abu-Manneh claims that this political turbulence provided an opportunity for Mahmud Nedim, who was descended from “an old upper class family in İstanbul of strong orthodox Islamic tendencies” and “acquired his education by private tuition most probably of traditional subjects”.³² When he was appointed to

²⁹ Abu-Manneh, “Mahmud Nedim and Hüseyin Avni Pashas,” 30.

³⁰ Ibid, 33.

³¹ Ibid, 34-36.

³² Ibid, 36-38.

the grandviziarate following the death of Ali Pasha, he immediately followed a policy of transforming the high bureaucracy cadres in order to strengthen the sultan's power who lost his prestige and influence following the prevail of Ali and Fuad Pashas in the 1860s. He removed many leading associates of Ali and Fuad Pashas from their offices and arbitrarily sent them into exile including the serasker, General Hüseyin Avni Pasha. According to Abu-Manneh, such an act was the exact opposite of the concept of modern state that the Tanzimat tried to establish. It was the first blow to the Tanzimat.

General Hüseyin Avni Pasha, on the other hand, had a quite different socio-political background. He was born in "a village in south west Anatolia to a humble peasant family"³³. He took the opportunity of joining the army as a way of social upward mobility, like many others in the Tanzimat period. Their career paths were in direct contrast to Mahmud Nedim's. For in that sense, he belonged to the last generation of Ottoman statesmen who advanced in the state largely through "traditional training of private tutoring or growing up in the service"³⁴. According to Abu-Manneh, Hüseyin Avni represented a generation which owed their social status to the Tanzimat principles. Hence, they strongly resented Mahmud Nedim's efforts to shift the center of power from the Sublime Porte to the palace:

It is obvious that those two leading personalities, namely Mahmud Nedim and Hüseyin Avni had many contradictory attributes such as their social origin, their vision of state system and their objectives. Moreover, Nedim, unhappy with the Tanzimat, kept himself out of Istanbul for many years while Avni integrated into the system and found self-fulfillment within it. He regarded the reform measures undertaken by Ali and Fuad as best suited the Ottoman Empire at the given circumstances, while Nedim detested them. Hüseyin Avni stood for powerful state organs, Nedim

³³ Ibid, 39.

³⁴ Ibid, 33.

for a powerful sultan. Each of them represented a socio-political trend hostile towards the other.³⁵

Following the aggravation of the political polarization with the economic crisis, Hüseyin Avni and his associates, having Midhat Pasha as their leader, organized the coup d'état of 1876 to depose Abdülaziz who was not able to control the political instability. Contrary to the general perspective, Abu-Manneh argued that the deployment of the army for such a “drastic measure”, reminding the Janissary acts, gave a second blow to the Tanzimat ideals.³⁶ According to him, the rise of Abdülhamid II to the throne in 1876 and his absolute rule of over thirty years constituted the death blow to the “great feat of 19th century Ottoman history.”

It can be argued that for Abu-Manneh, social backgrounds of the prevailing actors of the 1870s is the major determinant of their political trajectories. Although it cannot be denied that social backgrounds can have a considerable impact on shaping political mindsets, I will rather draw attention to the impact of the crucial developments of the period as they profoundly affected the social and political structure of the empire as well as its position within the international setting, and the reactions that these developments invoked in the political actors. In that regard, I will not treat these political trajectories within the framework of ideological affiliations shaped by the social backgrounds of the actors, but as the responses they developed regarding the ongoing transformation. Therefore, the emphasis will be on the impact of what the political actors and societal elements as whole experienced during a critical period on the shaping of their political trajectories.

Moreover, Abu-Manneh points out an “end” regarding the period. Therefore he traces the origins of the polarization of thought which, according to him, brought that end. On the contrary, I consider it as a period

³⁵ Ibid, 41.

³⁶ Ibid, 43.

of beginnings.³⁷ I believe that the catastrophic events that shook the Ottoman Empire to its foundations created an atmosphere in which a large spectrum of political ideas and governmental principles that would be the main pillars and themes of Ottoman-Turkish political body were put forward, theorized and discussed publicly.³⁸ The following decades proved that they were not only discussed, but acted upon.



³⁷ “Origins imply causes; beginnings imply differences”, The historian looking for beginnings rather than origins as an essential distinction for Foucault see Patricia O’Brien, “Michel Foucault’s History of Culture,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt, (University of California Press, 1989), p. 37.

³⁸ For a different perspective on the nature of this atmosphere of discussion see Murat Şiviloğlu, *The Emergence of Public Opinion: State and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire*, (New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 174-221.

Making of the Hamidian Era: Narratives of Crisis on 1875-1876

(...) Mahmud Paşa evvelki sadâretinde umûmen me'mûrîni dil-gîr eylemiş ve hakkında kimsenin emniyet ü i'timâdı kalmamış idi. Bu defâki sadâretinde ise bütün bütün efkâr-ı umûmiyyeye karşı bir hâl ü harekette bulunmuştur ve: "Sakalını Rusya elçisi İgnatiyef'in eline verdi. Bâbîâli'nin nüfuzu Rusya sefaretine geçti" deyu efkâr-ı umûmiyye anın aleyhine düştü.

– Ahmed Cevdet, *Tezâkir*

In this chapter, I will try to show how the economic, political, and international crises of the Ottoman Empire in the 1870s were conceived and formulated by leading political actors and influential writers in the Ottoman historiography through analyzing their narratives built in their political pamphlets, chronicles, and memoirs. Accordingly, I try to demonstrate how the high bureaucrats and intellectuals of the Abdülaziz reign tried to settle in the new political constellations starting to emerge in the first years of the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Moreover, I will try

to show how they built their narratives so as to remove the shadow of the political, financial, and international breakdown of the empire from the reign of the newly enthroned sultan.

§ 3.1 Recurrent Themes in the Narratives

I will mainly focus on the comments and analyses in Ahmed Cevdet Pasha's *Tezâkir*⁴⁶, Mithat Pasha's memoirs (*Tabsıra-i İbret*⁴⁷) and Ahmet Mithat Efendi's *Üss-i İnkılâp*⁴⁸ regarding the period. In addition, I will touch upon some other observations of Ottoman and foreign commentators, such as James Lewis Farley (1823-1885), an Irish banker and diplomat who wrote on Turkish and Eastern affairs, the Ottoman historian and writer Ahmed Sâib⁴⁹ (1860-1918), the famous Ottoman journalist Basiretçi Ali Efendi⁵⁰, and the prolific writer of the Second Constitutional Period, Mithat Cemal⁵¹.

Regarding these writers' narratives, I will specifically concentrate on the second term of Mahmud Nedim Pasha in the grand vizierate between 20 August 1875 and 11 May 1876. For in such a short period of time, the Herzegovina uprising of 1875 would escalate into a sovereignty crisis when the Porte accepted the infamous Andrassy Note presented by the

⁴⁶ Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir vol 4*, ed. Cavid Baysun, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yay., 1984).

⁴⁷ Mithat Paşa, *Tabsıra-i İbret*, ed. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu, (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 1997).

⁴⁸ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Üss-i İnkılâp*, ed. İdris Nebi Uysal (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2013).

⁴⁹ Ahmet Sâib. *Vak'a-i Sultan Abdülaziz*, ed. Mehmet Köseoğlu, (Samsun: M. Köseoğlu, 2014).

⁵⁰ Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul'da Yarım Asırlık Vekayi-i Mühimme*, (Kitabevi, 1997).

⁵¹ Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Namık Kemal, Devrinin İnsanları ve Olayları Arasında*, (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010).

League of Three Emperors,⁵² the crisis of Ottoman foreign debt into the declaration of a moratorium, and the dissent within the Ottoman public vis-à-vis the Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim's policies and actions into the student uprisings in Istanbul which would result in the dismissal of both the Grand Vizier and the Sheikh-ul-Islam Hasan Fehmi Efendi.

As the main topics of these authors' crisis conceptions, firstly, I will highlight the diminishing British influence⁵³ and the rise of Russian involvement in the Ottoman political arena after the death of Ali Pasha in 1871,⁵⁴ through the so-called "infamous alliance" between the grand vizier Mahmud Nedim Pasha and the Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire General Ignatiev.⁵⁵

Secondly, I will try to demonstrate how the Ottoman moratorium in 1875 was conceived and formulated as a conspiracy, planned by General Ignatiev who aimed at the alienation of the Ottoman Empire in the international arena and implemented by Mahmud Nedim who was considered as being completely under the influence of the Russian ambassador, to the extent of "treachery."⁵⁶ According to the Ottoman historiography, Mahmud Nedim was appointed to the Grand Vizierate for a second term

⁵² For the culmination of the Balkanian crisis to the Andrassy Note see David Harris, "The Origin of the Andrassy Note of December, 1875" *Pacific Historical Review* 1, no. 2 (1932): 193-210.

⁵³ For the change in the British foreign policy regarding the Ottoman Empire, see Richard Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question, 1875-1878* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1979). Doğan Gürpınar, "The Rise and Fall of Turcophilism in Nineteenth-Century British Discourses: Visions of the Turk, 'Young' and 'Old'", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 3, 347-372.

⁵⁴ For the change in the Russian Foreign Policy regarding the Ottoman Empire, see Andrei Melville and Tatiana Shackleina, eds. *Russian Foreign Policy in Transition: Concepts and Realities* (New York: CEU Press, 2005).

⁵⁵ For a detailed analysis of the role of Ignatiev in the Ottoman Empire and his pan-Slavic policies see, Özhan Kapıcı, "Osmanlı-Rus İlişkilerinde N. P. Ignatiev Dönemi ve Rusya'nın Osmanlı Siyaseti (1864-1877)", (Unpublished PhD diss., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2013.)

⁵⁶ For Ignatiev's thoughts on Mahmud Nedim's policies see, Alexander Onuo, "The Memoirs of Count N. Ignatyev", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 10, no. 29 (December 1931): 386-407.

upon his guarantee to the Sultan Abdülaziz that he could easily solve the Herzegovinian crisis. It was considered that he had thought that he could solve the Herzegovina rebellion with the help of his strong connections to the Russian Ambassador.

On the other hand, regarding the 5 million lira deficit in the 1875 budget, which had led a serious financial crisis as the government could not be able to find a new loan for the annual interest installment, he prepared a moratorium plan. Accordingly, half of the annual total of 14 million, which the state had to pay for the interest and principal of its regular debts, would be paid, with 5 million of the other half, the budget deficit would be closed, and the expenses of the army would be financed with 2 million. The principle of paying half of the debt and interest for five years in cash and half in a note with 5% interest was accepted by a government decision dated 6 October 1875. The decision not only caused a rapid decline in bond prices but also caused great domestic and foreign reactions, turning the European public opinion against the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁷

Thirdly, I will focus on how the revolution of Herzegovina that started in 1875 and escalated in a very short time into an international Balkanian crisis was conceived by the Ottoman high bureaucrats and political commentators as another intrigue of the Ignatiev-Mahmud Nedim alliance.⁵⁸ In December 1875, the governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia interfered in order to put an end to the military and diplomatic crisis in the Balkans and agreed on a reform project developed by the Austrian Prime Minister Conde Andrassy regarding the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The Andrassy Note, as the reform project called, was considered as a serious foreign intervention by the Ottoman

⁵⁷ Mehmet Hakan Sağlam, Osmanlı Devleti'nde Moratoryum 1875-1881: Rûsûm-ı Sitte'den Düyyûn-ı Umumiyye'ye, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2007), 37-38.

⁵⁸ Fort he Russian involvement in the Ottoman-British Rivalry in the Balkans see, Mithat Aydın, *Balkanlarda İsyan: Osmanlı-İngiliz Rekabeti: Bosna-Hersek ve Bulgaristan'daki Ayaklanmalar, 1875-1876* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2005).

public opinion⁵⁹ and when it had been accepted by the Porte in February 1876, the Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim was targeted again. This was yet another catastrophic incident of the late 1870s for which Mahmud Nedim had been held responsible.

Except for Farley's book⁶⁰ (1875), the historical accounts and memoirs that I will try to analyze in the following sections were written in the first years of Abdülhamid II after the dethronement of Abdülaziz in 1876 through the first *coup d'état* since the dethronement of Selim III in 1807. Although it was for the sake of a new constitutional regime, a military *coup d'état* was in sharp contrast to the Tanzimat ideals. Moreover, the crises of the 1870s had created such a catastrophic political atmosphere that the long pursued ideals of the Tanzimat period were replaced by deep anxiety of sovereignty since the surveillance of the Ottoman economy was on the verge of being transferred to a commission consisting of foreign delegates and the international crisis following the Balkanian uprisings was escalating into the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878.

Before diving into the narratives of the authors I mentioned above, it can be useful to point out the relationship between history writing and autobiography writing. Although these narratives were usually written as chronicles and political treatises, as the authors, themselves, were highly effective, active participants in the period in question, I find it necessary to mention the intricate nature of the relationship between history writing and autobiography writing.

This discussion on the transforming power constellations at the period is also linked to the discussion on the relationship between collective memory and history. In analyzing the differences between these two

⁵⁹ For an analysis on the political discussions at the time and the significance of the public opinion, see Uygur Aydemir, "1870'ler Basınındaki Siyasi Tartışmalar Işığında Sultan Abdülaziz Döneminde Kamuoyunun Siyasi İşlevi", in *Sultan Abdülaziz ve Dönemi Sempozyumu*, C.2, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları), 181-273.

