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Ali Suavi's Understanding of Civilization in the *Ulum* Newspaper: A Response to the Western Claims of Civilizational Superiority and Idealization of an Islamic Civilization

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ABSTRACT

Ali Suavi is among the most interesting figures in the late Ottoman intellectual history. In some earlier works, he has been portrayed as a secular Turkist, while in others, he was presented as an early Islamist responsible for the twentieth-century crises in the Middle East. His stance on parliamentary regime has been another problematic theme. Seen as a confused member of the Young Ottomans, Suavi has been accused of intellectual incapacity, who would otherwise not turn on the idea of constitutional government in his later writing. In this study, I attempt to reflect on such problems.

In order to offer a new reading of Ali Suavi's thought, I focus on his notion of civilization as part of a broader context that was shaped by the nineteenth-century Western imperialism and discourse of civilizational superiority. This way, his writings on Turkish history and language, his discussion of ideal government, or his critique of the West can gain new meanings, and this can help us make a better sense of his thought.

ÖZET

Ali Suavi, geç dönem Osmanlı entelektüel tarihinin en ilginç figürlerinden biridir. Kendisi bazı erken dönem eserlerde seküler bir Türkçü olarak resmedilirken, bazılarında ise Ortadoğu'nun yirminci yüzyılda yaşadığı krizlerin sorumlusu olan bir erken dönem İslamcı olarak sunulmuştur. Kendisinin parlamenter rejim konusundaki duruşu da bir diğer problemlilik konudur. Yeni Osmanlılar'ın kafası karışık bir üyesi olarak görülen Suavi, entelektüel yetersizlikle de suçlanmış ve önceden savunduğu anayasal hükümet fikrini sonraki yazılarında terk ettiği iddiası buna kanıt olarak sunulmuştur. Bu çalışmada, bu problemler üzerine eğilmeye çalışacağım.

Ali Suavi'nin düşüncesi üzerine yeni bir okuma önerisi sunmak adına, kendisinin medeniyet anlayışını, ondokuzuncu yüzyıl Batı emperyalizmi ve medeniyet üstünlüğü söylemiyle biçimlenmiş, geniş bir bağlam içinde ele alıyorum. Bu şekilde, kendisinin Türk tarihi ve dili, ideal hükümet biçimi, ya da Batı eleştirisi etrafındaki yazılarının yeni anlamlar kazanabilir ve bu da kendisinin düşüncesini daha iyi anlamlandırmamıza yardımcı olabilir.

INTRODUCTION

Current literature in Ottoman intellectual history has certain deficiencies that made the starting point for this thesis. First of all, the common pattern is to pick up a past intellectual, begin with his life story in chronological order, continue with an introduction to the audience of his previously unseen or ignored writings as well as major works, and end with a few concluding remarks. In this pattern, what we have is at best a historical contextualization that might shed light on our understanding of that past intellectual: we can learn about his childhood, family, social background, and political upheavals of the period in which he was raised. These are, of course, crucial information for our understanding of both the writer and his period. After all, Ali Suavi was one of the leading members of the Young Ottomans, which, in 1865, emerged as a secret society to challenge the bureaucratic authoritarianism of the Sublime Porte as well as to produce a response to the nineteenth-century encounter with the Western modernity. Coming to grips with his ideas requires one to have a solid understanding of his life story and the contemporary situation of the empire, which, the Young Ottomans sought to save. Yet, it is equally important to contextualize his thought and see against what background he expressed his opinions. How could we describe his intellectual context? Which opinions did he share with the other Young Ottomans? How different were Suavi's ideas than the Young Ottomans? Can we read him as part of a broader intellectual current?

After recognizing the lack of intellectual contextualization as a problem, one can also find another and related problem which Edhem Eldem labels as Turkocentrism. In his article "Osmanlı Tarihini Türklerden Kurtarmak (Saving Ottoman History from the Turks)," Eldem describes the Turkocentric approach as one of the major problems in the Ottoman historiography. According to this, the modern Turkish state embraces the Ottoman past as exclusively its own despite the great number of different ethnic groups having lived under the Ottoman rule for centuries and thus being a part of the Ottoman legacy. On the other hand, nation-states that gained their independence from the Ottoman Empire do not help either: they label the Ottoman period as a dark age where nothing important happened, which also contributes to the reproduction of the Turkocentric narrative.¹

In Turkey, it was a curiosity about the genesis of the modern Turkish state and society that pushed historians and sociologists to study the late Ottoman period as a preliminary stage before the secular Turkish republic. They attempted to find the origins of Turkish secularization and

¹ Edhem Eldem, "Osmanlı Tarihini Türklerden Kurtarmak," *Cogito* 73 (2013): 269-271.

modernization in the late Ottoman intellectuals as well as the state-initiated reform projects that started with the Gulhane Edict of 1839; some historians sought the origins of liberalism in the Young Ottoman thought² in order to explain the emergence of later phases, some others³ went so far as to seek the seeds of Westernization in Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi's visit to Paris in the early eighteenth century, which had turned out to be a short-lived experience according to the conventional narrative, after the resistance of backward Ottoman society and *ulama*. Framed within this conventional narrative of Ottoman modernization that had been produced in the early republican period, late Ottoman intellectual history has been read against an assumption that divides the Ottoman intellectuals into two groups: Westernists and Islamists, modernists and conservatives, etc. A linear line of thought has been produced in this regard, from the Young Ottomans to the Young Turks to the early republican period as well.

Reviewing the literature on the modern Middle East and specifically on Arab nationalism, especially the studies that are also concerned with the late Ottoman context, however, one can see close relationships between the Istanbul-based Ottoman elite and the leading Arab figures of the period.⁴ When considered separately, the history of the late Ottoman Empire and the Arab Middle East in the nineteenth century may seem irrelevant to each other, as if the two contexts had not shared a common experience. Whereas the Ottoman modernization was initiated by the Ottoman sultans and continued by the bureaucratic elite, the Arab Nahda is usually narrated with reference to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and Muhammad Ali's reforms. Both contexts have their particularities that need to be discussed, problematized, and reflected upon, it is beyond doubt. Yet, at some point, focusing too much on particularities prevents us from seeing the common themes and processes that had an impact on both contexts.

² Tefik Çavdar, *Türkiye'de Liberalizm (1860-1990)* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1992), 43-53.

³ Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Tarihi Simalar Tesavir-i Rical* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011), 23-25; Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 85; Abdullah Uçman, ed., *Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi'nin Fransa Sefaretnamesi* (İstanbul: Tercüman, 1982), 5-8; Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'nin Siyasi Hayatında Batılılaşma Hareketleri* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet, 1999), 30-31; Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi* (İstanbul: Ülken Yayınları, 1992), 25; Şerif Mardin, *Türk Modernleşmesi: Makaleler 4* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 10; Fatma Müge Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 16-17; Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 211-212.

⁴ This literature is not necessarily limited to early works but also contains more recent studies: George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1939); Youssef Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History Nation and State in the Arab World* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); Rashid Khalidi et al., eds., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury, and Mary C. Wilson, eds., *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993); Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East* (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1997).

In introducing his work, Michael Provence underlines that "... the durable tendency to view the history of the region through the lens of national histories of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, etc. obscures commonalities that were clear to all until at least the 1940s."⁵ As he reveals in elaborating more on his main argument, such leading Arab figures as Fawzi al-Qawuqji, Jafar al-Askari, Aziz Ali al-Misri, and Yasin al-Hashimi were raised by the Ottoman military academy. Moreover, Shakib Arslan, Musa Kazım Pasha al-Huseyni, and Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar were Ottoman civil school graduates.⁶ They were raised within the same framework with the Turkish speaking Ottoman elite that later founded the Turkish Republic and they would be important actors to have more or less influential roles in the shaping of the modern Middle East. Yet somehow, the two contexts have been mostly treated as if they were alien to each other. This is especially a problem for the history of ideas. Inspired by the growing literature in global intellectual history and Quentin Skinner's approach, I propose a two-step contextualization of Ali Suavi's thought.

It is obvious that we need to begin by locating Ali Suavi into his period. Being aware of the specific importance and central place of the Ottoman modernization and reforms as it was the main context within which Ali Suavi and other intellectuals made their arguments, I still contend that we should benefit from a wider context. This brings us to the second step, which is, intellectual contextualization. If, instead of treating the late Ottoman and Arab intellectuals separately as if they had formed completely unique intellectual traditions, we read them against each other within the framework of encounter with the nineteenth-century Western modernity and imperialism, we can expand our understanding of both.

It is possible if we can read Ali Suavi's writing as part of an intellectual tradition that was formed within the framework of encounter with the Western modernity. How similar or different arguments did he make in comparison to contemporary and earlier intellectuals? In what ways did he comply with the conventional intellectual style and where did he diverge from it? For instance, what was he trying to do in writing about the superiority of the Turkish language over French and Arabic? Was it merely an example of his Turkism or should we see it as a response to Orientalist scholars who had based their arguments regarding the inferiority of the non-Western world on linguistic studies revealing the so-called grammatical deficiencies of Semitic languages? What can we say about Shams al-Din Sami's response to Nacib Nader,

⁵ Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-48.

for instance, where Sami, in his defense of Turkish against the claim that Arabic is superior, asserted that Arabic was not even “comparable to third rate European languages like Russian”?⁷ Can we ignore the broader context within which Sami established his discourse?

To be more specific, we need a three-dimensional view of past intellectuals’ writing. If we are to seek the meaning of what Ali Suavi wrote, we need to try to understand his intention in writing it.⁸ This brings us to the following questions: What did he write? What meaning can we derive from his work? What was his intention in writing what he wrote, or to be more precise, what did he mean by writing it?⁹ Seeking answers to such questions can enhance our understanding of Ali Suavi’s so-called confusion, his references to Islamic tradition and secular sources at once. This is not to suggest that there was only one Ali Suavi, and we will recover his intention, which will allow us to grasp the meaning he intended to present. Rather, this is a useful approach to recover his possible intentions to arrive at the conclusions closest to what he meant.

I aim to accomplish the proposed project in the following order: In the first chapter, I begin with a discussion on where to begin. When did the encounter between the West and the East start? Is it appropriate to begin with Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi’s visit to Paris and fall into the line of Ottoman modernization literature, or is it Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt that had the irrevocable impact on the modernization of the whole region that we today call the Middle East? What did the categories of the West and the East mean and how were they constructed? In this chapter, I attempt to set a global historical context for the nineteenth century, out of which we can have a better understanding of the encounter between the West and the East.

Following this brief discussion, in Chapter 2, I continue by laying down the intellectual context. I attempt to set a wider context and trace peculiarities as well as commonalities between the nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectual currents and the early Nahda thought. Focusing on such intellectuals as Rifa’a Rafi’ al-Tahtawi, Butrus al-Bustani and Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, I try to present how the problems of civilization were discussed, how the conception of the West as a homogenous entity emerged, and what solutions were proposed in order to catch up with that imagined entity of the West.

⁷ Kamal Soleimani, *Islam and Competing Nationalisms in the Middle East, 1876-1926* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 98.

⁸ Quentin Skinner, “Motives, Intentions and Interpretation,” in *Visions of Politics Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 99-100.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

I start to focus on Ali Suavi, the main subject of this study, arguably late, in the third chapter. In this part I discuss Suavi's place among the Young Ottomans and his contacts in England and France. After tracing his intellectual networks and discussing the influence of his relationships on his thought, I continue in Chapter 4 with a focus almost exclusively on Suavi's own writings, a majority of which are taken from his newspaper *Ulum*. In the end, I propose an alternative contextualization for Suavi's thought.

CHAPTER 1

DISCUSSING THE POSSIBILITY OF A GLOBAL HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK FOR OTTOMAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Modernization

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, in the conventional narrative of the Ottoman modernization, Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi's visit to Paris has often been regarded as the first sign of the Ottomans recognizing their backwardness in the face of the European powers and deciding to take measures to catch up with the West. According to this, Westernization of the Ottoman Empire commences with Mehmed Çelebi's visit to France in 1721. Following Bernard Lewis' line of argument, Fatma Müge Göçek argues that the Ottomans, discovering that the military defeats against the Western powers required of them doing more than merely borrowing the Western military technology, became interested in the Western modernity and for the first time ever, decided to open permanent embassies in major European capitals. It was within this context that Mehmed Çelebi was dispatched to Paris in 1721, "to visit fortresses and factories, and to make a thorough study of means of civilization and education, and report on those suitable for application in the Ottoman Empire."¹⁰

The long-term impact of this visit in the Ottoman Empire was two-fold: first, and the most noted one, was in terms of borrowing institutions and technology from France and the West; the second was in terms of an emerging new taste in the Ottoman Empire for Western, particularly French, art and architecture.¹¹ Mehmed Çelebi's detailed descriptions, such as that of the Versailles and its garden, for instance, would have a posthumous impact on the Ottoman architectural style in the following decades.¹² More importantly, the Tulip Age that was coming after his visit would become a point of reference for the opposition to the newly emerged taste for Western cultural products.