⁶⁰ James Lewis Farley, *The Decline of Turkey: Financially and Politically* (London: Printed by Author, 1875).

concepts, Halbwachs emphasizes lived experiences as a “current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial”, whereas historical periodization separates them as totally transformed entities:

When a given period ceases to interest the subsequent period, the same group has not forgotten a part of its past, because, in reality, there are two successive groups, one following the other. History divides the sequence of centuries into periods, just as the content of a tragedy is divided into several acts. But in a play the same plot is carried from one act to another and the characters remain true to form to the end, their feelings and emotions developing in an unbroken movement. History, however, gives the impression that everything – the interplay of interests, general orientations, modes of studying men and events, traditions, and perspectives on the future- is transformed one period to another.⁶¹

In that sense, the narratives that will be analyzed in the following sections profoundly contribute to our understanding regarding the formation of collective memory. For, Halbwachs also argues that whereas history means to be unitary, objective, and impartial; “living groups of the past and present” have genuine viewpoints which do not afford “equal significance to events, places, and periods.”⁶²

According to him, the recollection of past experiences operates always within the framework of social groups, such as religion, family, and social classes, which constitutes the “social memory”. Therefore, what the authors of the above-mentioned narratives wanted to narrate for their contemporary audiences and also the generations to come as significant events of their period and what they chose to be silent on providing us a

⁶¹ Maurice Halbwachs, “Historical Memory and Collective Memory,” in *The Collective Memory*, eds. Maurice Halbwachs, Francis J. Ditter and Vita Y. Ditter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 80.

⁶² Halbwachs, “Historical Memory,” 83.

genuine point of view outside the historical account. For “there exist customs and modes of thinking within each particular family that equally impose – and even more forcibly- their form on the opinions and feelings of their members.”⁶³

Halbwachs’ analogy, in the above quotation, between a historical narrative and a tragedy seems to be significantly important for it draws attention to the fictitious nature of a historian’s writing. History writing shares this fictitious nature with autobiographical narratives. In analyzing the effects of conventional forms and plot structures of storytelling on autobiographical writings, Brockmeier emphasizes that the simple fact that autobiographies are written from the end to the beginning, “shaped and ordered as a narrative event”, transforms the life story into a “narrated event” which necessarily involves a *telos*. He argues that the linear development displayed in autobiographies proceeds toward a goal, i.e. the realization of its *telos*. Defining this effect of “development in time” throughout the narrative as “retrospective teleology”, Brockmeier draws attention to the impact of the art of storytelling on autobiographical writing.⁶⁴

According to him, an attempt to answer a triggering question regarding an extraordinary event that constituted a turning point in life like a success, revelation, catharsis, or crisis determines the narrative in autobiographies. The necessity of answering this question is what Brockmeier defines as retrospective teleology, and according to him, it leads the whole narrative.⁶⁵ Therefore, although here, I will be dealing mostly with chronicles and political pamphlets, it is crucial to remember the teleological nature of these narratives, especially since they were written in a time when a political breakthrough was being experienced in the Ottoman Empire and a genuinely new political regime after the Tanzimat period was about to emerge. In order to settle properly in this new regime,

⁶³ Ibid, 58.

⁶⁴ Brockmeier, Jens. “From the End to the Beginning: Retrospective Teleology in Autobiography,” in *Narrative and Identity*, eds. Jens Brockmeier and Donal A. Carbaugh (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011), 251-253.

⁶⁵ Brockmeier, “From the End to the Beginning,” 253.

the authors needed to build their narratives with an implicit, and sometimes quite explicit, *telos*.

§ 3.2 A British Narrative: *The Decline of Turkey: Financially and Politically*

In *The Decline of Turkey: Financially and Politically*, a pamphlet written in 1875, J. Lewis Farley expressed his deep detest of the British Government's policy of "non-interference" regarding the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁶ In his view, in a political atmosphere where French, Austrian, and especially the Russian Governments constantly engaged in policies which aims to "rule" the empire according to their interest, the British Government wasted all of its sacrifices for the Ottomans and "passed them into the hands of their enemies" who were "under the mask of friendship, leading them into their ruin."⁶⁷

Farley's pamphlet was one of the many which were written on the catastrophic period of the second half of the Ottoman 1870s. According to him, what the Empire had been going through at the period was the result of Russian intrigues manipulating the Ottoman Government through his influence on the Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Pasha, nicknamed by his adversaries as Nedimoff. Like many other commentators, Farley dated the accession of the Mahmud Nedim to the Grand Vizierate after Ali and Fuad Pashas, as the beginning of the end of the Ottoman Empire for it was the time in which English "friendship" was replaced by Russian "intrigue":

All the world knows the sacrifices that England has made for Turkey. Our ships defended her capital; our soldiers shed their blood to protect her from her northern foe; and, since the Crimean War, we have given Turkey one hundred and sixty-two millions of

⁶⁶ For British foreign policy in 1870s, see Geoffrey R. Berridge, *British Diplomacy in Turkey, 1583 to the Present: A Study in the Evolution of the Resident Embassy*. (Leiden; Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2009.)

⁶⁷ Farley, "The Decline of Turkey," 4.

money. As long as Fuad and A'ali lived, Turkey was grateful, and English influence was, as it ought to be, paramount at the Porte. With the accession, however, of Mahmoud Pasha to the Grand Vizierat, on the death of A'ali, in September 1871, a new state of things came into existence.⁶⁸

In his pamphlet which was written in an inflamed tone, Farley seemed to warn his own Government and the Ottomans against the vicious aims of General Ignatiev, “the Mephistopheles of the East”⁶⁹, and to suggest certain policies of way out for the Ottoman Government, which was, according to his view, led to its ruin under Sultan Abdülaziz, a capricious and lavish man who ventured his government and people on his luxurious personal whims.

One of the main points that Farley highlighted was the corruption of high state officials who turned the financial crisis into an opportunity to build their own fortunes.⁷⁰ According to him, Ottoman high state officials (he especially targets Mahmud Nedim Pasha) gave up their hopes of curing the deeply indebted Ottoman finances and dedicated their efforts to make profit through getting high commissions from the foreign and internal loans they brokered for the Ottoman Government.

§ 3.3 Convergence of Rival Narratives: Mithat Pasha's *Memoirs* and Ahmed Cevdet's *Tezâkir*

Farley was not alone in his accusations. Corruption was the most popular accusation raised against Mahmud Nedim Pasha both during his first and second grand vizierate. He was presented as the sole responsible for

⁶⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁹ For the British view on Ignatiev's activities, see David MacKenzie, *Count N.P. Ignat'ev: The Father of Lies?* (New York: Boulder, East European Monographs, 2002). See also Mithat Aydın, “Sir Henry G. Elliot'in İstanbul Büyükelçiliği (1867-1877) Dönemindeki Bazı Büyük Siyasi Olaylara Bakışı” *A.Ü.Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 18: 21-49.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 10.

the dire economic situation of the empire. According to Mithat Pasha, one of Mahmud Nedim's great adversaries, Mahmud Nedim's political strategy was to allow the lavish and capricious Sultan Abdülaziz to spend from the state treasury as far as he wishes, to provide resources for the excessive expenditures of the sultan through internal and external borrowing on extremely disadvantageous conditions, to manipulate the budget deficits in order to appease his opponents. Mithat insisted that through this traitorous strategy, Mahmud Nedim consolidated his position in the eyes of the Sultan as the only man who could provide the resources he so ambitiously needed and built his own wealth in the meantime at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and its people.⁷¹

What was interesting is that deadly rivals, such as Mithat and Cevdet Pashas, were of the same opinion when it came to Mahmud Nedim's corruption and treachery. Cevdet points out two deadly sins of Mahmud Nedim which made "the state officials" as well as the general public opinion "turn against him." During his first period of grand vizierate, between September 1871 and July 1872 Mahmud Nedim had set up a commission of budget pruning in the central bureaucracy (*tenkihat komisyonu*) and he had started by cutting off state officials' salaries and abolishing some positions that he had seen as an unnecessary burden to the budget. According to Cevdet, like many others, that was the main wrongdoing of Mahmud Nedim that created his adversaries within the state officials from various ranks. He not only cut off state officials' salaries but also sent his political adversaries from high-level officials into exile and constantly rotated local governors to such an extent that "a governor would learn that he has been appointed to another *vilayet* when he just arrived where he had been appointed a week ago."⁷² These policies that he employed during his first, short-term grand vizierate were depicted in his

⁷¹ Mithat Paşa, "Tabsıra-i İbret," 151.

⁷² "Mahmud Nedim Paşa'nın evzaâ'-ı nâ-becâsından büyük küçük kâffe-i memûrîn dil-gîr ü müteneffir olmuş idüğünden (...) Mahmud Paşa ise Bâbîâlf'den bu vak'u haysiyyeti ref' ü izâle etmiş ve ale'l-umûm vüzerâ ve me'murîn-i sâirede kadr ü i'tibâr bırakmamış olduğundan..." Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, "Tezâkir," 122.

contemporaries' memoirs with a hateful tone and these depictions determined the venomous historical portrait of Mahmud Nedim Pasha up to the present.

According to Cevdet, aside from the state officials from different ranks, what turned the public opinion against Mahmud Nedim was the policies that he employed in his second grand vizierate. Like Farley, Cevdet wrote about Mahmud Nedim's so-called alliance with the infamous Russian ambassador General Ignatiev that, according to Mahmud Nedim's adversaries, put the Ottoman Empire in a fully unprotected position vis-à-vis the Russian "intrigue."⁷³ The depiction of this situation in Cevdet's writings was quoted word by word in the writings of many Ottoman officials and historians as well as modern ones.⁷⁴ Moreover, according to Cevdet, Mahmud Nedim was attributing the criticisms that were constantly raised against him to the sultan himself and that paved the way for the "public to turn against the sultan."⁷⁵

What made Mahmud Nedim completely vulnerable vis-à-vis the accusations of his adversaries was his infamous decision on suspending half the interest payments on the external debt announced in October 1875 (*Ramazan Kararnamesi*). Although it is argued that "the government had effectively reached the end of its credit some considerable time earlier, in late 1873,"⁷⁶ Mahmud Nedim was the one who declared the statement and could not escape being framed by his contemporaries as the man who led the Ottoman Empire into bankruptcy.

⁷³ For Ignatiev's policies in the Ottoman Empire, see Ayten Kılıç, "A Russian Machiavelli in the Ottoman Empire: Count Ignatiev Conquers İstanbul (1864-1875)." In *The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78*, edited by Ömer Turan, (Ankara: Middle East University, 2007).

⁷⁴ "(...) Mahmud Paşa evvelki sadâretinde umûmen me'mûrîni dil-gîr eylemiş ve hakkında kimsenin emniyet ü i'timâdı kalmamış idi. Bu defâki sadâretinde ise bütün bütün efkâr-ı umûmiyyeye karşı bir hâl ü harekette bulunmuştur ve: "*Sakalını Rusya elçisi İgnatiyef'in eline verdi. Bâbîâli'nin nüfuzu Rusya sefaretime geçti*" deyu efkâr-ı umûmiyye anın aleyhine düştü." Ibid, 146.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 151.

⁷⁶ Christopher Clay, *Gold for the Sultan: Western Bankers and Ottoman Finance, 1856-1881* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 12.

In fact, Mahmud Nedim's three main critics, Mithat, Cevdet, and Ahmet Mithat, were fully aware of the Ottoman finances and knew that the Ottoman bankruptcy was a process. They highlighted the fact that the "reckless" declaration of suspending half the interest payments echoed in the foreign markets as the full bankruptcy of the Ottoman Empire and turned the British who hold a considerable amount of Ottoman bonds against the Ottoman government.⁷⁷ Cevdet pointed out that, if the British government would turn against the Ottoman government especially in a time when the Russians had the opportunity to implement their ill wills regarding the Ottoman Empire, there would be no one to stop them. Cevdet concludes that Mahmud Nedim's political strategies not only made the Ottoman "public opinion" turn against "the policies of their state" but his financial policies also raised hostility among the "European public."⁷⁸

It is also worth noting that writing retrospectively in 1881, Cevdet's stress on the public opinion in terms of both Europeans and Ottomans seems adequate.⁷⁹ As Birdal points out, after the *Ramazan Kararnamesi* British bondholders who "claimed to have invested in Turkish loans with the perception that they were backed by the Queen's government" began

⁷⁷ Hüseyin Al, *Uluslararası Sermaye ve Osmanlı Maliyesi 1820-1875*, (İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2007), 102-103. See also Huri İslamoğlu-İnan ed., *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Cambridge: 1987).

⁷⁸ (...) Rusyalu'nun Devlet-i aliyye hakkında der-kâr olan sû-i niyyâtına Avrupalu ve ale'l-husûs İngiliz milleti sed çekmekte olup fâizlerin böyle bir vaz'-ı hod-serâne ile tenzili ise ellerinde Devlet-i aliyye eshâmı bulunan Avrupa ahâlîsinin husumetine sebep olmağla Rusya devleti Devlet-i aliyye hakkında mâ-fi'z-zamîrini icraya fırsat bulmuştur ve andan sonra İngilizlerin Devlet-i aliyye'ye husumetleri tezâyüd etmekte bulunmuştur. Elhâsıl dâhilen efkâr-ı umûmiyye devletin mu'âmelâtından nâ-hoşnûd olduğu gibi bu icrâât-ı mâliyyeden nâşî Avrupa halkı dahi Devlet-i aliyye'den müteneffir olmuştur. Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, "Tezâkir," vol. 5, 147.