The conventional narrative continues after a disruption, that is, Patrona Halil Rebellion, which was deemed as a reaction against the conspicuous consumption in the Ottoman palace at a time

¹⁰ Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹² Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi, *Paris'te Bir Osmanlı Sefiri: Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi'nin Fransa Seyahatnamesi*, ed. Şevket Rado (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 61.

of economic, social, and political upheavals¹³ and makes a jump to the period of Selim III (r. 1789-1808), whose military and fiscal reforms had paved the way for further centralization and bureaucratization of the government that took place under Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839). Upon the war with Russia, in 1792, Selim asked twenty-two well educated and prominent men their opinion on the future reforms that the state should implement. The one point they all agreed upon was that they needed to strengthen the state and centralize the power in the sultan's hands in order to implement administrative reforms successfully. Besides this common point, they were divided into two groups: champions of the idea of returning back to the golden age of the empire and Westernists who were supporting the idea of following the example of the West.¹⁴ The binary conceptualization of East and West has been presented here as if the concepts denoted holistic images of two homogenous, geopolitical units in each other's imagination, which will be problematized in the third section of this chapter.

Selim started with military reforms. The memoranda mentioned above suggested Selim to find fresh sources of revenue in order to carry out the reforms. In 1793, the Ottoman government established the New Revenues Treasury for funding the new army. As the military reforms proved insufficient, and the Ottomans could not solve the problem of losing on the battlefield, they felt obliged to find alternative ways to defend the empire. Opening new diplomatic channels seemed the most feasible option. They became keen as never about the idea of forming alliances with the European powers they regarded friendly, against the rest. However, beginning in the late eighteenth century as with the example of Edmund Burke opposing the idea of becoming allies with the Ottomans against Russia because it would be an anti-Crusade move, and continuing with an ever-increasing degree throughout the nineteenth century, the Ottomans had to learn about a new obstacle, that is, public opinion. European powers had a public opinion that was making it difficult for them to form official alliances with the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ Can we think of this European public opinion of the period as based on the dichotomous understanding of the East versus the West as well?

In this chronological order, the abolition of the Janissary Corps takes an important place as it would have an unprecedented impact on the power balance in the Ottoman government. Before, the *ulama* refusing to comply with a reform was used to team up with the Janissaries to exercise

¹³ Münir Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1958), 2-3; Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, *Destâri Sâlih Tarihi: Patrona Halil Ayaklanması Hakkında Bir Kaynak* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1962), 26; Faik Reşit Unat, *1730 Patrona İhtilali Hakkında Bir Eser: Abdi Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1943), 41-70.

¹⁴ Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 46-49.

pressure upon the sultan to make him abstain from his attempt. Now that Mahmud obtained the *fatwa* he needed from the *ulama* to legitimize the massacre of the Janissaries, he could destroy one important and central part of the power balance safely. After the abolition of the Janissary Corps, the *ulama* got weakened in the face of reforms; Janissaries had used to constitute their armed wing.¹⁶

Under Mahmud, as Roderic Davison underlines, not only the institutions but the outlook of the state became Westernized. New uniforms for the army and the bureaucracy were the most apparent signs of Westernization. In addition to this, such practices as general census, quarantine system, more and regular diplomatic missions to European countries, and official newspaper were signaling an institutionalization of Westernization policy for the first time in Ottoman history.¹⁷ During Mahmud's reign, students were sent to Europe, but communication with local people or learning the French language were not allowed. It was their science, not their culture or harmful ideas, that mattered for the Ottomans.¹⁸ Still, as Hanioglu asserts, it was Mahmud's period that for the first time, Westernization became a formal policy, and was exercised from above, through institutions and brute force.

Moreover, Mahmud's vision of Ottomanism, as can be seen in a statement attributed to him, was a threat for the superior position of the Muslims in the wider Ottoman society: "If distinguish among my subjects,' Mahmud is reported to have said, 'Muslims in the mosque, Christians in the church, Jews in the synagogue, but there is no difference among them in any other way'."¹⁹ This is a highly secularized view of the Ottoman subjects as it reduces religion from having a regulatory power over the society to a set of beliefs and practices between the individual and God. This vision would later be institutionalized through legal and educational reforms, which annulled the old status of the non-Muslim minorities as separate religious groups represented by religious leaders and recognized them as Ottoman subjects. The Edict of 1856 would be, therefore, received by some Muslims as a *bid'at*, or innovation, something that does not derive from the *shariah*. They were considering themselves as *millet-i hakime* because their religion, Islam, was superior to Christianity and Judaism.²⁰ This point would be a matter

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁷ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 27.

¹⁸ Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 63.

¹⁹ As quoted in Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, 31.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

of debate for the Young Ottomans as well, who considered the issue as a problem for the integrity of the empire, which will be discussed in detail later in the following chapter.

There are two important developments under Mahmud II worth of attention. The first one was the expansion of bureaucracy, which was necessary to implement the reforms effectively. However, following Mahmud's death, until 1871, the new bureaucratic elite that came into life during this process would take over the government from the sultans.²¹ As part of this expansion and as a result of the increasing distrust after the Greek Revolt of 1821 in Phanariot Greeks who had been working as intermediaries between the empire and the Western powers, a second significant development was the foundation of the Translation Bureau to raise Muslim translators.²² It would later turn into a source for the opposition to the Tanzimat reforms and bureaucratic elite, where, the Young Ottomans obtained their first training. Although they were primarily concerned with the empire's position in world politics, another strong reason bringing Namık Kemal, Ziya Bey, and Ali Suavi together was the bureaucratic authoritarianism of Tanzimat period under Ali and Fuad Pashas.²³ They were men of letters coming from lower and middle classes, they were talented, but they were limited to certain ranks in the government posts and could not rise up any higher.²⁴ The willingness of the Young Ottomans to correct the mistakes that they believed the ruling elite made was thus combined with being excluded from the ranks of the higher ranks of the bureaucracy.

The Emergence of the Modern Middle East

Similar to that of the late Ottoman Empire, the history of the emergence of the modern Middle East has been narrated from within a binary framework, where the West has an impact over the latter in a one-sided relationship between a superior and an inferior. The conventional narrative of modernization school makes Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798 its point of departure for what it regards as the "defensive modernization of the Middle East," since it was thanks to this first close encounter between the superior West and the inferior East on the Eastern soil that the latter came to an understanding of its bitter condition and decided to catch up with the former by emulating its institutions and ideas.²⁵ According to this, it was a turning point for the

²¹ Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 73.

²² Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, 28-29.

²³ Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans*, 30-31.

²⁴ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 124.

²⁵ Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), 34-37.

modernization of the Middle East; yet, later studies have regarded this argument baseless. Longer trends and already undergoing gradual transformations taken into account, the three-year-long occupation was far from having such an impact in such a short period.²⁶

If we still have to take the occupation into our account of the modern Middle East, it does not necessarily have to be by attributing to it a quality it had never possessed. It was still an important event in that it weakened the Mamluks' power in Egypt, and once it was over, there emerged a power vacuum to be filled by Muhammad Ali.²⁷ Besides, the turning point for the modern Middle East was perhaps not the presence of Napoleon's expeditionary force in Egypt but what had enabled the move toward Egyptian coasts, namely the end of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, which had allowed the European powers to invest their time, money, and energy into their benefits.²⁸

The first thing Napoleon did once he arrived in Egypt was to announce a proclamation that started with the *basmala* and blamed the occupation on the Mamluks, suggesting that all men were equal before God except for virtue and intelligence, both of which the Mamluks had lacked. Thus they did not deserve to rule over the Egyptians anymore.²⁹ On the other hand, "the French are also faithful Muslims" in that they believed that God has no son or friend as the Muslims were used to believe. The French were "the most sincere friends of the Ottoman sultan" as well.³⁰ The reason behind this firm message was to gain the hearts of the local population as well as establishing a reliable line of contact with the local notables to make the colonization process easier,³¹ but it seems, according to al-Jabarti's account, the local population did never comply with Napoleon's decisions on Egypt.³²

Once the French forces had to withdraw due to the joint Ottoman-British attack in 1802, given the Ottomans being incapable of reasserting their control and the Mamluks with their power diminished, Muhammad Ali emerged as the only viable alternative to fill the power vacuum in

²⁶ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), 265; William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2009), 65.

²⁷ Robert L. Tignor, "Introduction," in *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006) 11-12; Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 46.

²⁸ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 266-267.

²⁹ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 49-50.

³⁰ *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798*, Introduced by Robert L. Tignor, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 24-28.

³¹ Christopher A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Cornwall: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 96.

³² Tignor, "Introduction," 8; Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 43.

Egypt. First, he tried to strengthen his position as the governor in Egypt, and thus he seemed loyal to the Ottoman Empire, until 1811. As he settled himself in power, he revealed clear signs that he did not have any intentions to remain a governor dependent on the central government and sought to expand his autonomy.³³ The rest of what he did in Egypt as a ruler was to strengthen his place. He started with student missions to Europe, military reform, and opening of new schools, all of which were designed to serve the purpose of creating a powerful army to keep him on the throne.³⁴ In that sense, Muhammad Ali's reforms were simpler than what the Ottomans had been trying to achieve with the Tanzimat reforms, as Hourani underlines: he did not have to propose a new understanding of equality for his subjects regardless of their religious affiliations in order to break free from European pressure and intervention. His military and economic reforms were focused on consolidating the power in his hands.³⁵

The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, had no chance but to keep good relations with Muhammad Ali, as he proved his power and intention to keep himself in his position. In 1813, for example, he was able to conquer Hijaz from the Wahhabis, who had defeated the Ottoman army back in 1803-1804.³⁶ A decade later, in 1827, his army had become so powerful that Mahmud II had to ask for his help in repressing the Greek revolt.³⁷ Through direct political and economic relations with Europe in the following decades, Egypt would become virtually independent from the Ottoman Empire by the time of Khedive Ismail.³⁸ If one important aspect of the emergence of the modern Middle East and the idea of Arabism was the Egyptian experience, another was the gradual secularization of the Arab intellectual context.

George Antonius does not entertain the idea that Muhammad Ali, as the founder of modern Egypt, constituted the origins of Arab nation; on the contrary, Antonius labels his reign as a "False Start" in his book.³⁹ What makes the real start was Ibrahim's rule over Syria, which enabled further development in the sense of Arabness among the people of the region.⁴⁰ His modern schools in Syria, modeled on his father's schools in Egypt, helped build a sense of common identity among the Arabs. Moreover, the American Board of Commissioners for

³³ Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 42-44.

³⁴ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 65-68.

³⁵ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 272-273.

³⁶ Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 217.

³⁷ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 76.

³⁸ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 282-283.

³⁹ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1939), 21-34.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-60.

Foreign Mission's decision to utilize education in addition to translation efforts as another means of proselytizing in the Middle East opened a new channel.⁴¹ Thus, the following was the American missionaries like Eli Smith who helped the revival of Arabic by transferring their printing press from Malta to Beirut, learning Arabic to reach out to their audience easily, and opening schools for boys and girls where useful knowledge as well as Christianity was taught, in Arabic.⁴² What follows in the Arab Middle East, namely, in Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt was a further development in Arabic literature through an increasing number of periodicals and novels published in Arabic, French becoming the new lingua franca after Italian among the Arabs and closer contact with European intelligentsia.⁴³

It is better to have a discussion in this section rather than the former on the impact of European embassies and consulates in the late Ottoman Empire as well as the integration of the Ottoman Empire into the global capitalist markets: first, they have been deemed a symbolic chapter in the story of the European hegemony over the non-Western world; and second, this organization helps open up a channel for a discussion of the concepts of East and West in the following section.

As Şevket Pamuk asserts, in the last two centuries European countries had experienced an intense level of industrialization. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, they had been seeking markets to sell their finished goods as well as sources of cheap raw material to supply their products with. Costs of transportation had been reduced and provided European merchants, but especially the British, with a strong incentive to search for a profit overseas. Whereas railroads led the products from factories to the ports, steamships provided an economical operation of overseas transportation. The general process was, as Pamuk asserts, between a center and a periphery; although the two parties were far from being homogenous entities, they had commonalities such as modes of production and levels of industrialization. Thus, European merchants sailing overseas were from the center of the world economy, whereas a large geographical entity, including the third world countries as well as the Ottoman Empire, can be labeled as the periphery.⁴⁴ To emphasize the new trend and its outcome, that is, the Middle East becoming a buyer of finished European goods and seller of raw material, one

⁴¹ Cemal Yetkiner, "At the Center of the Debate: Bebek Seminary and the Educational Policy of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (1840-1860)," in *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2011), 65-66.

⁴² Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 37-45.

⁴³ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 303.

⁴⁴ Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-4.

can suggest that already by the end of the eighteenth-century trade in different parts of the world had come to be controlled by European merchants but Arab merchants could still protect their position in the Indian Ocean trade⁴⁵; yet, after the first quarter of the nineteenth century, it was nothing more than local merchants finding loopholes in the Baltalimanı Treaty of 1838 to increase their profits and constituting small pockets of resistance against the British.⁴⁶

Baltalimanı Treaty has been regarded as a turning point in the “Ottoman decline” by certain historians, but on the other side of the spectrum, there is a view that suggests the opposite. First of all, as Pamuk explains, the free trade treaties between the Ottomans and the European countries which followed after that between the Ottomans and the British did theoretically open Ottoman economy to the global markets, but this cannot be considered as the only or most important reason in itself behind the Ottoman Empire’s transformation into a purchaser of manufactured goods and supplier of raw materials.⁴⁷ Moreover, there is also information opposing the argument that this was a treaty exclusively for the benefit of the British. Muhammad Ali of Egypt had become a problem for the Ottoman Empire that the latter could not solve by itself. It was at this stage that Lord Palmerston offered a helping hand to Mahmud II.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the British had come out of the Napoleonic Wars victorious and was by far the most industrialized country of Europe, for whom the protectionism policy in continental Europe was a trouble. Thus, the British had the intention to sail overseas and establish markets for its goods and suppliers of raw material.⁴⁹ The free trade agreement with the Ottoman Empire came into life within this context and not under unfavorable terms.

More problematic than the free trade agreements with the European countries was perhaps military costs, especially the cost of the Crimean War of 1853, after which the Ottoman Empire began borrowing from foreign creditors. This new chapter in the Ottoman incorporation into the global capitalist market ended up with the Ottoman Public Debt Administration being founded in 1881 as the empire declared that it had no further capacity to pay its debts to foreign creditors.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the increasing importance of the role played by the European embassies and consulates in the Ottoman realm in the nineteenth century has been discussed in the late Ottoman historiography as another process symbolizing the new hierarchical

⁴⁵ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 261.

⁴⁶ Hala Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia, and the Gulf, 1745-1900* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 208.

⁴⁷ Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913*, 18-19.

⁴⁸ Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia, and the Gulf, 1745-1900*, 106.

⁴⁹ Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913*, 11.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

relationship between the West and the East. As underlined by Hourani, in the nineteenth century different than the preceding period, European countries gave up on forming alliances with one or another party in the Ottoman palace as they did not need the intermediacy of the Ottoman government anymore, nor were they willing to accept any Ottoman governmental framework that would limit their business interests.⁵¹ After the 1830s, major European powers began to seek protection and legal rights for the Christian minorities in the Ottoman realm; minorities needed the European powers for protection and extraterritoriality; Ottoman Empire needed military protection of one European power against another in a potential war and for its part needed to keep diplomatic relations close; lastly, even Muslim local notables needed European consuls in negotiating their interests against the Ottoman government and its local agencies.⁵² Under such circumstances, European embassies and consulates had an ever-increasing power inside the Ottoman Empire.

This line of narrative, when packed up with the concepts of West and East, pushes us to think that the Western hegemony over the East was apparent, there was an effort in the East to modernize itself by emulating the West, but in overall, it failed, and today we are where we are. Major studies constituting the conventional narrative on the emergence of modern Middle East, regardless of favoring or challenging the Westernization paradigm in late Ottoman historiography, are mostly dependent on this axis of West and East. At the same time the dialogue among the actors of the East remains to be relatively less touched upon. In the next section, I will discuss the concepts of West and East, and then, later in the following part, I will discuss the possibility of a global, at least a broader regional framework.

A Critical Discussion of the Concepts of East and West

Ottoman decline paradigm and the conventional narrative have already been discussed in the first section of this chapter, but referring back to it has benefits for this section as well. The peak of this decline paradigm is perhaps embodied in what Bernard Lewis proposes as a summary account of the early symptoms of Ottoman decline:

Thus, in the middle of the 16th century, when the Ottoman Empire was at the very peak of its power and glory, a perceptive Turkish statesman was already deeply concerned about

⁵¹ Albert Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 62-63.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 63-65.

its fate and welfare, and was able to lay his fingers unerringly on what became, in the years to follow, the characteristic signs of Ottoman decline. Inflation and speculation, venality and incompetence; the multiplication of a useless and wasteful army and bureaucracy; the vicious circle of financial stringency, fiscal rapacity, and economic strangulation; the decay of integrity and loyalty; and beyond them all, the growing, menacing shadow of the maritime states of the West – all these were already seen by Lutfi Pasha as he cultivated his garden in Dimotika.⁵³

For Bernard Lewis and historians following his line, it is an irrevocable fact that the Ottoman Empire in particular and the East, in general, had fallen behind the West, though when this occurred has been controversial, and since then there has been a one-sided relationship between the two parties rather than an exchange. Specifically speaking of Lewis, the decline started earlier in the military after the defeat at Vienna in 1683⁵⁴ and continued in other areas; he arrives at this conclusion by relying on the historical actors themselves and uses this as a point of justification for his arguments⁵⁵; how can one speak in the name of the seventeenth-century Ottomans and say that they were not left behind Europe when there is clear evidence of the seventeenth-century Ottomans themselves admitting that they had to close the gap with Europe? This idea is apparent from the very title of his article as well: “Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline.” Yet, what he misses to consider is that, the Ottoman sources he relied on had themselves relied on conventional ways of expression and whatever conceptual tools were available to them. Last but not least, they had their own personal interests as well.

Rifa’at Ali Abou-El-Haj demonstrates in his groundbreaking work *Formation of the Modern State* that when Mustafa Ali⁵⁶ and Koçu Bey, writing their political tracts in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, complained about the erosion of Ottoman political structure and its reflections on the socio-economic order, they did not do this job as mere observers with no personal ties. During the period of Mustafa Ali, for instance, a new trend of social mobility from the rural areas to urban centers had already started; peasant *reaya* were leaving their land and settling in the cities to become artisans. Mustafa Ali criticized this shift by basing his argument on the double loss of the state revenues: peasants leaving their land to become craftsmen and shopkeepers did not pay their *çiftbozan* dues, nor did they pay the taxes that were

⁵³ Bernard Lewis, “Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline,” *Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1962): 73.

⁵⁴ Lewis, *The Middle East and the West*, 32.

⁵⁵ Lewis, “Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline,” 73-83.

⁵⁶ For a comprehensive study of Mustafa Ali, see Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

paid by artisans in normal times. On the other hand, Koçu Bey was more interested in the everyday manifestation of this social disorder: *reaya* were now “riding horses, carrying firearms like military men.”⁵⁷ For Koçu Bey, such changes meant a disruption of the *nizam-i alem*, or world order, by which he mainly referred to the Ottoman world.⁵⁸

Both Mustafa Ali and Koçu Bey had a highly strict understanding of order in their mind and interpreted the undergoing social, political, and economic changes accordingly. They considered any new development occurring in the Ottoman political structure and any form of social mobility threatening to their privileged position among the civilian ranks of the Ottoman ruling elite. In their ideal Ottoman society, everyone should stay at their prescribed socio-economic community and do not move up to higher classes; if such social mobility occurs, it is equal to the disruption of *nizam-i alem*.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Naima, who had benefited from the newly undergoing socio-economic changes and the transformation of the Ottoman state structure, regarded the changes in his account as natural and harmless developments.⁶⁰ Thus, in short, considering the private benefits and privileges of the Ottoman authors of these *nasihatnames*, one should be careful in throwing arguments of Ottoman decline as being observed by the Ottomans themselves.

If one thing is to be careful in reading the contemporary intellectuals and their interpretation of the changing world around them, another important thing to bear in mind is to be aware of the fact that these authors used whatever conceptual tools were available to them at the time in order to make sense of the unknown. To elaborate more on this, remaining within the context of binary conceptualizations of the East and the West, Jerry Toner’s study of English travelers to the East can offer a better ground for a new understanding, but before that, a short interruption needs to take place regarding the concepts of Near East, Middle East and more generally, East. As Hüseyin Yılmaz draws attention, the term “the Eastern Question” entered into use with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and interestingly when it is compared to present understanding, it had referred to Ottoman Empire’s Egyptian problem rather than Europe’s Turkish problem. As a little bit of time passed on, it began covering the conflicts in Eastern Europe. “Toward the late nineteenth century, however, within the context of a broader confrontation between Europe and

⁵⁷ Rifa’at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 17-18.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27-33.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

the Orient, the scope of the Eastern Question was extended to all of Eurasia,”⁶¹ and it was not anymore Eastern Europe but whatever rests to the east of Europe. Moreover, Yılmaz gives us a new perspective in order to make sense of the intellectual origins of the Eastern Question debate. He states in referring to the European travelers to the Ottoman Empire that:

They had very little knowledge of, or regard for, Ottoman administrative divisions, regions or city names. Instead, they primarily resorted to Greco-Roman and biblical terminology in their representations. Early modern European information gathering and representation provided the Eastern Question debate with a picture of the Ottoman Empire that was geographically fragmented, socially divided, linguistically disunited, and culturally incoherent. Such views formed the staple of the Eastern Question debate in which the Ottoman Empire was considered to be a non-European entity confined to Asia.⁶²

Abdolonyme Ubcini had directed this criticism as well, at earlier works constituting the literature on the East and the Ottoman Empire in a book he published in 1856, suggesting that the works of Villeroy, Montagu, Chavigny or Lomenie were to compensate the need for general information about the East as well as “to amuse the public” by individual efforts.⁶³ Knowledge in Europe on the Ottoman administrative system and geography was misleading and needed to be corrected. Thus he justifies his attempt to write a new account.⁶⁴

In his study, Toner demonstrates that the problem for the travelers in the first place was “how to represent the sometimes strangely disturbing features of foreign life in ways that are understandable to an audience back home.”⁶⁵ Since when has the East been called the East as an opposite of the West, and since when have these concepts been referring to something more than mere geographical units and denoted singular and homogenous geopolitical entities? Whereas the statement that “for Europeans this region was, for millennia, *the* East – the classical, archetypal, and immemorial orient which has been the neighbor and rival of Greco-Roman and Christian Europe”⁶⁶ obscures any possible nuanced reading vis-à-vis such questions, historicization of the concepts serves better opportunities to come to grips with the

⁶¹ Hüseyin Yılmaz, “The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Near and Middle East in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, ed. Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper (California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 11-12.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶³ Abdolonyme Ubcini, *Letters on Turkey: An Account of the Religious, Political, Social, and Commercial Condition of the Ottoman Empire, Volume 1*, trans. Lady Easthope (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1856), 1-2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁵ Jerry Toner, *Homer’s Turk: How Classics Shaped Ideas of the East* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 3.

⁶⁶ Lewis, *The Middle East and the West*, 10.

mentalities of the historical actors who constructed and reshaped them. Reading English travelers' observations in the East vis-à-vis political developments back home can serve the purpose of opening up new channels for nuanced readings.

English travelers, in whose education the ancient Greek and Roman classics used to occupy a large place, tried to make sense of the Orient, that new world which was somewhat strange to them, by reading the classics. This was not only because of the travelers' need to understand a new world, but it was also the need to tell a story of that world to an audience back home, who cannot possibly come and see it for itself. Thus, when the Crusades broke out, a new demand arose with the question against whom they were fighting. In this specific atmosphere, the Crusades were narrated with reference to the battles that the Greeks and the Romans fought against the barbarians.⁶⁷

Moreover, the classics were utilized in ways to accommodate political upheavals as well. As Toner points out, the unstable identity of the Turk serves as a proof to this argument. In the 1470s, Mario Fielfo, for example, in his *Amyris*, preferred to interpret Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople with reference to the battle between the Greeks and the Trojans: the conquest of the Greeks had been avenged by the Trojans at last, as Fielfo saw it.⁶⁸ In other accounts, the Turks were portrayed with their weakness to leisure and luxury just as the Romans, which had brought the end of the latter.⁶⁹ Despite such changing and lively redefinitions of the East and the Eastern peoples, it was also the case that the East, though far from being homogenous in itself, was regarded as stagnant and never changing: Lady Mary Montagu, in a letter to the Pope, suggested that "the East has become a place where time has stood still, ever since the time of mythological heroes of Homer."⁷⁰ These examples can be complemented with an alternative, from the opposite side.

During his stay in France, Mehmed Çelebi encountered things that seemed strange to him, or at the very least, things he regarded that would seem strange to his audience back home. The boundaries between private and public spheres were drawn at different lines; there were different understandings of leisure activities and entertainment; conceptions of time differed in Ottoman and French societies, and architectural styles were different from each other. As Mehmed Çelebi encountered a different mentality as well as institutions that did not exist in the

⁶⁷ Toner, *Homer's Turk: How Classics Shaped Ideas of the East*, 60.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 77-79.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

Ottoman Empire, he needed to establish a language to transmit to his audience what he observed.⁷¹ Thus, he made an effort to make the unknown more familiar with his audience. For instance, “the Garonne river in Bordeaux ‘spreads out in front of the city like the port of Istanbul’,” or the Marly gardens in Paris resembled “‘the high aqueduct in Kırkçeşme’ – a neighborhood in Istanbul.”⁷² Such reference points helped him reach out to his audience back home. Furthermore, when he was appalled by certain manners of the French society, for example, their behavior towards women in public, he did not abstain from expressing his astonishment with exaggerated expressions: in France, for example, even the lowest woman was respected by the most royal men; French women had unquestionable freedom in public sphere.⁷³

As mentioned above, Mehmed Çelebi utilizes a highly careful language to establish a connection with his audience, which, of course, was not the French but the Ottomans in Istanbul. When he saw something new and unfamiliar to the contemporary Ottomans, he tried his best to help his audience make sense of it. When he encountered the French military band, Mehmed Çelebi called it *mehterhane*; when it was the theater that he saw for the first time in his life, he likened the place to *rakkashane*.⁷⁴ In that way, he could escape the necessity of excessive explanation to the audience back home. Examples are numerous and available from other contexts as well, but there is no need to go further back in past. There has never been a single, stable, homogenous, and holistic image of the East; on the contrary, it has always been changing to accommodate the needs of the day, as was there a history of the concept of West in the East, which I will discuss in the next section.