⁷⁹ For a detailed analysis and critique of Cevdet's state model see Christoph Neumann, "Whom Did Ahmed Cevdet Represent?," in *The Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elizabeth Özdalga, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 117-134.

to campaign for “government support to salvage their investments.”⁸⁰ As a matter of fact, several letters of British bondholders who claimed that their investment money was wasted on the luxury expenditures of Sultan Abdülaziz were published in British newspapers on a daily basis. As a result, the British government had to publish an official declaration that the British government did not back personal investments in Turkish loans and had never recommended the British people to invest in Ottoman bonds and therefore could not be held responsible for personal losses.⁸¹

In that sense, Eldem and Sağlam agree on the significance of the period between 1871 and 1875 in terms of the change in the pattern of the Ottoman foreign debt and its repercussions in both the Ottoman and European public opinion. According to them, this was a period when the Ottoman government could no longer invest the new loans in any reform project or monetary policy but only use it to pay the annual interest payments.⁸² In fact, beginning from 1863, Ottoman foreign borrowing and the general financial situation of the empire had become among the major targets for domestic opposition against Sultan Abdülaziz.⁸³

Indeed, as Cevdet also mentioned, Mahmud Nedim’s declaration was at a time when the uprisings in Herzegovina were about to escalate into a full Balkanian insurrection (*Hâlbuki Devlet-i aliyye hakkında mukadder olan mesâibe mukaddime olacak Hersek ihtilâli günden güne alevlenmekte idi.*) In terms of European public opinion turning against the Ottomans, Cevdet must have remembered how Ottoman military intervention

⁸⁰ Murat Birdal, “Fiscal Crisis and Foreign Borrowing in the Ottoman Empire: Historical and Contemporary Discourses and Debates,” *Journal of European Economic History* 48, no. 2 (2019): 90.

⁸¹ Hüseyin Al, “Uluslararası Sermaye,” 108.

⁸² Edhem Eldem, “Ottoman Financial Integration with Europe: Foreign Loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt,” *European Review* 13, no. 3 (2005): 431–45; Sağlam, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Moratoryum,” 34–35. For the difference of first and second borrowing period at the Ottoman Empire, see Seda Özekicioğlu, Halil Özekicioğlu, “First Borrowing Period at Ottoman Empire (1854–1876): Budget Policies and Consequence”, *Business and Economic Horizons* 3, no. 3 (October 2010): 28–46.

⁸³ Nazan Çiçek, “The Young Ottomans,” 190–207.

in the Bulgarian rebellion of 1876 echoed in the European public opinion after the British statesman W. E. Gladstone wrote his famous pamphlet *"The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East"*.⁸⁴ Like Farley, Cevdet seems to consider the British support as an indispensable barrier against the Russian threat in the Balkans.⁸⁵ According to this view, which was shared by many other observers, even though Mahmud Nedim's decision was the only solution, as the Ottoman government was not able to pay the annual interests of its foreign debts as early as 1873, *Ramazan Kararnamesi* risked the alienation of the Ottoman Empire in the international arena at a time when Balkanian uprisings would escalate into the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War.⁸⁶

Regarding Ottoman public opinion, Cevdet draws an interesting scheme. According to him, within the classical Ottoman political system the grand vizierate and the cabinet had functioned as a "curtain" between the people and the sultan. Cevdet argues that what was considered good and beneficial by the people regarding the state policies was attributed to the sultan and what was disliked by the people was attributed to the ministers. Accordingly, whenever discontent arises in public opinion a change in the cabinet would cool down the public temper.

In that sense, Cevdet accuses Mahmud Nedim of putting the Sultan Abdülaziz forward and attributing all the good and evil in the political arena to the sultanate. By doing so, argued Cevdet, Mahmud Nedim could pursue his personal interests without accepting the responsibility of his policies. Cevdet follows that in return, the public opinion turned against the sultan and a constant discontent spread among the people. Through

⁸⁴ W. E. Gladstone, *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, (London: John Murray, 1876).

⁸⁵ For Russian policies regarding the Balkans at the time, see B. H. Summer, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880* (Hamden; London: Archon Books, 1962).

⁸⁶ "Ber-vech-i bâlâ eshâm-ı umûmiyye fâizlerinin tansîfinden dolayı Avrupa efkâr-ı umûmiyyesinin dahi aleyhimize dönmüş olması Rusya fesâdlarının serbestçe icrasına meydan verdi." Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, "Tezâkir," 148.

that discourse, Cevdet explained the widespread public resentment towards Sultan Abdülaziz and the dynamic behind the student uprising that took place in 1876 in Istanbul.⁸⁷

Another accusation made commonly against Mahmud Nedim, regarding his decision of moratorium was about the corruption resulting from the secret and abrupt nature of its implementation. Cevdet claims that some Galata bankers who were acquainted with Mahmud Nedim and General Ignatiev sold out large amounts of Ottoman bonds a night before the announcement of the decision and made great fortunes out of that.⁸⁸ He also claims that among them was Mithat Pasha himself. According to him, although Mithat has made a great amount of money by selling his bonds, his reputation was damaged.⁸⁹

Cevdet seems to share Farley's discourse on the corruption of his fellow high statesmen who gave up on enhancing the Ottoman financial situation and tended to exploit the financial crisis so as to build their own

⁸⁷ "Çünkü öteden beri bu Devlet-i aliyye'de hey'et-i vükelâ Mâbeyn-i hümâyûn ile efrâd-ı ahâlî beyinde bir perde idi. İcrâât-ı vâki'adan enzâr-ı enâmda hoş görünen şeyler pâdişâhlara ve nâsın beğenmediği işler vükelâyâ ve ale'l-husûs sadrâzamlara azv olunurdu; ve bir aralık efkâr-ı âmmeye heyecân görölse hey'et-i vükelâca bir tebeddül icrâsiyle efkâra sükûnet geliverirdi. Mahmud Paşa ise nîk ü bed her ne olursa olsun hep Sultan Abdülaziz Han hazretlerine atf eder ve ağrâz-ı zâtiyyesini tervîc için icrâ ettiği işleri dahi ana tahmîl eyler idi. Bu cihetle efkâr-ı âm m e bozuldu. Ekser-i nâs Zât-ı şâhâne aleyhinde nabecâ tefevvühâta cesâret eder oldu." Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, "Tezâkir," 151. For a detailed analysis of the "softa incident" of 1876, see Uygur Aydemir, "Mahmud Nedim Pasha's Critique of The Tanzimat Bureaucracy: State Modernization, Political Strife, and Great Power Intervention", (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Sabancı University, 2017), 181-186.

⁸⁸ "Diğer rüfekaşının mu'âmelâtı meçhul olup fakat Mahmud Paşa ile Rusya elçisine mensûb olan sarrâfların külliyyetli kâğıd satıp mebâlig-i i külliye kazanmış oldukları tahakkuk etmiştir." *Tezâkir*, 146.

⁸⁹ "Midhat Paşa ise gecedan kendi sarrâfı ile haberleşip ferdâsı henüz keyfiyet duyulmadan kendi hisâbına küllî konsolid satmış olduğu haber alınmış ve bir iki saat sonra keyfiyet îlan olundukta eshâm-ı umûmiyyenin fîatı def'aten nısfına tenezzül etmekle Midhat Paşa bundan mebâlig-i külliye kazanmış ise de dâmen-i iştihârı lekelenmiştir." Ibid, 147.

wealth. On the other hand, he specifically exempts Yusuf Pasha, the minister of finance, who was among the ministers who signed the *Kararname* along with Mahmud Nedim, from this conspiracy and explains in detail how he avoided any possible accusations of corruption and abstained from making a profit at the expense of the loss of general public. Cevdet states that he even lost a large amount of money due to the prices going down after the announcement.⁹⁰ We can argue that considering Cevdet's specific mentioning of Mithat's name, his arch-enemy, in this conspiracy, the discourse on the Ottoman high statesmen exploiting the Ottoman foreign debt either by cutting off high commissions for themselves on the loans they brokered or by selling out their investments before the prices went down, had become a common means employed to demean political rivals.

Writing on where he himself stood in this conspiracy, Cevdet clearly leaves himself out. In fact, he argues that Mahmud Nedim deliberately kept him out of the meeting and sent him away to Rumelia on the pretext of sending him to investigate the ongoing uprisings. According to him, Mahmud Nedim's main purpose was keeping him out of the meeting where he convinced the ministers of the indispensability of the moratorium. On the other hand, he goes one step further in his accusations against Mahmud Nedim. He claims that although he thought that the uprisings could be contained easily through a "rational and wise" policy, he could not write his observations to the Bâbîâli. For according to him, the "Russians" were behind the uprisings and they were provoking the Bulgarians and he knew that any policy or precautions that were to be made in Bâbîâli, they could not be planned and implemented without Russians

⁹⁰ "Ber-vech-i bâlâ akşam üstü buna karâr verildikte Yusuf Paşa ferdâsı piyasada bir büyük kıyâmet koparacağını derhâtır ederek Mâliye nâzırı olduğu cihetle geceleyin konsolide oynamış olmak gibi sû-i zandan kendisini vikaaye zumnında bir tarafa gitmeyip Mahmud Paşa ile birlikte doğru anın konağına gidip gece saat altıya kadar yanında kalmış ve nihâyet Mahmud Paşa hareme gittikte o dahi hânesine gitmiştir. Bîçâre Yusuf Paşa'nın epeyce konsolidesi olduğu hâlde âmmenin zararından istifâde etmiş olmamak için kendi konsolidelerini bile tebdîl ettirememiştir." Ibid, 147.

involved in them. Therefore, he immediately returned to *Dersaadet* and explained in person what he thought was necessary for containing the uprisings.⁹¹ On the other hand, when he returned, he saw that the meetings were not over yet and the decision was about to be made. At that point, Cevdet states that when Mahmud Nedim asked him about his opinion on the moratorium, he clearly objected it as he did before. He adds that as a punishment for his opposition, Mahmud Nedim dismissed him from the ministry of justice and sent him to Syria as the governor.⁹²

This serious accusation of Cevdet against Mahmud Nedim clearly reflects to what extent Mahmud Nedim was considered at the time as the mere puppet of the infamous Russian Ambassador, General Ignatiev. Indeed, there is a consensus in the Ottoman historiography, as it is reflected in the memoirs and biographies written in the period, on the demise of British influence and the rise of profound involvement of Russia in Ottoman politics through Ignatiev's influence on Mahmud Nedim after the death of Âli Pasha.

On the nature of the relationship between Mahmud Nedim and Ignatiev, Basiretçi Ali Efendi argues that through Mahmud Nedim, Ignatiev was involved in all the decision-making processes in the Bâbîâli and manipulated them in accordance with the Russian interests. According to him, in the secret meetings that were taking place between them,

⁹¹ "Rumeli'nin revîş-i ahvâline nazaran Bulgaristan'da bir azîm ihtilâle isti'dâd olduğu ve âkilâne ve hakîmâne hareket olunur ise önü alınabileceği anlaşıldı. Lâkin Bulgarların efkârını idlâl eden Rusya'lılar olup hâlbuki Bâbîâlî'ce her ne tedbir ittihâz olunacak olsa Rusya elçisiyle mahremâne müzâkere olunacağı ma'lûm olduğundan hakaayık-ı ahvâle dâir Bâbîâlî'ye bir şey yazmağa cesâret edemedim. Hemen Dersaadet'e avdet edip de şifâhen arz-ı m â-fi'z-zamîr ederek tedabir-i mümkinine icrâsına teşebbüs etmeği münâsib gördüm; ve bizim Rumeli canibine ihracımızdan garaz-ı aslî Mahmud Paşa'nın umûr-ı mâliyyece musammemi olan husûsâtın müzâkeresinde bulunmamaktan ibâret olup ol esnâda bu işe bir karâr verilmiş olduğunu dahi işittim." Ibid, 151.

⁹² "Meğer mâliye işi henüz hitâm bulmamış. Mahmud Paşa tekrar efkârımı sordukta yine muhâlif re'yde olduğumu söyledim. Bunun üzerine artık bizim Meclis-i vükelâ'dan ibracımız îcâb-ı hâlden görülmekle hemen Adliye nezâretinden azlimiz ile uhdemize Sûriye vilâyeti tevcih buyruldu ve bu tebeddül bence mûcib-i memnûniyyet oldu." Ibid, 151.