To further this discussion with a more relevant example for this thesis, we can continue with the Gülhane Rescript of 1839, after which, according to what the historians of modernization paradigm have called, an intensive Westernization project was commenced. As Butrus Abu-Manneh revealed, however, the Rescript had more of its origins in Ottoman and Islamic intellectual tradition than Western political theory. According to historiography that was mainstream at the time Abu-Manneh wrote his article, Mustafa Reşid Paşa was a Westernized man, who had been ambassador to Paris and London, where he acquired the French language, read Western political literature, and found the opportunity to discuss with Western statesmen, all of which brought him under the direct influence of Western political theory. When he was

⁷¹ Göçek, *East Encounters West*, 25.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷³ Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi, *Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi'nin Fransa Seyahatnamesi*, 19.

⁷⁴ Göçek, *East Encounters West*, 26-27.

back home, then, he had in his mind how to reform Ottoman political institutions according to the Western model.⁷⁵ Reşid Paşa was also in contact with Mehmed Sadık Rıfat, who had been minister to Vienna and traveled to northern Italy, where he had established a close connection with the Austrian Prime Minister Metternich and had the chance to make observations on Europe.⁷⁶

One practical evidence that Abu-Manneh proposes against the influence of Reşid is that he was abroad at the time when Abdülmecid addressed his ministers with a decree after his ascent to the throne. This decree had many arguments in common with the Gülhane Rescript. In a way, this decree resembled the traditional *adaletnames*, which new sultans were used to address to provincial governors and military commanders to warn them against corruption and arbitrary rule and promises to rule justly and according to the *shariah*. Abdülmecid's decree was different in that he addressed his ministers and thus gave the decree a form of general principles.⁷⁷ Another proof or explanation for the impact of Islamic tradition on Abdülmecid and the Rescript, Abu-Manneh traces the long-established Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order and its place in the Ottoman palace.⁷⁸ According to Abu-Manneh, both texts, namely, the Rescript and the decree, argued that the reason for the decline was arbitrary government; it was necessary to restore the *shariah* to go back to the glorious old days; the government had to assure the security of life, property, and honor to its subjects; punishment without trial and verdict should be avoided; and these basic rights would be extended to the non-Muslim subjects as well as Muslims.⁷⁹

Furthermore, although approaching the problem from a different perspective, Frederick Anscombe agrees with Abu-Manneh in that the Gülhane Rescript was not prepared under the impact of the West, and it was highly Islamic in its tone. For Anscombe, Tanzimat reforms were primarily for the Muslim majority and to restore the empire's place in world politics, all in the name of Islam.⁸⁰ He explains the references to Islamic discourse with contemporary political circumstances: there was a rival Muslim leader, Muhammad Ali of Egypt, and thus the new sultan, Abdülmecid, utilized Islamic discourse in appealing to its Muslim subjects to gain

⁷⁵ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript," *Die Welt Des Islams* 34, no. 2 (November 1994): 173–174.

⁷⁶ Masami Arai, "Citizen, Liberty and Equality in Late Ottoman Discourse," in *Penser, Agir et Vivre Dans l'Empire Ottoman et En Turquie*, ed. Nathalie Clayer and Erdal Kaynar (Paris: Peeters, 2013): 3.

⁷⁷ Abu-Manneh, "The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript," 190–191.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 182–188.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁸⁰ Frederick E. Anscombe, "Islam and the Age of Ottoman Reform," *Past & Present*, no. 208 (August 2010): 160.

their support.⁸¹ Yet, Abu-Manneh had done a further analysis of the text and found that both the decree and the Rescript were informed by Ottoman *nasihatname* literature as it can be seen in its explanation of the decline as caused by disruption of the *shariah*.⁸² In short, this binary conceptualization of East and West does not rely on a concrete basis.

Peter Mansfield regards the Western impact on Eastern political thought differently: it was more about the Young Ottomans, a new generation different from their predecessor in that they were able to speak a foreign language, traveled abroad, and made observations of Europe, thanks to which, they were able to make a comparison with their society and the state of affairs in the politics once they were back home than the direct impact of Enlightenment and the French Revolution with such concepts as liberty and equality. The outcome was anger and shame, as Mansfield suggests.⁸³

In closing this section, Bernard Lewis, whose metaphor of “trees of liberty” symbolized the transmission of Western ideas into the Ottoman intellectual context, can be referred to draw a fruitful conclusion. He utilizes the metaphor with reference to a historical event: In 1793, the first French delegation after the revolution arrives in the Ottoman realm, and they want to celebrate their presence by planting a tree in the backyard of the French Embassy. As Madeleine Elfenbein underlines, “The metaphor ... establishes the French Revolution as the seedbed, and French thinkers as the gardeners, of Ottoman liberalism. And it manages to powerfully suggest, if not demonstrate, the broader role of European ideas and their emissaries in the story of late Ottoman intellectual transformation.”⁸⁴ True, she admits, that most of the ideas in this period were produced in Europe and European intellectuals had an important role in the process. Yet, historians following the line of argument that ideas are seeds and they are planted by people, in this case, passed from European to non-European intellectuals at the end to be planted in the non-European world, “keep making an elementary mistake, conflating the importance of Europe with the importance of Europeans.”⁸⁵

Instead, Elfenbein offers an alternative approach, based on a replacement of Lewis’s metaphor of ideas as seeds with ideas as germs. According to that, ideas do not need to be planted, they

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 183-185.

⁸² Abu-Manneh, “The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript,” 194-195.

⁸³ Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East*, 71-72.

⁸⁴ Madeleine Elfenbein, “Trees of Liberty and Asiatic Germs: Rethinking Metaphors of Transmission in European and Ottoman Political Thought,” in *Orte Des Denkens – Places of Thinking*, ed. Murat Ates, James Garrison, and Georg Stenger (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2016), 185-186.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

flow independently and through dialog between people.⁸⁶ She proposes a comparative example of Rhigas Velestinlis and Namik Kemal to support her argument that ideas do not always bear the same outcome, and their reception differs in different contexts. Velestinlis, a Greek Ottoman subject, was executed in 1798 for conspiring against the state. What made him guilty was a pamphlet he wrote, which contained “New Political Constitution for the Inhabitants of Rumeli, Asia Minor, the Archipelago, Moldavia and Wallachia,” that was modeled on the French Constitution of 1793 with certain novelties, calling for the equality of all Christians and Turks, along with their right to freedom, life, and property. A similar language would be used by the Ottoman government sometime later in the Gülhane Rescript, but at the moment, it was not appropriate. Furthermore, in 1867, Namik Kemal would call for a revision, or perhaps more than a revision, a retreat, of some of the reforms initiated in the Tanzimat period that he regarded as causing erosion of Islamic values. As Elfenbein asserts, both men were readers of Montesquieu, particularly of his *The Spirit of the Laws*, but they came up with different ideas.⁸⁷

In the next section, I will discuss why we need to situate late Ottoman intellectual history into a broader context where we can see more than the established East-West axis and raise our awareness of the dialogue among the Eastern intellectuals.

Possibility of a Global Historical Framework Independent of the Eurocentric Grand Narrative: Non-Western Commonalities

Instead of basing our intellectual histories on an East-West axis where the central theme has been the Western impact over the East, which obscures our understanding of the past, we can have an alternative approach that might allow us to have nuanced readings. In this alternative reading, we will be able to see more than mere confrontation of civilizations and that there has always been room for dialog and cooperation between intellectuals of different mentalities. This exchange does not necessarily have to be between European and non-European intellectual contexts, there are as many examples in the case of non-Western cooperation. In response to Bernard Lewis, for instance, Christopher Bayly asserts that the origins of the Tanzimat reforms laid back in the discussions of decline made by the previous generation, and “Well before the nineteenth century, networks of intellectuals debating the need for reform had formed in

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 189-192.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

different societies across the world and had often done so with reference to each other.”⁸⁸ As time went on, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, this global debate on reform became narrowed down into a framework determined by more specific concepts such as constitutional monarchy and representative government.⁸⁹ Moreover, one of the common themes of these debates was civilization, which reveals the opposite to what had been claimed by early modernization school of historians; civilization was not a discourse exclusively used by the West, but it was taken up and redefined, or translated differently, in the non-Western world. In this section, I set a global historical background in preparation for a discussion on the non-Western responses to the Western modernity and its civilizational claims.

As Tomoko Masuzawa asserts, from the seventeenth until the early nineteenth century, there had been a traditional categorization of religions, which divided the world into four as Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, and the rest.⁹⁰ When one considers that the rest referred collectively to all non-monotheistic beliefs and sets of practices, it becomes apparent that the former three were conceived as constituting a meaningful group based on a common aspect, which was monotheism. In the first half of the nineteenth century, this four-way classificatory system gradually gave way to a new understanding of world religions, which emerged in relation to the new philological studies. In the new schematization, Christianity and Buddhism were regarded as universal religions whereas Islam and Judaism were relegated to a new status as Semitic religions, which were non-universal and not likely to spread over their natural boundaries. Philological studies helped in the process as well: original languages of Judaism and Islam were Hebrew and Arabic, which were Semitic languages, whereas the Christian New Testament was penned in Greek language and the Indian and Persian religions were, speaking of the languages in which their ancient texts were written, Aryan, or Indo-European.⁹¹ Through the end of the first half of the century, this process of racialization of religions and languages reached a peak.

European philologists focused on grammatical structures of languages and assessed any given language in terms of its grammar and decided whether it was rational or not, while “all other linguistic properties and endowments that might be regarded as meritorious and deserving of attention – such as opulence of vocabulary, sonority and lyricism of diction, intelligence and

⁸⁸ Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 76.

⁸⁹ Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, “Introduction,” in *An Emerging Modern World 1750-1870* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 22-23.

⁹⁰ Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 59.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

intricacies of rhetorical figures – are decidedly secondary.”⁹² It was also this same period that, “the underlying assumption [was] that all non-Europeans were firmly in the grip of religion, and ‘Oriental’ or ‘primitive’ societies could best be described and understood in terms of religion.”⁹³ Thus European scholars started to associate the findings of philological studies and comparative study of religions with their perception of the East in a presentist and dehistoricized manner which would lead to such conceptions as Hindu India or Muslim world.

It will be helpful to be more specific with the racialization of languages and religions to come to grips with the process of European civilizational discourse against the East. As mentioned above, although not all Muslims spoke Arabic, Islam’s original language was, thanks to the language of the Qur’an, Arabic. Since, according to this understanding, Arabic was grammatically irrational and less capable of development, its speakers were also deemed to be affected, mentally less capable, rigid, and inflexible.⁹⁴ This was also an explanation offered for the Bedouin’s temper.

Friedrich Schlegel suggested that in the Semitic languages, namely Arabic and Hebrew, inflectional capacity, meaning linguistic freedom as well as mental and spiritual creativity, were compromised.⁹⁵ Later in 1847, a student of Schlegel brothers, Christian Lassen argued that Indo-European languages and their speakers were superior to Semitic languages and their speakers. He went so far as to claim that all the Semites had done in their history was to borrow from the former.⁹⁶ In this specific claim there was an instance of racialization of discourse as well: “in comparison to the first family, this second tribe of languages was decidedly imperfect and inchoate in inflectional capability, and with this imperfection came all the limitations that characterized their native speakers as a race.”⁹⁷ According to this, languages determine the mental abilities of their speakers, but what is more interesting and goes further is the idea that transmission is impossible. In that case, an Afro-American born to English language does not count as an Indo-European even though his native language is Indo-European.⁹⁸

It was within this context that, as recent studies in global intellectual history have revealed, there emerged non-Western responses with a common discourse. The first and most essential

⁹² *Ibid.*, 169.

⁹³ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 876-877.

⁹⁴ Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, 170.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

commonality of Muslim and Asian responses was relying on a singular and homogenous entity of the West as a model to be followed as well as to criticize. While the European conception of civilization shifted from a universalist perspective to a narrower one defined by white and Christian identities, Muslim and Asian intellectuals relied on Enlightenment universalism in translating the concept of civilization into their own intellectual contexts.⁹⁹ For instance, asking how come the Japanese adopted European sciences after the 1870s when they had not allowed vaccination back in the 1820s on the basis that it was magic, Jason Ananda Josephson concludes that the Japanese intellectuals received a secularized, de-Christianized, and universalist version of European civilization before even it came into life in Europe, and therefore, European sciences had an autonomous discourse in Japan.¹⁰⁰ A similar de-Christianization process was undergoing in the Ottoman context as well, as Aydin suggests: “Most of the Muslim reformers ruling the Ottoman state saw values, institutions, and international norms in Europe as universal, not peculiarly Christian.”¹⁰¹ It was based on this abstract notion of civilization that later debates in Ottoman and Japanese contexts would be carried out.

There is no need to go into the details of the Ottoman context, since it constitutes the focus of this thesis, but it will be helpful to lay down the Japanese example in a more elaborate manner for further contextualization. Similar to the Muslim view of Christianity and Judaism as earlier religions sent by the same God but distorted by their believers, after which, Islam was sent as a revised and finalized version, in the Japanese case, upon recognizing certain similarities between Buddhism and Christianity, we see an understanding of Christianity as a distorted and even heretic sect of Buddhism from the first contact with the Jesuits in the sixteenth century until the nineteenth century.¹⁰² Moreover, whereas Bernardino de Avila Giron wrote in 1619 that “it seems that the Devil has taught them many things of our holy religion because there are similarities, both great and small, observed in many manners,”¹⁰³ there was a similar perception of Christianity in Japan, as we can see in the example of a Zen monk Sessō Sosai, who in 1648 wrote that Jesus was in fact a simple man who studied together with the students of Buddha and

⁹⁹ Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 21-24.

¹⁰⁰ Jason Ananda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 102-103.

¹⁰¹ Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 21.

¹⁰² Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, 49.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 58.

thus learned something out of their belief, but still missed the essence of it, which makes his religion a distorted and imitated version of Buddhism.¹⁰⁴

In the nineteenth century, there was a new trend, that of utilizing the similarities not for enmity but as a proof of chances to catch up with what the West had. In 1791, for instance, Hattori Nakatsune wrote in his treatise *Sandaiko* that all the European scientific findings were compatible with the Japanese tradition:

“Recently, the peoples of countries in the far west have mastered navigation and sailed around [the world]. They have surveyed the earth and [learned that] it is round. They have been able to determine that the earth floats in the sky, and [to master] the movements of the sun and moon... [Ancient Japanese explanations], when viewed with [the European ones] do not depart from [the latter] even a little. Thus, one can realize the truth of the ancient transmissions.” ... In other words, Hattori argues that the ancient Japanese texts anticipate Western astronomy, a claim that would be repeated by different National Science scholars over the course of the next seventy years.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, similar to the Young Ottomans who regarded the European practice of representative government compatible with the Islamic tradition with reference to the concept of *meşveret*, in Japan, from the mid-nineteenth century on, Confucian thinkers saw in certain Western practices the ideals of Confucianism, from which the contemporary Tokugawa government had drifted apart. In translating the concept of civilization into Japanese context, these intellectuals preferred the term *bunmei*, which referred to “refinement of human character and social life through learning and morality,” in a way to correspond to the Enlightenment idea of linear and endless progress.¹⁰⁶ Thus, progress was translated into a Japanese ideal. Furthermore, again, resembling the late Ottoman Islamist discourse that was based on the idea that Islam was the source of modernity and Muslims had fallen back of the West only because they left the original Islam, certain Japanese intellectuals argued that European physics was born out of ancient Japanese wisdom that the modern Japanese had ignored. Okuni Takasama (1792-1871), for example, suggested that “Western science originates in Japan and was a gift to mankind by the Japanese gods. Because Shinto deities both created the universe and the way to study it, Shinto offers unique insights into the nature of the world that are beyond the ken of the Western researchers because they cannot arrive at true first principles.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁰⁶ Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 25-26.

¹⁰⁷ Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, 127.

In conclusion, in the late Ottoman historiography that has been constituted in Turkey, there is a disturbing tendency to separate the late Ottoman history from the nineteenth-century Middle East. Ottoman reforms have been presented as proof of the empire willing to Westernize itself and, in an alternative reading, separating itself from the backward East. One can witness the same problem with Ottoman intellectual history, where, most studies present individual intellectuals individually, and when they contextualize, they usually limit themselves to the Ottoman and European intellectual currents. As demonstrated in this chapter, what the late Ottomans dealt with was no different than what the rest of the region dealt with, and in this global context, their responses came from within a common discourse. In the next chapter, I will begin by presenting the Eastern Question as the political context of the nineteenth century and situate the civilizational claims of the European Orientalist scholars into it. After setting the first context, I will continue with the intellectual context, from within which I will attempt to read Ali Suavi's thought.

CHAPTER 2

OTTOMAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS

In the preceding chapter I tried to lay down the nineteenth-century Ottoman modernization and the emergence of the Middle East as part of the same global framework; discussed the conceptual toolkit we have for the modern Middle East, Ottoman Empire, and the West; and argued for a broader context with references to East Asian intellectuals of the same period. In this chapter, I will first set the political context which was shaped to a great extent by the Eastern Question and then discuss how, in relation to the political upheavals and the Western civilizational discourse, various local responses utilizing a common discourse came into life.

As Doğan Gürpınar points out, the nineteenth-century Ottoman bureaucratic mind was concerned with “modernization, security, and incorporation into the ‘civilized world’.”¹⁰⁸ In a letter written by Ali Paşa (1815-1871) to the Russian Ambassador Ignatieff (1832-1908) as a response to the Russian protest regarding Ottoman attitude towards Crete, one can see an instance of the tension among the statesmen in late Ottoman Empire to defend not only the interests of the state they had been serving but also to defend their civilization:

It is appropriate for the current interests of Russia to treat us as ignorant of our own interests, anti-Christians, barbarians, enemies of social progress, a government incapable of governing Christians. It would be impossible to divert it. No matter how hard we protest these charges and produce supporting evidence. ... I know that the imperial government of Russia supports the opposite of what I advance and bases its judgement on the tyranny of the Turks against the Christians. But if Prince Gortchakow, who is a just man, saw Turkey and the Turks with his own eyes, if he could have seen for himself the progress made over the past 20 years, I am more than persuaded of it, he would have a totally different idea. ... In the administrative and judicial order we are still far from the degree of improvement which the European nations have already achieved. What government or people got there in one day? ... We have walked, we walk, and we will walk resolutely and energetically on the path of reform, provided that we are treated with a little more leniency and that we are not robbed of the help and sympathy of our fellow Christians by promises and encouragement.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 179.

¹⁰⁹ Salih Münir Paşa, *La Politique Orientale de La Russie* (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 2000), 71-73. [my translation.]

Why did Ali Paşa feel responsible for offering a self-criticism alongside a defense of his empire, suggesting that they were walking on the path of progress? Why did he express his uneasiness with the European powers intervening in the Ottoman Empire's domestic politics on behalf of the Christian Ottoman subjects? Where does civilizational discourse stand in the Eastern Question? I begin in the next part with a discussion of the Eastern Question.

A Prelude to the Eastern Question?

When did the Eastern Question begin? Writing at the heat of the First World War and at the peak of Western claims of civilizational superiority, John MacDonald dates the beginning of the Eastern Question to 1699, when the Turkish retreat from the Christian Europe began.¹¹⁰ This is the result of a highly racialized perception of history from a presentist perspective:

Why have the Turks never coalesced with other races as their Turanian kinsfolk, the Bulgars, have done? Is it that the Turkish mind was stereotyped by an exclusive, despotic religion of cast-iron dogma that regulated every act and concern of life, a religion that relegated the adherents of every other faith to a servile state; whereas the Bulgarian mind fell under the influence of a progressive, humane faith, capable of illimitable enlargement? ... There is no instance, it has been said, of a Mahometan people turning Christian.¹¹¹

His conceptions of the East and the West and his assumption of Muslims constituting a racial category seem sharp. Even when he comes closer to develop an objective perspective to the Ottoman Empire, as in the case of his interpretation of the era of Mehmed II, he somehow manages to divert to his civilizational bias. In his words, "The Conqueror was a lover of art and literature. He was a Latin, Greek, Arabic, Persian scholar. But though the character and conduct of earlier Sultans were in many ways admirable, the system they stood for was irreconcilable with what Europe understand by progress, by civilization."¹¹² His view of both Europe and the East is holistic and essentialist, yet unoriginal. He depended on a conceptual toolkit that was historically constructed. In this section, then, I will begin with discussing how this kind of sharp conceptualizations came into life with reference to the political context of the Eastern Question. Since this was perceived by the Western commentators and historians alike as a war between

¹¹⁰ John MacDonald, *Turkey and the Eastern Question* (New York: Dodge Publishing, 1913), 36.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 34.

civilizations, I will focus on what matters for this section and start with the Greek Revolt of 1821.

First of all, the Serbian revolt of 1804 and the Greek revolt of 1821 were different from each other in that the former had been a reaction against the despotism and corruption of the janissaries, whereas the latter seemed to be inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution.¹¹³ Another difference was the European public opinion siding with the Greeks against the Ottoman Empire. As was decided after the Napoleonic Wars to put an end to wars and rebellions, which had been causing instability in inter-imperial relations for some time, European powers would not encourage uprisings and not support the rebels. Thus, they did position themselves accordingly when the Greeks revolted, and they did not intervene on behalf of the Greeks.¹¹⁴ However, European public opinion was in favor of the Greek cause thanks to a misleading historical sense of romanticism that associated the modern Greeks with the ancient Greeks, something that would constitute a point of reference for Ottoman critics.

As Cemil Aydın asserts, the Greek War of Independence, together with the French occupation of Algeria at around the same time, were the initial blows on the established understanding among the European powers to protect the territorial integrity of the concert of Europe and to abstain from any potentially harmful acts.¹¹⁵ The latter had started as an occupation that unintentionally turned into colonization, as Hourani suggests, because after destroying the Ottoman government in Algeria, the French did not want to withdraw easily, neither did they know what to do next in order not to lose what they gained; thus, they moved into the interior to set up their own government there.¹¹⁶ Combined with the European public opinion in favor of the Greek revolt against a Muslim empire, the French invasion would have a different impact on the Christian and Muslim identities.¹¹⁷ It was, as Dimitrije Djordjevic puts it, “the philhellenic movement in the West based on the romantism and the classicism of the European liberal bourgeoisie”¹¹⁸ that played a significant role in triggering sympathy for the Greek revolt in the European public opinion. In the early nineteenth century, Chateaubriand’s *Itineraire de Paris a Jerusalem* (1811), Lamartine’s *Dernier chant du pelerinage de Childe Harold* (1825),

¹¹³ A. L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923* (New York: Longman, 1996), 15.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹⁵ Cemil Aydın, “The Emergence of Transnational Muslim Thought, 1774-1914,” in *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 127.

¹¹⁶ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), 269-271.

¹¹⁷ Aydın, “The Emergence of Transnational Muslim Thought, 1774-1914,” 128.

¹¹⁸ Dimitrije Djordjevic, *Revolutions Nationales Des Peuples Balkaniques 1804-1914* (Beograd: Institut d’Histoire, 1965), 47. [my translation]

and Victor Hugo's *Les Orientales* (1825-8) had made a great impact over the French people who did not yet forget the humanistic principles of revolution.¹¹⁹ To elaborate more on this issue, I continue with the example of French diplomat Comte de Marcellus (1795-1861).

In a period when the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* were made regular reading materials in the European education system and where there was an intellectual hunger to find out more about the ancient Greek philosophy, as embodied in the search for the true location of Homer's Troy at the turn of the nineteenth century,¹²⁰ the Greek revolt broke out. For Marcellus was a French royalist and most benefited from the restoration of power in France in the hands of the monarchy, and Napoleon III's rule was the period of *la mission civilisatrice* of France, Gonda Van Steen prefers to take Marcellus, a French traveler and also secretary of the French ambassador at Constantinople, into the center of analysis. One more reason is of course the fact that he contributed on the discursive level to Greece's transition from being a part of the Ottoman Empire to a nation-state with its own foundational narrative.¹²¹

Marcellus's view of the Greeks was initially not entirely positive: if he saw the necessity to rescue the Venus of Melos from the Muslim fanaticism, he also regarded the Greeks as incapable of preserving the Venus as they were also infected by the same Muslim fanaticism under the Ottoman rule for hundreds of years. Thus, he needed to rescue Venus to the civilized world, namely, France.¹²² On another occasion, however, he revealed clearly that he perceived the Greeks more favorable over the Turks: the former was still Oriental and incapable of suppressing his greediness for treasure, yet it was also Western enough to act with bravery and claim independence from the latter.¹²³ Furthermore, in his narration of his rescue operation for the Venus, he refers to French classical works as well as Lord Byron's tales, on which he bases his story. The plot is a commonly used story of "abduction from the *harem*." According to this, there is a couple in love, but the woman is taken captive by the janissaries to be presented to the sultan as a gift. When the man makes a plan to rescue her from the palace, he gets caught and is brought before the sultan. As he makes himself clear to the sultan, the latter is influenced by his bravery and lets him get his lover back. Making the Venus resemble the captive woman

¹¹⁹ Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil, *Tanzimat'ın Fransız Efkâr-ı Umumiyesinde Uyandırdığı Akisler* (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940), 1.