Mahmud Nedim asked Ignatiev about what policy to employ and opened up to him all the state secrets.⁹³

On the other hand, according to Midhat Cemal and Ahmed Sâib, Mahmud Nedim was not the only source through which Ignatiev penetrated into the “veins” of the Ottoman State. They argue that even the Şeyhülislam, Hasan Fehmi Efendi, was under the influence of Ignatiev. Midhat Cemal even claims that Şeyhülislam Hasan Fehmi Efendi was trying to convince Ignatiev that he was as dear to him as his own son.⁹⁴

Thus, in the Ottoman historiography, the two catastrophic events of the late 1870s that caused the alienation of the Ottoman Empire in the international arena to an extent that was never experienced throughout the Tanzimat period, namely the moratorium and the Balkanian uprisings were considered as the result of Russian manipulation through Ignatiev’s influence on the Porte. Ahmed Sâib explicitly argues that the Balkanian revolts were a conspiracy planned by Ignatiev with the cooperation of Mahmud Nedim.⁹⁵

⁹³ “(...) Rusya Devleti’nin Dersaâdet sefir-i kebîri Ceneral İgnatyev, Mahmud Nedim Paşa’nın urûkuna kadar hulûl etmesiyle devletin umûr-ı siyâsiyyesine ve Bâbîâlî’nin mukadderâtına kadar müdâhale eylemesi ve esrâr-ı devleti Ceneral İgnatyef’e açması, mesâlih-i devlet husûsunda Rusya Devleti sefirisinden muâvenet beklemesi Mahmud Nedim Paşa’nın seyyi’ât-ı ahvâliyyesinden ve ikâmet-i mütevâliyesinden ileri gelmiştir.” Basiretçi Ali Efendi, “İstanbul’da Yarım Asırlık Vekayi-i Mühimme,” 94.

⁹⁴ “Ve, Rusya, padişahı; Rusya sadrîâzamı; Rusya, şeyhülislâmı...” “Şeyhülislâm Hasan Fehmi Efendi ise Rus elçisine yemin ediyordu ki onu, kendi evlâdı Haydar kadar severmiş ve bir gözü Haydar, bir gözü de *Moskofelçisi* imiş.” Kuntay, v. 2, s. 763 “herkes hilâfet dahi yine generalin taht-ı nüfûzunda bulunup bu zâtın emri her şeye hâkim-i mutlakı.” Ahmet Sâib, “Vaka-i Sultan Abdülaziz”, 153.

⁹⁵ Binâenaleyh sefir için yalnız bir şey kalmıştı ki bu da şu mertebeye gelen ahvâlden lâyıkı vechle istifâde edebilmek cihetiydi. İgnatyef böyle fırsatları kaçırarak adamlardan değildi. Mahmud Nedim Paşa, ikinci def’a olarak sadârete gelir gelmez, evvela nice kuvvetiyle maksad-ı aslî olan maddeye yüklendi. Verdiği işaret üzere evvelce tertib olunan plan mucebince Devlet-i aliyye’nin Rumeli kıt’asının öteki ucunda bulunan Hersek kıt’asını isyâna kaldırdı” Ibid, 153-154.

This pattern in the Ottoman historiography, namely attributing the catastrophic events to the foreign intrigues in alliance with the local interest groups was not unprecedented. According to the memoirs and other historical writings cited above, this was also a powerful means to demean political rivals in a time when the established status quo was falling apart and new political constellations were being formed.

§ 3.4 The Founding Narrative of the Hamidian Era: Ahmet Mithat's *Üss-i İnkılâp*

In his *Üss-i İnkılâp* (1877) Ahmet Mithat mainly deals with the period between the Crimean War of 1854 and the beginning of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 and focuses primarily on the period after the death of Âli Pasha in 1871. For according to him, with the death of Âli Pasha the Ottoman Empire had been devoid of capable bureaucrats like Reşit and Âli Pashas who could carry diplomatic relations with European statesmen in accordance with the interests of the Ottoman Empire and resist the palace at the same time.⁹⁶ What distinguishes Ahmet Mithat's *Üss-i İnkılâp* from the other narratives we cited above is its systematic analysis of the 1870s with specific stress on the idea that it was a distinguished period in the Ottoman history and his clear statement on why he attempted at writing a historical analysis.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ “Âli Paşa merhum ıslahat-ı dâhiliye vesilesiyle saltanat-ı seniye-i Osmaniye’yi tazyik ve izaçtan hali kalmayan Avrupa’ya pek makul mübahesat ile bir yandan meram anlattığı gibi diğer taraftan Abdülaziz Han merhumun şiddet-i mutritesini teskin ile uğraşıyordu. Onun vefatından sonra ise hakan-ı merhuma meram anlatarak yolsuz yerlerde gösterdiği lüzumsuz şiddetlerin önünü alacak ir kimse bulunabilmek şöyle dursun, ez-cümle Mahmud Nedim Paşa efkar-ı şahanede olan ifrat-ı şiddete bir kat daha inbisat vererek umur-ı dahiliyyeyi hercümerç eylediği cihetle münasebat-ı diplomatikiyyede olan nezaketi hüsn-i muhafaza imkanı elden kaçırılmıştır.” Ahmed Midhat Efendi “Üss-i İnkılâp,”¹²⁸.

⁹⁷ For a discussion on Ahmet Mithat's political thoughts, see Burak Onaran, “Ahmet Mithat Efendi”, *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce (Cumhuriyet’e Devreden Düşünce Mirası Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet’in Birikimi)*, C. 1, (İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul 2002).

Interestingly enough, in the preface to his book (*Arz-ı Teşekkür ve İtiraf-ı Acz*), he explicitly states that Sultan Abdülhamid II had ordered him to write a historical analysis of “this period of reform” in order to reveal the causes and consequences of the great events of the period for the benefit of the generations to come. He acknowledges that it is usually considered that for a solid analysis of the causes and consequences of the great events of a historical period, one needs time to see them clearly from a certain distance. On the other hand, he claims that this particular principle in history writing essentially originates from the times that “rigorous thinkers” were under the oppression of despotic regimes. According to Ahmet Mithat, since Sultan Abdülhamid was a rigorous soul himself, he was quite aware of this particular problem in history writing and ordered him to pen his narrative with the utmost autonomy, sticking to the facts without any concern.⁹⁸

Bearing the motivation behind it in my mind, it is striking to see how Ahmet Mithat’s narrative in his *Üss-i İnkılâp* was delicately tailored to remove the shadow of the catastrophic events of the late 1870s from the reign of the newly enthroned Sultan Abdülhamid who had found himself at the zenith of a series of complicated crises that had been escalated into the financial downfall and the diplomatic isolation of the Empire, and on top of it, in a devastating war with Russia. Although he more or less repeats what was said in the narratives of the authors we cited above, one particular point specifically distinguishes his narrative from its counterparts. In his effort to absolve Abdülhamid from the sins of his predecessors, he does not abstain from targeting Abdülaziz himself, right along with Mahmud Nedim Pasha.

He argues that his pride and self-glorification had reached the extent that apart from realizing the widespread dissent among the people as well as the bureaucrats regarding his Grand Vizier’s policies and paying attention to the gravity of the financial and diplomatic crises of the empire, he employed himself in “inventing new rituals of greeting of the sultan.” According to him, what made Sultan Abdülaziz an accomplice to the

⁹⁸ Ibid, 16-17.

sins of Mahmud Nedim Pasha was his appointment to the Grand Vizierate for a second term despite all the resentment and dissent against him in the public opinion and also within the ranks of the bureaucracy. He claims that in so doing Abdülaziz had made himself responsible for the catastrophes that Mahmud Pasha brought to the Empire. The sultan who felt as if he was unleashed from the hindrances that Âli Pasha had built against his “despotic desires”, indulged himself with Mahmud Pasha’s flattery.⁹⁹

Regarding the financial condition of the Empire, Ahmet Mithat seems to argue that the financial breakdown of the empire was not an unsolvable predicament, nor an irreversible fate. We can argue that his optimistic tone was to mean that the financial breakdown was only a consequence of the reckless wrongdoings of the bureaucrats of the reign of Abdülaziz and his excessive luxury. Accordingly, he seems to argue that the new sultan could easily overcome what seemed to the Ottoman and European public as a predicament.

In that sense, Ahmet Mithat had a simple formula. According to him, although in the 1870s the empire ended up with a considerable amount of foreign debt and treasury bills (interest-bearing debt securities), the Ottoman state could overcome dire straits “with a little effort,” for the “national resources of wealth” were not yet touched and utilized properly. He claims that if they were to be utilized properly, the state would not only be able to pay its debts without further borrowing but also acquire enough sources to implement the long-pursued reforms.¹⁰⁰ It is striking to see how “turning to the untouched national resources” as a discursive strategy in times of deep financial crisis in the Turkish political history was employed also in the crisis of 1870s.¹⁰¹

Ahmet Mithat follows that there were three necessary measures in order to enhance the financial condition of the state, even to the extent

⁹⁹ Ibid, 135-136.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 110-111.

¹⁰¹ For the global interest in the Ottoman “untouched resources” see, Necla Geyikdağı, *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire: International Trade and Relations 1854-1914*. (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2011.)

that if they were to be achieved, “there would be no doubt” that the Ottoman state could have reached “the first world economies.”¹⁰² As we mentioned above, Ahmet Mithat’s first condition was the proper utilization of the national resources. He argued that the Ottoman state which dominates over wide forests, profound mines, and navigable seas and rivers; enjoys a geographic advantage that allows to least-cost trade could have easily developed in the fields of industry, trade, and agriculture if the statesmen paid the necessary attention to the utilization of national resources. His second point was the centralization of the tax revenues through eliminating local corruption which prevented the tax revenues from reaching the central treasury. Finally, he suggested cutting off excessive state expenditures and establishing austerity. These last two points were long-pursued desires of the Tanzimat period. He himself acknowledges that these were “so obvious measures” that “it was impossible for one not to understand them if one just had a look at the conditions of the country,” and “they were touched upon in several edicts throughout the Tanzimat period.”¹⁰³

On the other hand, his point was to stress that although there were obvious and long-term solutions to the financial crises of the empire, the high state bureaucracy tended to exploit the tax-paying people, employ temporary monetary policies, and resort to foreign borrowing. Although like his contemporaries, he primarily glorifies Reşit and Âli Pashas and targets Mahmud Nedim Pasha as the sole responsible for the economic, political, and international crises that the empire experienced in the 1870s, his narrative allows us to see how those crises were intertwined with each other and conceived by the contemporaries as such. Within a short passage, he clearly demonstrates the intricate nature of the political, military, economic, and diplomatic crises of the period of 1875-1876 and allows us to understand why in the Ottoman historiography this particular period is conceived and named as “the period of crisis.”

¹⁰² For a discussion on the economic ideals of the Tanzimat period, see C. Clay, “Western Banking and the Ottoman Economy before 1890: a Story of Disappointed Expectations”, *Journal of European Economic History* 28, no.3, (Winter 1999): 471. Zafer Toprak,

¹⁰³ Ibid, 112-113.

According to him, the military expenses for the Herzegovina uprising of 1875 had been created an unbearable burden to the state treasury. Moreover, as the government repealed a one-fourth of the tithe since the military recruitment for the suppression of the Herzegovina uprising had already been an excessive burden to the people, the only solid source of state incomes was diminished considerably. When this catastrophic situation was written and discussed exhaustively in all newspapers, the price of Ottoman state bonds had experienced a sharp decline.

Ahmet Mithat follows that, when the state could not find a new source to pay the annual interest of the debt installment for the year 1875, the government had decided on a moratorium and this particular decision had devastated the already fragile financial credibility of the Ottoman Empire. Finally, the dethronement of Sultan Abdülaziz and the escalation of the Herzegovina uprising into a war with Serbia, Montenegro, and eventually with Russia had made even the moratorium plan impossible to implement. Eventually, according to Ahmet Mithat, the Ottoman Empire had ended up with a full-scale war with Russia, no financial credibility to finance the military costs, and in total isolation from its allies, i.e. Britain and France, to support it against Russia, as they did in the Crimean War of 1854.¹⁰⁴

Regarding the isolation of the Empire, like his contemporaries, Ahmet Mithat too targets the Russian General. According to him, before he conspired the Herzegovinian uprising and the moratorium decision, he lobbied the European states that the Ottoman Empire was in such a situation that could not be improved with any kind of reforms and the reform promises of the Porte were only "lies to extort money from the European states." Accordingly, Ahmet Mithat claims that Ignatiev suggested that the annihilation of the Ottoman Empire or at least salvaging the Balkan Christians from the empire would be better than wasting more European money on the barren reform projects. He argues that since the British government was an old and frank ally of the Ottoman state, it would not

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 122-123.

fall for the Russian General's propaganda, but that was not the case for other European states.¹⁰⁵

Concerning the Andrassy Note, Ahmet Mithat again shares the general public opinion which conceived the Porte's acceptance of the reform project suggested by the League of Three Emperors as a serious matter of sovereignty. In fact, he even targets the Porte's negotiations with the Serbian rebels and the recognition they acquired from the Porte as if they were a legitimate state. According to him, the only result of the Porte's acceptance of the Note was the open acknowledgment of the Ottoman state that "it had lost its way in the valley of diplomacy" and the fact that it could no longer be able to govern the Balkanian territories. He argues that the Andrassy Note was actually a precursor of the Treaty of Berlin (1878), through which the Ottoman state would lose almost all the political sovereignty in the Balkanian territories, and it was unacceptable at all in the beginning.¹⁰⁶

Ahmet Mithat's motivation for writing his book, i.e. absolving the public image of the newly enthroned sultan from the responsibility of the crises he found himself in by attributing it to the malpractice of his predecessors, perfectly reveals in his narrative on the connection between the Andrassy Note (1876) and the Berlin Treaty (1878). This was also an illuminating sample of the "inheriting a wreck from the former government" discourse in the Ottoman-Turkish political history.

Like Ahmed Cevdet, Ahmet Mithat also seems to be highly concerned with public opinion. According to him, as much as the European public opinion, the Ottoman public opinion was agitated regarding the spread of the Herzegovina uprising to Bulgaria. He points out that Mahmud Nedim and Abdülaziz had ignored the news from the Balkans demanding additional troops and instead, tend to reform projects on local governance. According to the new project, Bulgarian *nahiyes* would be governed by local councils that would be selected according to the ethnic majority

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 129.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 130.

of each *nahiye*.¹⁰⁷ Ahmet Mithat claims that the negotiations of peace and the new local governance plan were considered by the Ottoman public opinion as delivering the Ottoman sovereignty in the region to the hands of rebels. He again targets General Ignatiev and claims that in order to further isolate the Ottoman state from its European allies, he fabricated rumors that the agitated Turks in Istanbul were in preparation to attack the non-Muslim population and the “gun shops were plundered.” Ahmet Mithat argues that Ignatiev’s plan was to frame the public dissent against Mahmud Nedim due to his “traitorous” policies regarding the Balkanian uprisings as the Muslim public’s rage against the non-Muslim population. Therefore he tries to reject this “propaganda” and claims that the rage of public opinion was directed only towards Mahmud Nedim and Sheihk-ul Islam Hasan Fehmi Efendi who were considered as the puppets of Russian interests. In order to prove his argument, he claims that the “*talebe-i ulum*” in Istanbul gathered in the main squares of Istanbul were appeased when Mahmud Nedim and Sheihk-ul Islam Hasan Fehmi Efendi had been dismissed from their posts, without causing any harm to the non-Muslim population in Istanbul.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, it is striking that he does not hold back from targeting Abdülaziz, unlike his contemporaries, and argues that according to the public opinion, Abdülaziz was in the service of Russian interests to such an extent that he could no longer trust his own soldiers and demanded *Mosko*troops to guard himself against his own people.¹⁰⁹ Since the task of writing a historical analysis regarding the period was assigned to Ahmet Mithat by Abdülhamid himself, it can be argued that Ahmet

¹⁰⁷ For Bulgarian struggles for political independence, see Thomas Meininger, *The Formation of a Nationalist Bulgarian Intelligentsia 1835-1878* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987)

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 140-142.

¹⁰⁹ “Sultan Abdülaziz Han hazretlerinin de nefsi-i hümayunlarını muhafaza için Rusya tarafından Dersaadet’e otuz bin kadar Moskof askeri celp etmek tedarikinde bulunduğu dahi efvah-ı nâsa düşünce artık halk Mahmut Nedim Paşa’yı hıyanetle bi’l-itham makam-ı sadareten tardına mecburiyet görüldü.” Ibid, 141.

Mithat's assaults against Abdülaziz were supported by the sultan's approval. Accordingly, it gives us an idea on the extent of Abdülhamid's anxiety of building his own public image at a time when public opinion was conceived as having an efficient, and also concerning, political power.

In conclusion, we can argue that, on the hand, the new sultan had to separate himself from the catastrophes of the 1870s which almost brought the empire at the verge of a total financial, diplomatic and military breakdown, and on the other hand, the high bureaucrats of the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz and the political actors among intellectuals had to settle in the new regime that, as of the 1880s, would be considered as a breakthrough from the Tanzimat period and also from the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz. Accordingly, they built their narratives on the 1870s in a way to put the responsibility on the shoulders of the legitimate targets of the period, i.e. Mahmud Nedim Pasha, the Russian Ambassador General Ignatiev, and to an extent Sultan Abdülaziz.

A Regime Crisis Reflected in Diplomacy: Mahmud Nedim's Counter-Narrative

Üss-i İnkılâbın muharririnin dâire-i hakkâniyetden sad merhale ba'îd olan iddiâsı vecihle haydi Mahmûd Nedîm Paşa Rusya sefâretine riâyet göstermiş ve Avusturya devletinin makâlâtına aldanmış olsun ve Reşid Paşa ve Ali Paşa merhûmunların gâile çıkarmayub fakat âsâyış eylemek mesleğinde bulunsun. Bu mesleğin netîcesiyle teşdîd ve tecdîd-i mu'âmelât ile vurub kırmak ve Rusya devletini bednâm etmek ve Avusturya devletinin şu ta'ahhüdâtını tezyîf eylemek ve düvel-i fahîme süferâsının Dersa'âdet'den tebâüdlerine sebebiyet vermek meslek ve mişvâr-ı midhatiyyesinin netâyicini muhâkeme edelim.

– Mahmud Nedim Paşa, *Müdafaanâme*

As I have discussed in the Chapter 3, Mahmud Nedim Pasha was portrayed in the contemporary sources as a vicious political figure who had destroyed the political, administrative, economic, and diplomatic achievements of the Tanzimat period. He was constructed in these contemporary narratives as the scapegoat for the disasters in the Empire in late 1870s. On the other hand, above all of his so-called misdeeds and traitorous policies, what made him one of the most detested bureaucratic figures of the late Ottoman history¹¹⁰ was his position vis-à-vis the power that the bureaucrats has gained during the Tanzimat period. Moreover, from his point of view, the failure of Tanzimat bureaucracy in implementing the reform promises was also the main cause of Ottoman Empire's isolation from Europe at a time when Ottomans were led by an uncontrolled bureaucracy to perish in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78.

In this chapter, I will argue that the essence of the critiques, to use a light term, directed towards Mahmud Nedim regarding his moratorium decision, his policies in face of the Balkan insurrections, and his so-called service to the Russian cause was his keeping the powerful high bureaucrats of Bâb-ı Âli out of the decision making processes in a time when vital policies were about to be made in the economic, diplomatic, and political spheres of the Empire. In this framework, my main point is that what was unacceptable for the high bureaucrats of Bâb-ı Âli was Mahmud Nedim's attempt to by-pass the decision-making processes of Bâb-ı Âli which was built on the principle of a rational-legal bureaucratic structure. This was the critical point on which fierce political rivals, such as Ahmet Cevdet and Mithat came together against Mahmud Nedim. As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, Mahmud Nedim was constructed in the contemporary sources, as the Ottoman Grand Vizier who

¹¹⁰ İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal argues that Mahmud Nedim Paşa was without debate one of the most hated figures of the Ottoman history: "En büyük bedbahtlığı -haklı haksız- tan ü teşnie uğrayarak kabul-i âmmeye mazhar olamaması ve tarihte iyi bir nam bırakamamasıdır. Semere-i hayat, zikr-i cemile nailiyettir. Ondan mahrum olunca hayatın ne kıymeti kalır?" Mahmut Kemal İnal, *Son Sadrazamlar*, vol 1, (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1982), 313.

destroyed the most essential principle of the Tanzimat period, i.e., limiting the sultan's power and building a rational-legal bureaucratic state structure.

§ 4.1 A Theoretical Comparison of *Âyine-i Devlet* (1862) and *Müdafaanâme* (1878)

I will also try to establish Mahmud Nedim's political position within the heating clash of monarchists and pro-Tanzimat bureaucrats of late Tanzimat era through making a comparison between his theoretical critiques of Tanzimat in *Âyine-i Devlet* (1862) and his arguments in *Müdafaanâme* in his defense against his contemporaries. My main argument is that Mahmud Nedim's critical position vis-à-vis the ideal state structure of Tanzimat was the main cause for him being declared as the scapegoat of the crisis of 1870s. I will argue that the accusations directed against him by his contemporaries and his defensive position reflect, in essence, a regime crisis in the late-Tanzimat political sphere of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, I will discuss, specifically, his analyses of the position of the Empire in the international arena in relation with his regime critique. In so doing, I will also try to show that his so-called pro-Russian position can be considered in relation with his critique of Tanzimat bureaucracy. For, he criticizes Tanzimat bureaucrats' populist policies which demonized Russia. According to him, their populist policies isolated the empire from the European powers and led the Empire into a catastrophic war with Russia in 1877.

Through analyzing Mahmud Nedim's political treatises, I will also try to emphasize that the late Ottoman historiography embraced the narratives of Mahmud Nedim's accusers without bringing his detailed texts into the discussion. This attitude contributed to the reductionist discussion that regarded the history of late Ottoman political thought and practice within the limited scope of the debate on modernist vs. conservative,

pro-Tanzimat vs. anti-Tanzimat, monarchist vs. liberal political figures.¹¹¹ In fact, Uygur Aydemir (2019) is the first to bring Mahmud Nedim's both texts into the discussion in a way to challenge the binary opposition in the current historiography.¹¹²

§ 4.2 Mahmud Nedim's Critique of the "Uncontrolled Bureaucracy" and His Alternative to the Ideal State Structure of the Tanzimat Period

To repeat the main argument of this thesis, when I consider the late 1870s as a crisis period, I suggest to regard this period as a medium where political cleavages were activated and revealed in a more crystalized fashion. For, in that period, the political status quo was shattered and formative opportunities to build a new status quo came along. Indeed, in analyzing Mahmud Nedim's political treatise *Âyine-i Devlet* (1862), Butrus Abu Manneh discusses his tenure in Grand Vizierate after the death of Ali Pasha as a "rise of a current in Ottoman politics that had been suppressed in the 1860s, when Ali and Fuad dominated the Porte."¹¹³ In that sense, Abu Manneh was the first in pointing out Mahmud Nedim's position in the heating monarchist and pro-bureaucratic cleavage in the 1870s. Based on his treatise and his policies during his grand vizierate, Abu Manneh constructs Mahmud Nedim as the leading monarchist

¹¹¹ For a detailed analysis of the clash between modernist and conservative bureaucrats before and after the First Constitutional Period see Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 221-239.

¹¹² I am so thankful to Uygur Aydemir who kindly shared with me his unpublished PhD dissertation on the political career and ideology of Mahmud Nedim Pasha. His meticulous study primarily guided me in building this chapter. Uygur Aydemir, "Mahmud Nedim Pasha's Critique of the Tanzimat Bureaucracy".

¹¹³ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Sultan and the Bureaucracy: The Anti-Tanzimat Concepts of Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Pasa", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 3 (1990): 257.

among the late Ottoman statesmen and as the “precursor of the Hamidian era.”

Abu Manneh highlights the principles of limiting the sultan’s power and establishing the rule of law as the essence of the Tanzimat ideal. These two principles led to the “gradual shift of the locus of power from the palace to the Porte, i.e., to the bureaucracy.”¹¹⁴ He shares the consensus in the Ottoman historiography that the ascendancy of bureaucracy in the Ottoman state structure lasted until Ali’s death in 1871¹¹⁵ and after that, Mahmud Nedim turned against “what the Tanzimat stood for and worked to undermine those achievements when he became grand vizier.”¹¹⁶ According to Abu Manneh, Mahmud Nedim’s treatise builds on three main criticisms regarding the Tanzimat period. Based on these criticisms, Abu Manneh positions Mahmud Nedim on the anti-Tanzimat camp. Mahmud Nedim’s main emphasis is on the role of the sultan in the affairs of state. He constructs the ideal sultan as a “determined and capable” monarch who personally attends the state affairs and does not allow state officials take control of the state structure whether they belong to the *ulema* class, the bureaucracy or the army. His second emphasis, according to Abu Manneh, is on the “communal zeal” which bonds the community to the sultan personally, not to a rational-bureaucratic state structure. According to him, the ideal state structure of the Tanzimat which was based on a legal-rational bureaucracy damaged the communal zeal. According to Abu Manneh, by the term “zeal of community”, Mahmud Nedim points out the religious sentiment that bonds the Muslim community to the sultan, based on the sultan’s position as the caliphate. Thirdly, Abu Manneh focuses on Mahmud Nedim’s criticism regarding the “mania” of applying “European practices to the Ottoman sultanate.”¹¹⁷ These three points makes Mahmud Nedim a full-scale conservative who was fundamentally against the ideals of Tanzimat. According to him, in *Âyine-*

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ For a discussion on the bureaucratic ascendancy in the Tanzimat period, see Ali Akyıldız, *Osmanlı Bürokrasisi ve Modernleşme*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 15-31.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 258.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 260-262.

i Devlet, Mahmud Nedim laid down the policies that Sultan Abdülhamid would implement in his reign. He points out Mahmud Nedim's emphasis on the change in bureaucrats', state officials', and common people's understanding of state and state affairs and how this understanding damaged the state structure in the long run. Rather than a religio-communal center, as the observer of faith and protector of believers embodied by the sultan himself; the Tanzimat state was seen by the state officials and the public as a mechanical structure and a source of material gain:

We make new laws, he wrote, by translating paragraphs from European laws and putting them together. The ordinances of the *şeri'at* (Muslim law) are no longer observed, and are even regarded as a hindrance to the running of the state. The responsibility for all this, writes Nedim, falls on the new bureaucratic class, which has usurped power and now controls the state's destiny. The reforms have allowed this class to increase tremendously in both number and power. The government has numerous ministries. In the past, one secretariat sufficed for the Porte; now each ministry has its own secretariat, not to mention provincial offices. The cost of maintaining this inflated bureaucracy is enormous: all of these officials receive high monthly salaries from the treasury. No one in Istanbul will teach his son a trade or train him in commerce any longer because every parent wants his son to be a government official. As a result, the treasury has suffered greatly. The ulema, whether in active service or not, receive high salaries as well. During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, taking money out of the treasury was not easy, and there was no need to ask the merchants of Galata or foreigners for loans. This new class of bureaucrats was extravagant and corrupt.¹¹⁸

In that sense, Gökhan Kaya also points out the change in the conceptions of state and state affairs in the minds of state officials and of people.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 263.