¹²⁰ Günay Uslu, *Homer, Troy and the Turks: Heritage and Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1870-1915* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 36-37.

¹²¹ Gonda Van Steen, *Liberating Hellenism from the Ottoman Empire: Comte de Marcellus and the Last of the Classics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6-7.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 35-36.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 28.

and the brave young man himself, Marcellus, tries to make his point.¹²⁴ The Orientalism towards the Greeks was also part of the deal, but nevertheless, the Greeks were, as mentioned, still more favorable than the Turks: they only needed to be awakened, and rise up to their past glorious days because their ancestors had given life to the idea of freedom and they fell captive in the hands of the tyrant Muslim Turks whereas the latter had a problem in the very essence of their religious faith and culture.

This European sympathy towards the Greeks in the course of the Greek War of Independence was not suddenly triggered by a sense of a Christian minority group rising against a Muslim empire, but the result of a long-standing intellectual and educational practice. In the eighteenth-century poetry, one can see comparisons of Greece between ancient and modern periods only to the favor of the former, written by people who had never themselves been to Greece but writing as informed by other writings and as well as Greek classics. According to these writings, such as the poem of James Thomson (1700-1748), *Liberty, A Poem*, even the nature of Greece mentioned in ancient Greek literature was in deterioration.¹²⁵ In another example, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), who had never been to Greece either, suggested in 1772 upon the first Greek rebellion against the Ottoman rule that “there is no permanent national character; it varies according to the circumstances. Alexander the Great swept India; now the Turks sweep Greece.”¹²⁶ Moreover, the long-standing educational practice, as institutionalized in England, should not be forgotten either: “for upper class Englishmen in the late medieval and especially early modern period, classical education was the only kind of humanistic higher education available,”¹²⁷ and the interest in the Greek and Roman classics would rise at the end of the eighteenth century to peak together with the Greek Revolt of 1821. This trend would continue with the public schools in England, where the ruling elite, having a racialized notion of aristocracy and civilization, wanted to keep the entrance into bureaucratic ranks harder for non-elite children and made classics an important part of education, which proved with the result of elimination of Indian children, for example.¹²⁸

Moreover, it was upon this institutionalized and gradually developed sympathy towards the idea of Greece that the momentary developments like Lord Byron’s secular martyrdom for the Greek

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 56-58.

¹²⁵ Terence Spencer, *Fair Greece Sad Relic: Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1954), 247-249.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹²⁷ Jerry Toner, *Homer’s Turk: How Classics Shaped Ideas of the East* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 7.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-11.

cause and his preceding romantic support through his poetry played a role to trigger European public opinion in favor of the Greeks. Such others as Chateaubriand and Marcellus, for example, became more vocal supporters of the Greek cause after Byron's death in 1824.¹²⁹ Lord Byron (1788-1824), similar to Johnson, usually made a distinction between the ancient Greeks and their descendants, and in his poems he utilized the idea of ancient Greece as the mother of freedom and the modern Greeks as indebted to their ancestors saving that freedom from the Turkish tyrants.¹³⁰ On the other hand, what he did and wrote for the Greek cause put aside, David Katz argues that Byron was tricked into fighting for a cause he did not believe. He was a supporter of the idea of Greece as having some sort of autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, as the colonies of Britain had at the time, which he had expressed as his will to see the Greeks not as slaves but free subjects of the empire.¹³¹ He did not believe the Greeks could achieve independence at all either, likening their situation in the face of the Ottomans to the position of the Jews against the whole world.¹³² Yet, he was still remembered as an ardent supporter of the Greek cause and turned into a celebrated figure for his martyrdom. Thanks to such episodes of romantic support for the Greek cause in the European public opinion, there emerged similar sentiments, and this turned into a pressure on European governments to intervene on behalf of the Greeks against the Ottoman Empire. The Battle of Navarino, in 1827, came as a result of this pressure.

Was there a unified Christian West attacking a Muslim empire and its Muslim partner, or is it a later development that we come to see the image of the West as a singular and homogenous unity? For the first part of the question, I suppose that it is enough to survey a small sample of European newspapers; the second part of the question will hopefully, although partially, be answered as I go into a detailed discussion of the intellectual context. In the French paper *la Quotidienne*, following the destruction of the Ottoman and Egyptian squadrons, on 12 November 1827, for instance, the matter was discussed with the French interests in mind. Although the article begins with glorifying the act of war as an act of humanity and an instance of civilization prevailing over barbarism, in the final analysis it was deemed potentially harmful to the French benefits. It was suggested that France was tricked into the operation and helped the British and Russian in destroying the joint Ottoman-Egyptian fleet, but it was not an action to the benefit of the French. Of course the Turks were merciless towards the Greeks and were

¹²⁹ Steen, *Liberating Hellenism from the Ottoman Empire*, 43.

¹³⁰ Spencer, *Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron*, 288-294.

¹³¹ David S. Katz, *The Shaping of Turkey in the British Imagination, 1776-1923* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 97.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 113-114.

hostile to the Christians in general, which derived from their religion Islam, but the Turkish atrocities in Greece had been going on for years, and no one intervened; now, when the European ambassadors were in Constantinople to make a treaty, and there was no official declaration of war against the Ottomans, they were attacked. The newspaper suggests that it was to the benefit of the British and interestingly, to the advantage of the Ottomans, because what Mahmud II and the British were fearing of, namely, the possibility of Muhammad Ali becoming too powerful was no more possible, given his fleet destroyed. The British possessions in India were no more under the threat of a possible French-Egyptian cooperation either.¹³³

There are examples of British newspapers where the matter was discussed with reference to international law. An article on the *London Evening Standard* begins with an assessment of the battle: “That the Turks were carrying on an exterminating war against the Greeks cannot be denied,” therefore, “the annihilation of their fleet was not only justifiable but praiseworthy. It was the result not only of a *right* but of a *duty*.”¹³⁴ Yet, the matter in question, as the newspaper asserts, is not that of the mercilessness of the Turks and the suffering of the Greeks; the ambassadors of the allies were present in Constantinople to negotiate the terms for de-escalation of the conflict and hopefully sign a treaty to end it all when the allied forces sank the Turkish and Egyptian warships. In terms of law of nations, the newspaper says, it was an act of lawlessness and required justification on legal terms.

Another British newspaper, the *Morning Post*, went harsh in its language towards the British government. Resembling the examples presented above in its style, the newspaper begins by condemning the Turkish barbarism against the Greeks and explains that even though the Turks acquired Greece in the same manner as the British acquired India, America, and Ireland, the former lost its right to rule over Greece by the manner in which she ruled over the Greeks. Then, however, despite how justifiable it was to destroy the Turkish fleet, the event is condemned: “We need to add but little to what has been said of the battle of Navarin, for the country has already pronounced its verdict. This verdict is – the three practical powers, in this battle, were guilty of a most outrageous violation of public law, and it has imprinted an indelible stain on British honour.”¹³⁵

In order to have a bigger sample, one can count on the French press and its observations of the Ottoman Empire after the proclamation of the Gülhane Rescript as well. *Le Siecle, Presse,*

¹³³ *La Quotidienne*, November 12, 1827.

¹³⁴ *London Evening Standard*, December 2, 1827.

¹³⁵ *Morning Post*, January 1, 1828.

L'Univers, Le National, Le Temps and others had a positive view of the reform charter. Some of them received the reform promise as a turning point for the whole region, namely, the East, where other societies would consequently follow the example of the Ottomans to Westernize themselves.¹³⁶

As these examples reveal, there was not a singular West or Western interest at the time. There was more or less a common Western perception of the Ottoman Empire as barbarous, whose barbarity derived from its religion Islam. However, it was still regarded as part of the international law: the empire could label the Greeks not as freedom fighters but rebels according to its laws and fight them accordingly. Soon after this crisis, the first Muhammad Ali crisis (1831-1833) broke out, and the same powers were this time on the side of the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman Empire's Eastern Question

The first crisis became a crisis in the international sense of the term in 1833, with Muhammad Ali's army, led by his son Ibrahim, expanding its control over Syria and moving into the interior of Anatolia, only to stop in Kütahya. It was after this stage that Russia and Austria agreed to stop Muhammad Ali in order to prevent the potential collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which, if happened, would mean a new competition between the European powers after the Napoleonic Wars as there would be something new to share: Ottoman territories.¹³⁷ On the other hand, when the crisis first broke out, the British were busy at the North Sea and did not want to intervene on behalf of the Ottomans and invest their time, energy, and money as well as military power by sending their fleet to the Mediterranean, whereas the French were, though not busy at the time, indifferent to Muhammad Ali's advancements in Syria.¹³⁸ In fact, they sometimes regarded him as *un continueur* of what Napoleon Bonaparte had started in Egypt.¹³⁹ Therefore, when Russia intervened and guaranteed an earlier deal with the Ottoman Empire, the British and French were a little too late.

In 1834, Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty was signed between the Ottomans and the Russians. The problem with this treaty was, from the British perspective, a secret clause on the Straits. There was the Straits Convention signed in 1809 between the British and the Ottomans, guaranteeing

¹³⁶ Siyavuşgil, *Tanzimat'ın Fransız Efkâr-ı Umumiyesinde Uyandırdığı Akisler*, 4-7.

¹³⁷ Macfie, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, 20.

¹³⁸ Frederick Stanley Rodkey, *The Turco-Egyptian Question in the Relations of England, France, and Russia, 1832-1841* (Urbana: The University of Illinois, 1924), 14-15.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

that the Straits would be closed by the Ottomans to the warships in times of peace as well as war.¹⁴⁰ With the new treaty signed exclusively with the Russians, the Ottomans were becoming dependent upon Russia: the treaty granted Russia a prescript for military presence in the Straits and Istanbul if they were invited by the Ottomans, which meant that they could prepare for themselves an early seat at the table of a post-crisis international conference. In return for this favor, the Ottomans would close the Straits to foreign warships, meaning British and possibly French, heading to the Black Sea.¹⁴¹ On the other, as it is known from a letter Lord Palmerston wrote to his brother, Palmerston was comfortable with the treaty: Russians could not deploy troops to Constantinople unless asked by the Ottoman sultan himself; Ottoman sultan would not do such a thing as long as he was not threatened by Muhammad Ali; and lastly, Muhammad Ali could not attempt at starting another crisis if he was to lose the approval of the Great Powers.¹⁴²

When the second Egyptian crisis broke out in 1838 upon Muhammad Ali threatening the Ottoman government with proclamation of independence, the British intervened and tried to balance the position that Russia had obtained with the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi a few years ago, whereas the French took the wrong side. When the British signed exclusively with the Ottomans the Treaty of Baltalimani in 1838 to abolish monopolies in order to blow an economic strike over Muhammad Ali while making for itself an economic profit, French had nothing to do but protest being excluded from the process.¹⁴³ Yet, the British intervention was limited because they were not willing to actively take part in the course of the crisis to help Mahmud in military terms, which could engender a crisis with the French and Russia, thus, Palmerston suggested Mahmud to take care of the problem of Muhammad Ali on his own.¹⁴⁴

As Palmerston himself saw it, Muhammad Ali's real purpose was to establish an Arab empire over the territories where Arabic was spoken, yet he was not bothered with it in principle. He was bothered with the fact that this would be at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and this could mean the dismemberment of the empire, which, was not acceptable to the British interests as the Ottomans proved a good ally *en route* to India.¹⁴⁵ Thus, in the second crisis (1839-1841),

¹⁴⁰ Barbara Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870-1877* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973), 17-18.

¹⁴¹ Macfie, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, 21-22.

¹⁴² Rodkey, *The Turco-Egyptian Question*, 43.

¹⁴³ Philip E. Mosely, *Russian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Eastern Question in 1838 and 1839* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 99-100.

¹⁴⁴ Rodkey, *The Turco-Egyptian Question*, 76-77.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

the British sided with the Ottomans whereas the French preferred Muhammad Ali, and thus, in the London Convention of 1840, the latter was excluded. France approached to the Anglo-Ottoman alliance a little too late.¹⁴⁶ A year later, there would be a new treaty collectively signed with the Ottomans, including France, setting the status of the Straits to what it was back in the 1809 Treaty.¹⁴⁷ Instead of a summary of the events of the early nineteenth century, I prefer to finish with a short statement by A. L. Macfie, “In the nineteenth century, following the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815) ... it concerned the attempts of the subject peoples and their rulers to secure some degree of autonomy or independence, and the effects of the Great Powers either to contain these tensions thereby generated or to exploit them to their own advantage.”¹⁴⁸

Tanzimat Reforms in Education and Jurisdiction

Tanzimat reforms were carried out within the political context that I presented above. In this section I prefer to leave administrative and economic reforms aside and limit the scope to a discussion of the reforms in education and jurisdiction as relevant to the Young Ottoman opposition. Reforming the imperial education was, on the contrary to what could have been expected from a self-reforming state, long ignored by the Tanzimat reformers, until the 1860s. There was no administrative body established to govern the imperial education from a single center until after 1856. When the idea of reforming the imperial education was taken seriously, it was not a one-way secularization; alongside an increase of secular knowledge in the curriculum, Islamic and traditional courses preserved their place and sometimes increased in number together with the former.¹⁴⁹ This can be explained with reference to Ottoman agency. As Benjamin Fortna argues, “the late Ottoman state assigned education the conflicted task of attempting to ward off Western encroachment by adapting Western-style education to suit Ottoman needs.”¹⁵⁰

Fortna also considers Ottoman educational reforms as part of a global trend: in Russia, Japan, and China, as well as in major European countries like France, there were simultaneous efforts

¹⁴⁶ Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 13-14.

¹⁴⁷ Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870-1877*, 18-19.

¹⁴⁸ Macfie, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, 1.

¹⁴⁹ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *Osmanlı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi (1839-1908): İslamlaşma, Otokrasi ve Disiplin* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 22-23.

¹⁵⁰ Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8-12.

put into education. French experience was of course different than what the listed countries, including the Ottoman Empire, experienced. In these countries, education was regarded as a means of creating a better future for the state by educating the society and raising better trained soldiers, teachers, bureaucrats, and engineers for the state.¹⁵¹ Common point put aside, each case has their own peculiarities as well, and I will focus on the Ottoman case here.

After the Crimean War, in 1856, Ottoman Empire declared a new set of reforms to enhance the situation of its non-Muslim subjects. Education was on the list as well: non-Muslims were granted the right to set up their own community schools to educate their children the way they wanted, on the condition of being subject to regulations of the imperial educational system. In these schools, non-Muslim children would learn their own religion and language from the teachers chosen by their religious community leaders. They were also free to attend Ottoman civil and military schools if they wished.¹⁵² Beginning in 1860, there were efforts to unify Muslim and non-Muslim education under a single imperial umbrella in order to counter the effect of foreign missionary schools in the Ottoman realm. With the help of their home countries, foreign missionaries were able to establish schools wherever they wanted. They were functioning well and attracting Muslims as well as non-Muslim Ottomans.¹⁵³ Success of community schools and foreign missionary schools thus led the Ottoman bureaucratic elite to reconsider their reform agenda for education.¹⁵⁴ Put together with the European pressures, a first example of the Ottoman effort for unification came with the foundation of the Galatasaray Lycée.

Upon the Cretan revolt in 1866, French government sent the Ottoman government a list of reforms to be carried out in order to ameliorate the condition of non-Muslims. French demands can be listed as the inclusion of non-Muslims in state service, an integrated educational system to unify Muslims and non-Muslims, Christians to have a role in local administration, property rights to foreigners, etc. Public Education Act of 1869 emerged within this context, under the influence of French Minister of Education, Jean Victor Duruy.¹⁵⁵ Foundation of a Franco-Ottoman lycée was therefore part of this wider framework. Administration of the lycée was French; director was chosen by the French; the overarching system to be followed in education was that of *lycées napoleonién*; only the assistant director would be Ottoman. An eight years of

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 31-33.

¹⁵² Somel, *Osmanlı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi*, 66-68.

¹⁵³ Emine Ö. Evered, *Empire and Education under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 22-24.

¹⁵⁴ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 74-75.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 99-101.

education was deemed ideal; first three years would prepare Ottoman children who were coming from the traditional system to adapt to the French system and the remaining five years would be the period for a proper education to be taken.¹⁵⁶ All this, however, would change in a decade, and even more radically after the appointment of Ali Suavi as the director in 1877. First, it came under attack by conservative critics: according to them, Galatasaray Lycée was an instrument for the French to increase their influence in the Ottoman Empire. Its French director departed in a few years and succeeded by a number of Ottoman officials, as opposed to the designated plan.¹⁵⁷ Directorship of Ali Suavi should be regarded as part of this trend but it will be discussed later in a separate part for practical purposes.

Another expression of Ottoman effort for unification of imperial education was the Regulation Act of 1869. There was a strong emphasis for the need to integrate non-Muslim schools into the imperial system in order to be successful in the attempt to create an Ottoman nation.¹⁵⁸ However, some of the articles in the regulation seem to have constituted a serious barrier for this purpose. In the Article 3, *sıbyan mekteps* were suggested to be set up separately for Muslim and non-Muslim children, where both groups would be taught their own religion.¹⁵⁹ In the Article 6, it was more specifically asserted that the non-Muslim children would be taught about the fundamentals of their religion by the teachers appointed by the religious community leaders.¹⁶⁰ In Article 18, separate *rüşdiye* schools were proposed for Muslims and non-Muslims.¹⁶¹

The supposed failure in educational reforms would constitute an important point of criticism in opposition by the Young Ottomans and Ali Suavi. Another source of their disturbance was the legal reforms and extraterritorial privileges enjoyed by the foreigners as well as non-Muslim Ottomans. To begin with the legal and judicial reforms, beginning with the establishment of *Meclis-i Vala-i Ahkam-ı Adliye* in 1838 and the criminal code of 1840, early legal and judicial reforms in the 1840s and 1850s were directed at state officials. This was, as Avi Rubin asserts, understandable for a state reforming itself on the grounds of increasing the efficiency of its

¹⁵⁶ François Georgeon, “Le Formation Des Elites a La Fin de l’Empire Ottoman, Le Cas Du Lycee de Galatasaray,” in *Sous Le Signe Des Reformes: Etat et Societe, de l’Empire Ottoman a La Turquie Kemaliste (1789-1939)*, by François Georgeon (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 2009), 77-79.

¹⁵⁷ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 104.

¹⁵⁸ Somel, *Osmanlı’da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi*, 215-216.

¹⁵⁹ “Appendix 1: Education Act of 1869 (Translated and Edited for Readability),” in *Empire and Education under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks*, by Emine Ö. Evered (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 206.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 209-210.

bureaucracy and therefore sustaining rational statecraft.¹⁶² The trials of Nafiz, Akif, and Hüsrev Paşas can be taken as an early example to this.¹⁶³ Thanks to their trials, Ottoman government found the opportunity to give a message to all the layers of bureaucracy about the new order and how it would be implemented regardless of personal reputation.¹⁶⁴

Furthermore, legal and judicial reforms continued to expand the area of influence in the 1860s and 1870s. Provincial laws of 1864 and 1871 constituted the basis of *Nizamiye* courts: in the provinces there were now three judicial bodies, namely, the *Shariah* court, the criminal tribunal, and the commercial court. Initially this whole system was still under the control of *şeyhülislam* as he was charged with appointments to these bodies.¹⁶⁵ Their later transformation is explained by Sedat Bingöl with the increasing dependence on the West in political and economic terms: in order to implement what was promised in the Gülhane Rescript regarding the equality of subjects regardless of religious faith, the empire needed a new judicial body other than the *shariah* based legal system.¹⁶⁶

The emerging situation cannot be defined as a duality of legal systems, however, according to Rubin. In reforming the imperial education, Ottoman reformers did not aim at establishing a secular system as I discussed above; in parallel to the increase in the secular content and practical knowledge in the curriculum, there was a rise in religious content as well. It was similar with the new legal system: *nizamiye* and *shariah* courts were not opposite ends but they were “rather two entwined components of a single judicial system converging in some aspects and departing in others.”¹⁶⁷ Instead of regarding the newly emerged legal framework as a duality of secular and religious laws, then, it is more appropriate to see it as an example of legal plurality where subjects were able to choose one judicial body over the other in order to manipulate the system to their own benefits.¹⁶⁸ Yet, this legal plurality would be targeted by the Young Ottomans later in the 1870s. As Mansfield suggests, in *shariah* there is clearly expressed tolerance for non-Muslims in a Muslim-led state; but going forward and recognizing the equality of the non-Muslims to the Muslims in legal terms was something new that originated in the secular European idea of equality, which meant disregarding the *shariah* for some

¹⁶² Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 23-24.

¹⁶³ Cengiz Kırılı, *Yolsuzluğun İcadı: 1840 Ceza Kanunu, İktidar ve Bürokrasi* (İstanbul: Verita, 2015).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 108-113.

¹⁶⁵ Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity*, 28-29.

¹⁶⁶ Sedat Bingöl, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı'da Yargı Reformu (Nizamiye Mahkemelerinin Kuruluşu ve İşleyişi 1840-1876)* (Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), 294-295.

¹⁶⁷ Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity*, 55.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

critics.¹⁶⁹ Namık Kemal, for instance, suggested that the Ottoman Empire was founded upon the principle of Islam and “whenever the foundation changes, the existence of the state is threatened with destruction,” in his discussion of borrowing from the French law.¹⁷⁰ Together with Ziya, they proposed an alternative: recognizing every subject of the empire as Ottoman; establishing a parliament with representatives from each religion; and introducing a *shariah* based legal code to be implemented in every single Ottoman court, since Islam was sufficient to provide the basis for a legal code that is appropriate for all, in their view.¹⁷¹

Extraterritoriality was equally regarded as an undermining factor for the Ottoman sovereignty. Capitulations that were first given to the Russians with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 were later granted to other European powers as well. At first, there was nothing to worry about, but especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, with an ever-increasing Ottoman dependency on European powers in terms of military and diplomatic support and higher volume of commercial activities, these extraterritorial privileges came to constitute a problem. European consuls and ambassadors started to sell these patents to non-Muslim Ottomans on the grounds that they were merchants facilitating trade between the empire and Europe. Soon these patents came to be bought and sold among the non-Muslim subjects as well.¹⁷² Furthermore, another disturbing aspect of extraterritoriality was, as Cemil Aydın points out, opening of “institutions of foreign courts in the Ottoman Empire and China,” which hinted at the fact that “the local courts were deemed insufficiently civilized to be able to try and judge European residents.”¹⁷³ In further elaboration on this, Aydın asserts that:

The idea of Western civilization’s superiority over societies and empires deemed racially and religiously inferior was crucial in the justification of these courts, because no such court existed in much weaker countries in Latin America or in Europe.¹⁷⁴

For Aydın, it was a claim of civilizational superiority based on religious and racial identity that was embodied in the European pressure. This would be responded by Muslim intellectuals as we will see in the example of Tahtawi, who distinguished the Coptic Christians of Egypt from the French, underlining that they both believe in the same religion but French superiority comes

¹⁶⁹ Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 64.

¹⁷⁰ Masami Arai, “Citizen, Liberty and Equality in Late Ottoman Discourse,” in *Penser, Agir et Vivre Dans l’Empire Ottoman et En Turquie*, ed. Nathalie Clayer and Erdal Kaynar (Paris: Peeters, 2013), 7.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8-10.

¹⁷² Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity*, 26-27.

¹⁷³ Cemil Aydın, “The Era of Imperial Self-Strengthening,” in *An Emerging Modern World 1750-1870* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 122-123.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

from their hardworking and had nothing to do with their religion, thus, we cannot regard the Coptic as similar to the French.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Ottoman *Nizamiye* courts can be described as an Ottoman judicial attempt to regain its sovereignty, by creating a new institution where Muslim and European legal traditions were to be implemented simultaneously.¹⁷⁶

The late Ottoman intellectual history has been mostly read with regards to its relationships, though mostly taken as one-sided, with the Western thought. The Young Ottomans and their idea of patriotism, liberty, and constitutional government, or the Young Turks and their liberalism, positivism, and revolutionary ideas, have been studied with respect to the European intellectual context. As a first step to establish an alternative reading, in the next section, I first reconstruct an image of the late Ottoman intellectual context and then continue with the parallels in the Arab Nahda.

Ottoman Intellectual Context

In this section I will focus on the nineteenth century intellectual context but in the opening, I would like to address the preceding period to demonstrate shift in the nineteenth century Ottoman political thought. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century there was a process of consolidation of the political power in the hands of fewer and fewer people. Discussing the nuanced views of preeminent Ottoman historians such as Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, Baki Tezcan, and Linda Darling, Marinos Sariyannis proposes a middle way and argues that it was a process which started with the powerful sultans like Mehmed II consolidating the power in their hands at the expense of other members of the ruling elite and continued with this power shifting to the institution of the state at the expense of the ruler. It is in this context that Sariyannis discusses how this transition was reflected in the Ottoman political thought.¹⁷⁷

In the sixteenth century, in texts of Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali (1541-1600), the term *devlet* was used to refer to the sultan himself, whose power could not in any way be delegated to someone else. From the beginning of the eighteenth century on, however, it came to be used to refer to other states as well, which was in a sense a desacralization of the term, as Sariyannis

¹⁷⁵ Rifa'a Rafi' Al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)*, trans. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi Books, 2011), 176-177.