He argues that what Mahmud Nedim tried to suggest in his treatise is another state ideal, opposite of the abstract and rational state ideal of Tanzimat.¹¹⁹ On the first level, this state ideal requires a personal bond between each member of the religio-social community and the sultan himself. On the second level, this person-to-person bond incites what Mahmud Nedim calls the “communal zeal” which is, according to him, the basis and essence of the ideal Ottoman community and the state structure. It can be argued that Mahmud Nedim’s fundamental opposition to the Tanzimat ideal is based on this very conceptions of community and state. For, alongside the legal-rational state ideal of the Tanzimat, these conceptions also impose a conception of legal-rational citizenship. According to this conception, citizenship was determined by law. Each citizen was attached to the state, i.e. the bureaucratic structure, through the medium of law, i.e., through obligations and rights. The meaning of the establishment of Meclis-i Vâlâ-yı Ahkâm-ı Adliye in 1838, from this point of view, was that every interaction between a citizen and the state would be predetermined and pre-established. It was a relationship based on laws, codes, and internal regulations of each specific department. In this framework, it would be no longer an interaction which changes depending on the specificities of cases, individuals, regional conditions, and personal relations.¹²⁰

Gökhan Kaya also highlights the legal regulations in 1840s which radically changed the relations of taxation and property between the sultan and his subjects. What he specifically emphasizes is that, through the new laws of taxation and property, the bureaucracy was officially declared that the central bureaucracy, rather than the sultan, had *the monopoly over the legitimate means* of tax collection and recruitment. This constituted the essence of the cleavage between the pro-Tanzimat statesmen and the “palace clique” as Gökhan Kaya puts the terms.¹²¹ When I discuss

¹¹⁹ Gökhan Kaya, “Bürokratik Nüfûza Karşı Monarşik Egemenliği Yeniden Kurgulamak Üzerine Bir Girişim: Mahmud Nedim Paşa’nın Görüşlerinde Ahlâk ve Devlet İdaresi”, *OTAM* 38, (Güz, 2015): 55-94.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 60.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 62-63.

in detail Mahmud Nedim's theoretical critiques in *Âyine-i Devlet* and how he applied his critiques in defending his policies in the *Müdafaanâme* in following section, I will demonstrate that according to Mahmud Nedim the above mentioned Tanzimat principle meant a fundamental change in the state structure and the relation between the people, state officials, and the state to an extent to constitute a regime crisis.

Before that, I will point out two important arguments Kaya puts forward in his article. Firstly, he argues that the change in the European balance of power had an impact on the sharpening of the opposition between the pro-Tanzimat and palace cliques after 1870. He rightfully emphasizes France's diminished diplomatic impact on the Bâb-ı Ali after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Together with Ali's death in 1871 who had a close diplomatic relationship with France, Britain and Russia has become prominent, and rival, diplomatic powers, both aiming to penetrate into Ottoman internal politics. Two great powers representing opposite political regimes had definitely an impact on the acceleration of the rivalry between pro-Tanzimat and absolutist Ottoman statesmen. The accusations against Nedim's pro-Russian policies need to be considered in this framework as Kaya also draws attention.¹²²

Another important emphasis in Kaya's article is on the structure of Mahmud Nedim's political treatise. He analyzes Mahmud Nedim's treatise within the framework of the classical Ottoman *siyasetname/nasihatname* tradition. According to him, what distinguishes Nedim's treatise from its classical counterparts is that he builds his treatise on moral principles (i.e., loyalty, justice, persistence, endeavor, patience) among which loyalty takes the first place, rather than justice. In contrast to classical *siyasetnames* which suggest that justice is the linchpin of any political structure, Mahmud Nedim emphasizes the role of loyalty.¹²³ I will discuss why he constructs loyalty as a cure for what he sees as a bureaucratic decadence in the Ottoman state in the following section. Before that, I will suggest that Mahmud Nedim's construction of his political treatise on five

¹²² Ibid, 65.

¹²³ Ibid, 76.

moral principles can be considered as a manifestation of his state ideal which I discussed above. Rather than seeing the state as a mechanistic structure (i.e., rational-legal bureaucracy), he theorizes the state as an organic-relational being. In other words, according to him, an ideal state constitutes of a moral monarch, whose morality manifests in his personal observance to state affairs, of moral subjects whose morality manifests in their fulfilling of their duties to their state and community, especially in critical moments such as wars or economic crises, with a communal zeal, and of moral state officials whose morality manifests in their performing their duties not because they are salaried officials¹²⁴ but because they feel that they have a responsibility in preserving the well-being of their state and people.

According to Mahmud Nedim, the morality of the people and the state officials which is the regulating principle in the relation between the state (i.e., the sultan), state officials, and the people results from a religious and communal zeal (*gayret-i diniyye ve milliyye*). On the other hand, this ideal state and society can only be substantiated, in Mahmud Nedim's theory, if the state is not only represented but also personally controlled by the sultan. Through his emphasis on religious zeal, he reconstructs a classical Islamic political system where the state and society were governed by the sultan personally, since it was his duty to observe his people and their affairs as they were trusted to him by God. The state was not to be governed by salaried officials whose only motivation is to achieve higher political statuses.¹²⁵

Therefore, in *Âyine-i Devlet*, Mahmud Nedim's essential goal is to set forth the principles of this ideal state through bringing examples from what he presents as the classical Ottoman system. Based on that, he criticizes the ideal state structure of the Tanzimat era whose essence was to

¹²⁴ For an analysis of the significance of a "bureaucracy of salaried officials" in the Tanzimat period, see Nadir Özbek, "Tax Farming in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Institutional Backwardness or the Emergence of Modern Public Finance?", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 49, no. 2 (2018): 219-45.

¹²⁵ Yakup Karataş, Demet Karasu, M. Kerem Karasu, eds., *Mahmud Nedim Paşa: Âyine ve Hasbihal (Bir Babıali Eleştirisi)*, (Konya: Eğitim Yayınevi, 2021): 32-72.

build a legal-rational, non-personal, abstract state through bureaucracy. According to Mahmud Nedim, however, the Tanzimat ideal ended up as the decadence of Ottoman state in the hands of those who imported this state ideal from Europe without understanding, or simply ignoring, the distinctive supportive conditions in Europe that made this ideal work in practice. According to him, they misused it in accordance with their personal political gains.¹²⁶

Now, I will bring another point of view to the discussion by mentioning Uygur Aydemir's analyses on Mahmud Nedim's political position. In his doctoral thesis, Uygur Aydemir challenges "the current historiography on the so-called Islamist tendencies of Mahmud Nedim and his text." He analyzes *Âyine-i Devlet* in detail, especially the first paragraph of the introduction section in which, according to him, the nuances of Mahmud Nedim's political view reveals.¹²⁷ He argues that if it is not truly understood, it is more likely to be reduced to a binary opposition, i.e., the modernists vs. the conservatives.¹²⁸

According to Aydemir, in this paragraph, Mahmud Nedim suggests three different types of sovereign:

[...] the first being restricted by law, while the second and third one, contrary to the first, not confined by law. The difference be-

¹²⁶ Ibid., 40-41.

¹²⁷ "Osmanlı Devleti, padişahın hüküm ve iradesinin sadece meclislerin açılışında veya vekillerin toplantılarında okunduğu resmi nutuklardan ibaret değildir. Osmanlı devleti vekilleri ise kendi iradeleri ve keyfi hareketleriyle yaptıkları işlerden kanuni sorumluluk altına girmezler ve halk da onların hatalarına karşı çıkamaz. Padişahın iradesine dayalı işler ise yasal dairenin sınırları dışına çıkmamalıdır. Bununla birlikte vekillerin de hareket ve icraatlarının keyfi olmaması gerekir. Bağımsız bir padişahın yönetimi kendi iradesine bağlıdır. Aşağıda da açıklanacağı üzere, emri altındakilerin sınırlarını bilmeleri ise güçlü bir padişahın yönetimdeki etkinliği ile yakından ilgilidir. Öte yandan gafil padişahlar, devlet adamlarının icraatlarından, halk ve memleketin durumlarından bihaberdir. Böyle bir vaziyette millet ve memleketin işleri tıpkı devlet adamlarının görüşleri gibi karmakarışık olur." Karataş et al. "Mahmud Nedim Paşa," 38.

¹²⁸ Aydemir, "Mahmud Nedim Pasha's Critique of the Tanzimat Bureaucracy," 51-98.

tween the second and the third is that the second type of sovereign takes initiative in politics but the third one does not take part in politics. However, in this hypothetical situation, the third one's indifference in politics is not because of a systematic obligation, as it would be in the case of a ceremonial sovereign under a rigid legal frame, but rather due to the sovereign's personal choice or lack of interest.¹²⁹

Aydemir asks the question of why the second type of sovereign cannot be implemented in the Ottoman context according to Mahmud Nedim. He argues that Mahmud Nedim suggests that the European political structures with their universal law and rational-legal bureaucracy could not be achieved in the Ottoman context, therefore the sultan needed to involve in the state affairs personally. On the other hand, he argues that Mahmud Nedim believed in the superiority of the first type over the second and third types.¹³⁰ In that sense, Mahmud Nedim bases his monarchist views on his critiques of Tanzimat modernization, which according to him based on a careless importation of European political structures. According to Mahmud Nedim, Tanzimat principles and laws had not been applied to the ministers and statesmen, therefore it led to a bureaucratic oligarchy, rather than a law-bounded state.¹³¹ In that sense, according to Aydemir, Mahmud Nedim's main criticism was not towards a liberal state but to the uncontrolled sovereignty of bureaucracy:

Mahmud Nedim explains what type of state and society the Ottoman Empire is: a state whose sovereign has not retreated to

¹²⁹ Ibid, 56.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 56.

¹³¹ "Esasında güçlü Avrupa devletlerinin usulleri tamamen uygulamaya konulsa ve onları güçlü kılan etkenler Osmanlı'da devrede tutulsaydı buna bir şey denilemezdi. Batılılaşma konusunda şöyle bir hata yapılmıştır ki Avrupa'nın her alanda faydalı olacak şeylerinden uzaklaşıp, büyük görünme ve hüküm sahibi olma konularında direktmek, Avrupalıymış gibi görünme çabaları ve neticesindeki taklitçilik devleti bu hale getirdi. Esasında Avrupa devletlerinde işler belirli kanun ve nizamlar altında yürütülmekte, amir ve memurlar da kanuni mesuliyetten kaçamamaktaydı." Karataş et al. "Mahmud Nedim Paşa," 40.

hold a merely a ceremonial position, and one in which whenever the sovereign shares the political power with his ministers, it results in the emergence of ministers who are not held responsible for their actions. Then, in the end, the problem is both a practical and a theoretical one: the law is not applied to the ministers and statesmen.

Once read carefully, it turns out that Mahmud Nedim's primary criticism is towards the political position of bureaucracy. He sees the bureaucracy as a power that should be contained. In Europe, bureaucracy, he thinks, is contained by law or by the people, or by both: "constant supervision of the people and the law." On the other hand, in the Ottoman Empire, he observes that bureaucratic reforms are conducted in such a way as to guarantee the superior position of the bureaucracy. [...] Indeed, according to Ottoman bureaucrats, this was the essence of the administrative reforms in the Tanzimat period. The nuance of Mahmud Nedim's point of view is that he sees this as something negative, since he believes that this provided the bureaucracy a limitless and unchallenged power. However, in a healthy society, according to Mahmud Nedim, there should exist not the rule of bureaucrats but the rule of law.¹³²

It can be argued, therefore, that this "nuance" was actually the underlying reason behind the radical accusations made against Mahmud Nedim by his contemporary statemen. In the following section, I will try to discuss Mahmud Nedim's critiques of Tanzimat principles practices in *Âyine-i Devlet* in relation with his analyses in his *Müdafaanâme* on the European balance of power. Since it will exceed the boundaries of this thesis to undertake a full-blown analysis of the two texts, I will restrict the scope of my discussion to demonstrate how an internal regime crisis affected Mahmud Nedim's diplomatic policies after France's defeat

¹³² Aydemir, "Mahmud Nedim Pasha's Critique of the Tanzimat Bureaucracy," 57.

against Prussia. When Mahmud Nedim was trying to implement the principles of his ideal state structure, Britain and Russia has become two rival powers aiming at penetrating into the Ottoman Empire.

In addition, I will try to discuss Mahmud Nedim's critiques of his opponents's populist political attitude which, according to him, manipulated the public opinion towards a pro-war position and caused a catastrophic war with Russia.

§ 4.3 Mahmud Nedim amidst a Regime Crisis and the Changing International Balance of Power

In defense of his policies regarding the Herzegovinian uprising, Mahmud Nedim begins with a historical analysis of the conditions of the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. In the root of the discontent in the Balkanian territories, that built up to the 1875 Herzegovina uprisings, he sees the widening gap between the sultan and his subjects, whether they be Muslims or non-Muslims. He points out the reign of Selim I as a representation of an ideal unity between the sultan and his subjects achieved through the sultan's personal attendance to the affairs of his people and the direct relationship between the two parties without any intermediaries such as an uncontrolled bureaucracy¹³³ This is a topic which he also discusses in detail in *Âyine-i Devlet*. He points out the changing attitude of non-Muslim subjects of the sultan towards the state after that so-called ideal unity broke due to the exploitative policies of

¹³³ "İşbu evânda medâr-ı muzafferiyet ve terakkiyât pâdişâh-i ma'âlî-penâhların bizzât ve bi'l-ittihâd mesâî ve himem-i aliyyesinden olduğu bedîhâtdan olmasıyla berâber ol asırlarda müslim ve gayr-i müslim mütesâviyen mazhar-ı imtiyâz ve itibâr olarak gayr-i müslimlerin hukûk-i müşterekeye nâiliyetle karîn-i ma'delet olmaları metbûları olan İstanbul İmparatorluğu'nun mezâlim-i müstevliyyesinden nefret ve tebâ'üdle Devlet-i Osmâniyye'ye kalben ve kâliben arz-ı mutâba'atlarını müstelzim olarak ve hükûmet-i Osmâniyye'de ise i'tisâfâtı mefkûd ve her cihetle imtiyâz ve itibârı mütesâviyen mevcûd bularak sahîhen birleşmelerinden husûle gelen cem'iyyet ve makderet ol asırların terakkiyâtına esbâb-ı kaviyyedir." Mahmud Nedim Paşa, "Sadr-ı Esbak Mahmud," 8.

local administrators and the sultan's lack of due attendance to the affairs of his subjects. According to him, when they were treated with justice, in accordance with the divine law, the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire had been in good service of their state in moments of crises such as wars.¹³⁴ In both texts, he points out a group of religious zealots who violated the rights of non-Muslims thinking wrongfully that it was a part of "holy war." According to him, it was a consequence of sultans' non-attendance to the political affairs. As a result, non-Muslim subjects were abandoned to the uncaring local administrators and bureaucrats. This was the root-cause of foreign intervention to the internal politics of the Ottoman Empire and non-Muslim Ottoman subjects' collaboration with the foreign forces.¹³⁵ In Mahmud Nedim's point of view, this broken unity of the sultan, his subjects and state officials reflects the main flaw in the Tanzimat state structure. The need for the rebuilding of this unity was

¹³⁴ Karataş et al. "Mahmud Nedim Paşa," 42.

¹³⁵ "İşte bu zulümler yabancı devletlerin Osmanlı'ya saldırımlarına kapı araladı. [...] Tarihe bakıldığında Osmanlı Devleti'nin ilk zamanlarında adaletle hükmedilen gayrimüslimlerin, aldıkları güzel hizmetler karşılığında savaş zamanlarında devlete nice yardımlar yaptıkları görülür. İslam toplumunda ortaya çıkan kimi bağnaz yaklaşımlar gayrimüslimlerin de ayrılıkçı eğilimlere kapılmasına yol açtı." Karataş et al. "Mahmud Nedim Paşa," 42. "Bir cümle-i mücmele ve ma'kûle ve mu'tebere şudur ki ezmine-i mütekaddime asırlarında hâl ve akd-i umûra muktedir ve hüsn-i karîne mazhar ma'delet-penâh pâdişâhların makderet ve himmetleri ve adâlet ve hikmetle efkâr-ı ittihâdî birleştiren tebaanın gayret ve mesâîleri terakkiyât-ı şevket-i devletin mebdâfisi olduğu misillü vükelâ ve ulemâ ve avene-i mütegalibinin istilâsında bulunan ve "söz ayağa düşürülmüş olan" asırların ve pâdişâhların gaflet ve mağlûbiyet ve hevâ ve hevese inhimâkları ve ale'l-husûs tebaa-i gayr-i müslime müsâvâtdan mahrûm ve dîn ayrılığı ile müttehem ve her nev' imtiyâz ve itibârdan me'yûs edilerek bunları ecânibe muhtâc etmekle ve dostluklarını bi-hakkın düşmanlıklara tahvîl eylemeğe sebep olan ta'assubâta mutâba'atları ve ezcümle yeniçeriler tebaa-i gayr-i müslimeden müretteb vaktiyle bir asker-i zafer-peyker ve mehâsin-eser iken bu askerlik ta'assubât sâikasıyla tebaa-i müslimeye kesb-i inhisâr etmiş ve bu inhisârın bî-günâh birçok tebaa-i gayr-i müslime kanlarını dökdürmeğe sebep olan efkâr-ı muta'assıbası dahî ezmine-i mutavassıtanın mesâvîsidir demekde sıhhat bulunabilir." Mahmud Nedim Paşa, "Sadr-ı Esbak Mahmud," 10.

the main reason behind his emphasis on the merit of loyalty in *Âyine-i Devlet*.

On the other hand, through these arguments on the conditions of non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, Mahmud Nedim was probably responding to the accusations made against him which claim that he was a religious zealot who advocates an Islamist monarchy as the ideal state structure for the Ottoman Empire. In that regard, Aydemir points out a letter of Mahmud Nedim to his “old acquaintance Richard Wood, the newly retired Consul General to Tunisia”, expressing his confusion that he was “accused of being a fanatic and a partisan of Russian policy” at the same time.¹³⁶ Therefore, in his *Müdafaanâme*, Mahmud Nedim was trying to prove on the one hand, that he was not a religious fanatic, and on the other hand, not a partisan of Russian policy. This perfectly reflects how an internal regime crisis was intertwined with diplomatic relations and with the tendencies of high bureaucrats in choosing foreign allies.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, one of the harshest critiques directed at Mahmud Nedim by his contemporaries was on his policy regarding the Herzegovina uprising. As Mahmut Kemal İnal points out, Abdülaziz had appointed him to the grand vizierate for the second time on his promise that he could appease the incidents if he had the authority. On the other hand, İnal argues, he was accused of recognizing the unruly rebels as legitimate counterparts at the expense of the dignity of the Empire.¹³⁷ On the other hand, in his defense, Mahmud Nedim accuses his opponents of being populists who aims to provoke the religious zeal of the common people and to appear as true observers of the divine law in order to achieve popular support and higher political statuses. He argues that their irresponsible calls for war led the Empire to be bounded by international treaties with heavy conditions and ended up with foreign intervention in the Ottoman Empire. This was also a point which he discussed both in *Âyine-i Devlet* and *Müdafaanâme*. While he discusses this

¹³⁶ Aydemir, “Mahmud Nedim Pasha’s Critique of the Tanzimat Bureaucracy”, 212-213.

¹³⁷ Mahmut Kemal İnal, “Son Sadrazamlar,” 294-296.

argument in *Âyine-i Devlet* in a rather theoretical fashion,¹³⁸ in *Müdafaanâme* he directly points out the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War and accuses pro-war statesmen such as Mithat as irresponsible political figures who exploited the retreatment of the sultan from the state affairs. He responds to the critiques regarding his so-called submissive response to the Andrassy Note and argues that the policy of those who rejected diplomatic channels and called for war led to the massive losses in the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War. He argues that although he was accused of being in the service of Russian cause, he was following the diplomatic attitude of Reşid Paşa. According to him, the pro-war party allowed Russians to take what they wanted from the empire and caused the Muslim people to perish in the war. Although they were seemed as defending the sovereign rights of the Empire against the Russian atrocities during the Balkan incidents between the Herzegovinian uprising of 1874 and the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman war, they caused the total loss of Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkans.¹³⁹ According to Mahmud Nedim, this was a bitter

¹³⁸ “Kimi sonu belli olmayan savaşlar sırasında barış anlaşması gündeme geldiğinde devletin gücü hakkındaki yanlış fikirlerinden dolayı savaşa devam yönünde eğilim göstermişlerdir. Neticede orduların hezimetini gerçekleştirdiğinde ise barıştan yana tavır alarak düşman ne isterse vermeye mecbur olmuşlardır. Mecburiyet altında imzalanan bu anlaşmalarda savaşılacak devletler, Osmanlı Devleti’nin elini kolunu bağlayarak adeta devletin bağımsızlığını da ayaklar altına almışlardır.” Karataş et al. “Mahmud Nedim Paşa,” 57.

¹³⁹ “Üss-i İnkılâbın muharririnin dâire-i hakkâniyetden sad merhale ba’id olan iddiâsı vecihle haydi Mahmûd Nedîm Paşa Rusya sefâretine riâyet göstermiş ve Avusturya devletinin makâlâtına aldanmış olsun ve Reşid Paşa ve Ali Paşa merhûmunların gâile çıkarmayub fakat âsâyîş eylemek mesleğinde bulunsun. Bu mesleğin netîcesiyle teşdîd ve tecdîd-i mu’âmelât ile vurub kırmak ve Rusya devletini bednâm etmek ve Avusturya devletinin şu ta’ahhüdâtını tezyîf eylemek ve düvel-i fahîme süferâsının Dersa’âdet’den tebâüdlerine sebebiyet vermek meslek ve mişvâr-ı midhatiyyesinin netâyicini muhâkeme edelim. Mahmûd Nedîm Paşa’nın iki devlete aldanub ihtiyâr eylediği meslekden farazâ Devlet-i Aliyye’nin bazı hukûkuna dokunulmak seyyiesiyle Avusturya ve umûmen düvel-i Avrupa teklîfâtını red ile bir başına Devlet-i Aliyye’yi Rusya gibi bir düşmanın pençesine atmakda husûle gelen ve elyevm âlemin gözü önünde bulunan izmihlâlât muhâkeme olununca hangi teşebbüsâtın netîcesi hayırlı ve ma’kûl idüğü nümâyân olur. Yani Memâlik-i Mahrûse’den olan Rumeli kıt’âsı bütün bütün elden çıktı.

example of what an uncontrolled bureaucracy who cannot be held responsible neither by law nor by the people could lead the state into.

In fact, looking at his defense regarding his alleged support for the Russian cause, he seemed like he was aware of the changing balance of power in the international arena after France's defeat against Prussia in 1870. He defends himself arguing that he followed Reşid's diplomatic policy and presents a detailed analysis of European powers' and Russia's positions regarding the Ottoman Empire. He presents himself as a careful diplomat as opposed to his rivals (such as Mithat) who, on the one hand, carelessly import European political structures, and on the other hand, provoke the public opinion against Russia in the guise of preserving Ottoman sovereignty and Muslim communal dignity. According to him, their populist aggressiveness caused the international isolation of the empire. He suggests that keeping Russians as allies rather than enemies was the prudent policy, although it was not the popular position. He seems as if he was trying to put firmly that he was aware of the Russian policies regarding the Ottoman Balkans, but the Empire needed to follow a moderate policy rather than destroying the diplomatic ways through rejecting international dialogue. In this context, he juxtaposes the Andrassy Note of 1875 and the results of 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War regarding their results in the Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkans.

At that point, Mahmud Nedim not only accuses pro-Tanzimat statesmen of leading the empire to perish in the Russian War, but he also argues

Anadolu'nun Kars ve Bâyezîd ve Batum gibi nukât-ı mühimmesi yedd-i istîlâ-yı düşmâna geçdi. Anadolu ve Rumeli'nin silâh tutan yiğitlerinin ekseri şehîd ve esîr oldu. Ve Rumeli kıt'âsında bulunan ehl-i İslâm'ın nüfûs-u zükûr ve inâsı terk-i evtân ve emvâl ve emlâk eyleyerek muhâcirîn beliyesine uğradı. Ve bu muhâcirînin pek çoğu telef ve mün'adim olarak millet-i İslâmiyyenin nüfûs-u kesîresi muhârebâtta ve muhâcerâtta izâ'a olundu. Ve Anadolu ve Rumeli hakkında iler tutar şey kalmadı. Hazîne-i devlet batmak derecesine geldi. Elhâsıl bazı hukûk-ı cüziyye izâ'a olunmamalı der iken esâs devlet hercümerc olacak dereceye karîn edildi. Devlet ve milleti bitürüb bu hâle getirenlerin ef'âli Üss-i İnkılâb'da memdûh ve bu hâl-i felâkate gelmemek kâr ve efkârında bulunanların mazmûm olmasını devlet ve milletimiz düşünsün de ürcûfe-i medlûl Üss-i İnkılâb'ı onlar da muhâkeme eylesinler." Mahmud Nedim Paşa, "Sadr-ı Esbak Mahmud," 88.

repeatedly that the reform promises of pro-Tanzimat statesmen aiming to achieve European powers' support against Russia failed due to the incompetence and insincerity of the members of high bureaucracy (he abstains from mentioning names) and this failure caused the disappointment of European powers at the Ottoman reform attempts. He argues that European powers' main policy had always been preventing Russian atrocities against Ottoman Empire and keeping the Empire as a buffer zone against Russia. On the other hand, when the Empire could not implement what was promised to the European powers, it caused the isolation of the empire in the international arena.

He believed that this was the case when the promised reforms in the Treaty of Paris failed. He argues that this failure led to the abandonment of the Empire by the European powers against Russia in the war of 1877.¹⁴⁰ It seemed to Mahmud Nedim as a double failure. On the one hand, the rush on war in 1853 for "not giving concessions to the Russians with regard to the Sultan's Orthodox subjects for the sake protecting Ottoman independence"¹⁴¹ led to a devastating defeat against Russia. After that, the promised reforms in the Treaty of Paris regarding the conditions of Ottoman non-Muslim subjects ended up harming the Ottoman independence. And finally, the failure in the implementation of the promised reforms led to the isolation of the Empire from the European powers. In defense of his moderate policy vis-à-vis Russia, he also refers to the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-29 in the first chapter of his *Müdafaanâme*. He argues that the rush on war caused the infamous Treaty of Adrianople (1829). In the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-29, the Ottomans could not prevent the Russian advance and had to accept the conditions dictated by the

¹⁴⁰ For a discussion on the alienation of the Ottoman Empire from the Europe in the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877-1878, see Feroze A. K. Yasamee, "European Equilibrium or Asiatic Balance of Power? The Ottoman Search for Security in the Aftermath of the Congress of Berlin", in *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, edited by Peter Sluglett, M. Hakan Yavuz, (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2011), 56-78.

¹⁴¹ Aydemir, "Mahmud Nedim Pasha's Critique of the Tanzimat Bureaucracy", 204.

Russians including Ottoman acknowledgement of Greek independence.¹⁴²

He emphasizes also to the process that leads to the Crimean War and points out the contradiction between Reşid's prudent diplomatic policy and Âli's populist policy.¹⁴³ He refers to the Softa Incident of 1853 and argues that it was a result of Âli's provocation of the public opinion.¹⁴⁴ Obviously he was making an analogy to his and his opponents' contradictory claims. In fact, Aydemir highlights the similarity between the conditions of 1853 Softa Incident and 1876 Softa Incident which caused the dismissal of Mahmud Nedim from the Grand Vizierate:

Once the sources on the Softa Incident in 1853 are compared with those on the 1876 Softas Incident, several common points are revealed. For instance, in both events the softas were agitated by Russian aggression. In addition, in both events, the softas' reaction was to boycott education by even using the same phrases such as

¹⁴² "Ol vakit vücûh, esâs-ı devleti adâlet ve hüsn-i sıhhatle tahlîm ve tecdîd eylemek vecîbesini mühimsemeyerek ama müddet-i kalîlede tanzîm olunan bir taze asker ile Rusyalılara sefer açmak ve Edirne Mu'âhedeşi gibi bir zâyî'âta tesâdüfle gerilemek bahisleri pek meydânda iken Üss-i İnkılâb bu asrı dahî maksadına elverecek sûretde hâme-i beyâna getirmiş ve tarîk-i savâbı yitivermiş olması müdellel ve intihâbâtı mu'alleldir." Mahmud Nedim Paşa, "Sadr-ı Esbak Mahmud," 14.

¹⁴³ For Reşid's dipmocay during and after the Crimean War see, Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War, 1853-1856* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010.)

¹⁴⁴ "Ol vakit sadrâzam Dâmâd Mehmed Ali Paşa olub Reşîd Paşa merhûmun onunla mübâyet-i efkârı İngiltere sefir-i meşhûru Lord Canning Rusyalının redd-i metâlibine ısrârla Mehmed Ali Paşa'yı redd-i metâlibe icbâr etmesi ve Mençikof metâlibinde ısrâr eylemesi üzerine Mehmed Ali Paşa düşüb Reşîd Paşa nezâret-i hâriciyye geldikde İngiltereli evvelki şiddet-i mümâna'atı ta'dîl eylediği hâlde Mehmed Ali Paşa ihtirâ'âtından söz ayağa ve suhtelere düşürülerek nihâyet bu efkârın önü alınamayarak Rusyalılara cevâb-ı redd itâsıyla muhârebe kapusu açıldı. Pâdişâh-ı asrın ve Reşîd Paşa merhûmun efkârınca muhârebe menfûr iken Mehmed Ali Paşa'nın avâmca tesvîlâtı harbi açdığı artık Reşîd Paşa ve İngiltere sefiri Rusyalıyı ele alacak meslekden bi'z-zarûre mübâ'adet-birle maslahat muhârebeyi müntic oldu." Mahmud Nedim Paşa, "Sadr-ı Esbak Mahmud," 24.

“It is not permitted to continue education when religion is in danger, and “Knowledge has ascended to the heavens.” Their physical reactions were also very similar. They suspended their study desks from the minarets, filled the mosque yards and streets, blocked the entrance to the Sublime Porte, and intimidated and threatened cabinet members. Threats were not to be underestimated, as Reşid had to hide in his son’s house for three consequent days with sacks full of ash nearby to cover himself at any possible moment of danger, and Mahmud Nedim had to escape barefoot from the Porte’s back door, and took refuge in the nearest embassy. Sources generally agree that both demonstrations were instigated by rival political statesmen.¹⁴⁵

What I am trying to emphasize here is that Mahmud Nedim’s discussion regarding the pro-war policy of his rivals in delicate international conditions of 1870s is strictly attached to his critique of their internal political positions. Both in *Âyine* and *Müdafaanâme* Mahmud Nedim repeatedly claims that the retreatment of the sultan from the state affaires paved the way for Ottoman statesmen (such as Âli and Mithat) to follow a populist policy through which they provoke the public opinion (as in the Softa Incidents of 1853 and 1876) in accordance with their political agenda. He repeatedly uses the expression, “*söz ayağa düşürölüp*” regarding populist calls for war (he even uses the term regarding Âli’s policies, as I quoted in the previous footnote). Apparently, he was quite aware of the increasing role of the public opinion in the Ottoman state affairs, and he was rather disturbed by the fact.¹⁴⁶ It seems that, this increasing role of the public opinion which, according to him could be easily manipulated by the unchecked and uncontrolled bureaucracy, constituted one of the essential reasons behind his political position which emphasizes the role of the sultan in the state affairs.

¹⁴⁵ Aydemir, “Mahmud Nedim Pasha’s Critique of the Tanzimat Bureaucracy,” 203.

¹⁴⁶ For an analysis of the increasing role of the public opinion in the Ottoman political affairs after 1860s, see Murat Şiviloğlu, *The Emergence of Public Opinion: State and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Bringing Mahmud Nedim's analyses into the discussion allows us to understand the significance of looking at the heated political discussions and recriminations during the late Tanzimat period from a different perspective. The arguments put forward by two political camps needed to be analyzed by considering the intertwined nature of the changing balance of power in international arena after France's defeat against Prussia in 1871 and the regime crisis experienced in the Empire after the great pro-Tanzimat statesmen lost their power in the Sublime Porte. This point of view will also help us to understand Abdülhamid's political regime after the end of the First Constitutional period. In that sense, the stability in the Grand Vizierate during Abdülhamid's reign (in which Mahmud Nedim was Minister of the Interior from 1879 to late 1882) can be regarded as a clue for how the heated political atmosphere of the period between 1871 and 1876 was inherited and construed by him, as Findley points out the dramatic change in the importance of grand vizierate and of the Sublime Porte.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ "These events heralded the progressive decline in the importance of the grand vezirate and of the Porte in general. One expression of this was changing patterns of tenure in the grand vezirate, as in many other offices. Between the death of Âli Paşa (1871) and the Young Turk Revolution (1908), there were thirty-two grand-vezirial incumbencies by nineteen men, most of them still civil bureaucrats. [...] Thereafter, as the Hamidian system became more firmly established, turnover slowed dramatically, and there were only nine incumbencies by five individuals. [...] Yet length of tenure no longer entailed the kind of power Âli had enjoyed. The job had degenerated so much, indeed, that Ferid Paşa grand vezir from 1903 to 1908, once said that his situation made him envious of the *stedores (sırık hamalları)* working on the Istanbul wharves." Findley, "Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire," 242-243.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have approached the 1870s based on Hay's concept of "decisive intervention" and emphasized why the study of this period is highly suitable in developing a from-within-approach in studying the transformations in the Ottoman Empire.

I showed how the economic, political, and international crises of the Ottoman Empire in the 1870s were conceived and formulated by leading political actors and influential writers in the Ottoman historiography through analyzing their narratives built in their political pamphlets, chronicles, and memoirs. Accordingly, demonstrated how the high bureaucrats and intellectuals of the Abdülaziz reign tried to settle in the new political constellations starting to emerge in the first years of the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Moreover, I tried to show how they built their narratives so as to remove the shadow of the political, financial, and international breakdown of the empire from the reign of the newly enthroned sultan.

I mainly focused on the comments and analyses in Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's *Tezâkir*¹⁴⁸, Mithat Pasha's memoirs (*Tabsıra-i İbret*¹⁴⁹) and Ahmet

¹⁴⁸ Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir vol 4*, ed. Cavid Baysun, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yay., 1984).

¹⁴⁹ Mithat Paşa, *Tabsıra-i İbret*, ed. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu, (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 1997).

Mithat Efendi's *Üss-i İnkılâp*¹⁵⁰ regarding the period. In addition, I will touch upon some other observations of Ottoman and foreign commentators, such as James Lewis Farley (1823-1885), an Irish banker and diplomat who wrote on Turkish and Eastern affairs, the Ottoman historian and writer Ahmed Sâib¹⁵¹ (1860-1918), the famous Ottoman journalist Basiretçi Ali Efendi¹⁵², and the prolific writer of the Second Constitutional Period, Mithat Cemal.¹⁵³

Regarding these writers' narratives, I specifically concentrated on the second term of Mahmud Nedim Pasha in the grand vizierate between 20 August 1875 and 11 May 1876. For in such a short period of time, the Herzegovina uprising of 1875 would escalate into a sovereignty crisis when the Porte accepted the infamous Andrassy Note presented by the League of Three Emperors, the crisis of Ottoman foreign debt into the declaration of a moratorium, and the dissent within the Ottoman public vis-à-vis the Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim's policies and actions into the student uprisings in Istanbul which would result in the dismissal of both the Grand Vizier and the Sheikh-ul-Islam Hasan Fehmi Efendi.

Finally, I analyzed why Mahmud Nedim has been chosen as the scapegoat of the period. In answering that question, I emphasized his political position which stands as the direct opposite of the Tanzimat ideal. Through analyzing his political treatise *Âyine-i Devlet* (1862) which he wrote when he was in a rather voluntary exile in Tripoli as provincial governor, I tried to establish his position in the monarchist vs. pro-Tanzimat political struggle which began heating after the death of Âli Paşa as well as his critiques regarding the Tanzimat state structure, the implementa-

¹⁵⁰ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Üss-i İnkılâp*, ed. İdris Nebi Uysal (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2013).

¹⁵¹ Ahmet Sâib. *Vak'a-i Sultan Abdülaziz*, ed. Mehmet Köseoğlu, (Samsun: M. Köseoğlu, 2014).

¹⁵² Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul'da Yarım Asırlık Vekayi-i Mühimme*, (Kitabevi, 1997).

¹⁵³ Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Namık Kemal, Devrinin İnsanları ve Olayları Arasında*, (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010).

tion of Tanzimat reforms, and the diplomatic policies of pro-Tanzimat pashas. Secondly, I compared and contrasted his political analyses in *Âyine-i Devlet* to his arguments in his never published *Apologia* (1877-1878) which was written in defense of his political position and of his policies regarding the accusations made against him by Ahmet Mithat. Despite its title, *Sadr-ı Esbak Mahmud Nedim Paşa'nın Üss-i İnkılâp'a Müdafaanâmesi*,¹⁵⁴ Mahmud Nedim not only refutes the accusations of Ahmet Mithat with a quite agitated tone, but also presents his analyses and critiques regarding the policies of his counterparts among the high bureaucracy, including Cevdet and Mithat Pashas. In so doing, I suggested that the essential crisis of the period of 1875-1876 was the regime crisis of the Empire emerged from the bifurcation of monarchist vs. pro-Tanzimat political positions of leading statesmen of the empire, a bifurcation which became more evident after the shattering of Tanzimat status quo with the death of the last great pro-Tanzimat pasha, i.e., Âli.

Moreover, I tried to show that the internal political bifurcation of monarchist vs. pro-Tanzimat views in the Empire were strictly intertwined with the changing balance of power in the international arena after France's defeat against Prussia in 1871. After France's diminishing influence on the Ottoman Empire, two rival great powers with two opposite political regimes, i.e., Britain and Russia, emerged as main rival international powers trying to establish a firm dominance over the Ottoman politics. Through comparing Mahmud Nedim's diplomatic analyses in *Âyine-i Devlet* (1862) with his analyses in *Müdafaanâme* regarding the changing international balance of power in a time when the Herzegovinian uprisings were expanding through the Balkan Peninsula and escalating into an international crisis (which ended up with the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78), I emphasized the relation between the rival political positions within the Ottoman political sphere and the changing balance of power in the international arena.

¹⁵⁴ Mahmud Nedim Paşa, "Sadr-ı Esbak Mahmud Nedim Paşa'nın Üss-i İnkılâp'a Müdafaanâmesi," [1877-1878], Ali Emiri Koleksiyonu, İstanbul Millet Kütüphanesi.

To conclude, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the significance of the period between the death of Âli in 1871 and the establishment of Abdülhamid's regime and to bring the political narratives written throughout this period into the discussion with a different emphasis. Especially through bringing Mahmud Nedim's so far neglected political treatises into the discussion, I hope to bring a new attention to the period as a medium in which the foundational problems of the 19th century Ottoman Empire were thoroughly discussed and different suggestions on the ideal state structure for the Ottoman Empire became apparent.



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