¹⁷⁶ Aydın, "The Era of Imperial Self-Strengthening," 125.

¹⁷⁷ Marinos Sariyannis, "Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought," *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013): 84-87.

underlines.¹⁷⁸ To be more specific, in the sixteenth century Kınalızade Ali Çelebi (1510-1572) used for the first time the term *erkan-ı devlet*, which can be taken as closer to the meaning of state. In the same time period, an anonymous work using the term *beğlik* instead of *devlet* came still closer to the abstract notion of state. Yet, these were marginal examples from earlier periods.¹⁷⁹ By the end of the seventeenth century, the term *devlet* came to be used more commonly to refer to an abstract notion of the state: Naima used it in the plural to refer to the European states whereas Katip Çelebi (1609-1957) proposed a second definition to the term as being the human society or community.¹⁸⁰ By the early nineteenth century, there was no dispute regarding the definition of *devlet*, it was state as an abstraction and denoted something different than the concept of government, which was translated as *hükümet*.¹⁸¹ The dispute was, this time, about how to translate the European concept of civilization into the Ottoman context. Before going into the nineteenth century intellectual context, I will lay down the earlier discussions of reform and how they were justified.

Selim III's reign is associated with military reforms and beginning of other transformations in the Ottoman Empire. Adding to this, Fatih Yeşil argues that the intellectual context also accommodated to these transformations. Together with Ahmed Vasif Efendi (d. 1806) and others of the period, Ebubekir Ratib Efendi (d. 1799) was among those who tried to explain why reforms were needed in order to keep up with the changing world. His work was an attempt at justifying Selim's reforms against the anti-reform party, whose accusations were based on the observation that *irade-i cüziyye* was expanding its realm at the expense of *irade-i külliyye*, or to put it precisely, under Selim, human agency and reason were being regarded as more powerful than the God's will.¹⁸² This would be a concern for Ahmed Vasif Efendi as well.

Having been defeated in central Bulgaria by the Russian army, Selim wanted to learn about what his men had been thinking on the causes of losses in the battlefield and their possible resolutions to be followed. The Janissaries had stopped fighting in the middle of the war because, according to what they claimed, there was a shortage of supply that had made it impossible for them to continue. The news of their attitude traveled to Istanbul and therefore Selim asked twenty two men in his consultative assembly to write down from their perspectives

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 87-88

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 89-90

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 91-94.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁸² Fatih Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında Bir Osmanlı Katibi: Ebubekir Ratib Efendi (1750-1799)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011), 233-234.

about the reasons of Ottoman defeats and their proposals to change the situation.¹⁸³ Returns were in diversity: Enveri Efendi recommended a return to the *kanun-i kadim* and pointed out to the disregard of the *shariah* as the cause of defeats, for example, and if the erosion in the military units was God's will, enhancement of it could happen in the near future by God's will as well.¹⁸⁴ Sadrazam Koca Yusuf Paşa was in agreement with Enveri: the Ottoman government had been raising money by putting so much pressure on the *reaya* that the military defeats was in fact one way of God punishing the empire for its unjust rule. Having less in the treasury was a more preferable thing, because even in that condition, as long as they did not enrage the God, it could help them win.¹⁸⁵ Last but not least, Mehmed Hakkı proposed that soldiers should be taught their religion systematically as part of their military training, with such orthodox texts as those written by Birgivi.¹⁸⁶

In the same time period with these *layihas*, Ottoman ambassadors dispatched to European capitals were also writing down their observations on Europe.¹⁸⁷ Having been appointed as ambassador to Vienna, Ratib wrote a detailed report on his observations to be delivered to Selim. His *layiha* is more of a critique of the ardent opponents of reforms: the Ottoman army was defeated by the Russians because the latter was far better than the former, even though for centuries it was the Ottoman army being a source of inspiration for the European armies.¹⁸⁸ From this statement one can understand that Ratib meant to say that it could not be merely explained with God's will that the Ottoman armies had a long series of defeats in the battlefield but there was the reality of better training, discipline, and equipment. In addition, Selim's reforms were not intended as a direct emulation of European practices; in fact, it was through reforms that the Ottoman ruler had been seeking to take the empire back to its golden age and reassert the *kanun-i kadim*.¹⁸⁹

To continue with Ahmed Vasıf, a scribe and Selim's court historian, he was also writing from within a world where reforms were challenged by some *ulema* on the grounds that they were innovations, or *bid'a*, according to the Islamic law which prohibits Muslims from following any laws other than those of the God itself. Having to defend Selim's reforms in the face of

¹⁸³ Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 38-39.

¹⁸⁴ Ergin Çağman, *III. Selim'e Sunulan Islahat Layihaları* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2000), xvii-xviii.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, xxxii.

¹⁸⁶ Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 42.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁸⁸ Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında Bir Osmanlı Katibi*, 244.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 237-238.

rising opposition by ulema and the Janissaries, Ahmed Vasif interprets the situation with reference to both human reason and God's will, thus, offering a more harmonious explanation. Writing in 1792 upon the defeat against the Russians, he finds the main reason behind the Ottoman losses in the army consisting of sinners,¹⁹⁰ but then he also proceeds to human actions as a cause of the resulting defeat: utilizing the *hadith* "Hobble your camel and trust in God" as his justification, Vasif argues that "it is God's custom to create everything as an outcome of the secondary causes."¹⁹¹ In further elaboration on the issue, he asserts that the Russian army won because they were well equipped, trained, and disciplined in comparison to the Ottoman army.¹⁹² To put it precisely, he was trying to settle the long-standing dichotomy of human agency and God's will within the framework of Islam:

If man's deeds have, in fact, absolutely no effect or influence on the causes or the ability to influence the course of events, it is clearly the Lord God's divine custom to create a thing as an outcome of secondary causes. Indeed, this is close to what philosophers say: everything is contingent; what is contingent admits influence; and what admits influence cannot be without cause.¹⁹³

Vasif's view is not radically different from the common understanding of the preceding centuries. From the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, there were discussions among the Sunni theologians about the binary opposition between the human action and the God's will. Most early modern Sunni theologians were of the belief that only God had causal powers. According to this, if fire burns one's hands, it is not the fire that creates the sensation of burning but God, because things other than the God itself has no power to bring something into existence.¹⁹⁴

The debates in the early modern period were about where the boundaries between voluntary human action and involuntary bodily changes should be drawn: the act of praying was an example to the former, because it was ordered by the God and human beings were to be held responsible for not performing it since it was in humans' capacity; graying, however, was an example to involuntary bodily change against which human beings could do nothing because it was God's creation. Yet, there were critics of this belief, arguing in response that speaking of capacity for the actions, such as praying, that do not create anything, is in itself incoherent, and

¹⁹⁰ Ethan L. Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans: The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vasif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 178.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 227-228.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 228. [As quoted by Menchinger.]

¹⁹⁴ Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 294.

that seeing the God as the cause of human actions was problematic in terms of divine command and prohibition.¹⁹⁵ However, even after many debates, by the late seventeenth century it was still risky to speak of human actions as semi-independent from God's will. When Ibrahim Kurani suggested that God could directly bring about effects without utilization of secondary causes but it preferred the intermediacy of them, Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi responded with a letter, criticizing Kurani for not being clear enough: did he mean that God has partnership, or that human power has an independent effect?¹⁹⁶ Vasıf was, thus, trying his best within this intellectual context by combining Islamic tradition and secular reasoning in order to find a middle way in the face of opposition to reforms. Selim's final decision regarding the military training, after all the above mentioned *layihās*, for example, was also the result of such a combination: Western military drill to enhance the military capacity of the army and teaching the soldiers their religion through Birgivi's texts in order to mentally motivate and spiritually prepare them for the battle.¹⁹⁷

In the nineteenth century, debates on reform continued but this time they were accompanied with a new concept, that is, civilization. As I have tried to lay down in the preceding section of this chapter, there was a civilizational aspect of the Eastern Question that turned it into a Turkish Question of Europe. In this regard, I start with Mustafa Sami Efendi (d. 1855), whose *Treatise on Europe* presents a civilizational unity and a model to be followed by the Ottomans, and the Muslims in general.¹⁹⁸ Mustafa Sami's work is presented by Cemil Aydın as the first example of Ottoman intellectuals imagining a holistic image of the West in response to Western imagination of Asia and the Muslim world as geopolitical units.¹⁹⁹ Clearly, as I would agree with Aydın, Mustafa Sami has that image of the West as a whole, and he separates it from Christianity or any other cultural traits that the European Orientalists would associate with in the name of civilizational superiority claims.

First of all, there is a new, positive view of the West in Mustafa Sami's account from the very beginning, a change since Yirmisekiz Mehmed's account of France: he has a positive view of the practice of quarantine, suggesting that this was now being practiced in the Ottoman capital

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 295-297.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 299-303.

¹⁹⁷ Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 50.

¹⁹⁸ Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 17.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

as well, thanks to the sultan.²⁰⁰ Moreover, what is more interesting in his account is a notion of civilization that is clearly separated from religious faith and cultural traits, explaining the contemporary European civilization with regards to the Europeans' embracement of the past achievements and addition of new knowledge, in the part where he introduces to his audience the museums. According to this, European civilizational superiority does not derive from Christian religion; nor is it an inexplicable phenomenon. In the past, Muslim societies had respect to antiquities as well, the most extreme example being Mehmed II and his successors not touching the mosaics inside the Hagia Sophia even after it was turned into a mosque.²⁰¹ This suggests a reference to an imagined golden age in the Muslim history and an assurance that if it had happened before, it could happen again.

Furthermore, he makes it clear that the French people are intelligent, warm, and welcoming; they love joking around but always in a respectful manner; and they get serious on serious matters. They are hardworking, patriotic, and take their honor and reputation seriously.²⁰² Then, in a section where he collectively speaks of the Europeans, Sami Efendi suggests that Europe arrived at its current state of civilization thanks to knowledge and effort, which had nothing to do with their religion. Even a herdsman was capable of reading and writing his own letters, if not books. There were special schools for the visually handicapped children. They found vaccination and quarantine thanks to experimentation. These had nothing to do with their religion but were all about effort and hardworking.²⁰³

Through the end of his short treatise, Mustafa Sami makes his argument clear: civilization is a level of advancement that non-Western societies can arrive at if they followed certain steps that were taken by the Europeans before, and there is nothing to worry about emulating Christian societies because what they did to achieve civilization had nothing to do with their religion. In fact, what was now counted as European sciences were composed from what the Muslim Arabs had invented in the golden age of Islam. Thus, if the Muslim societies were ready to take certain necessary steps, since they were already gifted with the true religion it would be easier for them to achieve in a shorter amount of time what the Christian Europe had achieved after long efforts.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Mustafa Sami Efendi, *Bir Osmanlı Bürokratinin Avrupa İzlenimleri: Mustafa Sami Efendi ve Avrupa Risalesi*, ed. M. Fatih Andı (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 1996), 87.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

At the time Mustafa Sami wrote his treatise, translation of the concept of civilization was still problematic. French term *civilisation* had been in usage since the mid-eighteenth century, first time seen in its modern sense in 1757, in Mirabeau's *Traite de la Population* or *L'Ami des Hommes*.²⁰⁵ Mustafa Reşid used the term as *sivilizasyon* for the first time as an Ottoman in 1838. Since then there were efforts to replace it with a translation and *medeniyet*, a word deriving originally from Arabic roots m-d-n but completely made up by the Ottomans, would gain the first place in the second half of the century.²⁰⁶ Yet, it is also important to keep in mind that, as Baykara asserts, the concept of civilization never had a clear and well-framed definition for the Ottomans but defined as vaguely as possible, with reference to material progress, level of education, behaving respectfully towards other in everyday life, and sometimes relations between men and women.²⁰⁷ Mustafa Sami saw finding an address without having to ask anyone as a sign of civilization too, for example, what he witnessed in Europe thanks to direction signs on roads.²⁰⁸ This problem was not limited to the Ottomans; European travelers visiting the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century were no different in that they did not have a common definition for civilization either. Some regarded consumption of alcohol as a sign of civilization in the Ottoman context, since, as they saw it, it was an act against Islam, which was supposed to govern all matters of everyday life, whereas it was an unimportant European everyday activity. Thus, it was on the part of the Ottomans an act that brought them closer to the Western civilization: "I admired the proof of their progress in civilization," was what a traveler named MacFarlane said when he witnessed his Ottoman guards having a drink together with him during a meal.²⁰⁹

I continue with Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (1823-1895) as he was more elaborate in his definition of civilization and its place in the Ottoman context. Although Christoph Neumann heavily criticizes Ümit Meriç's work by suggesting that she interpreted Cevdet's statements under the influence of her political ideas and even when Cevdet was suggesting the opposite of what she believed, she tried to correct him,²¹⁰ I will still depend on Ümit Meriç's work as well as

²⁰⁵ Sendesni, *Regard de l'Historiographie Ottomane*, 119.

²⁰⁶ Tuncer Baykara, *Osmanlılarda Medeniyet Kavramı ve Ondokuzuncu Yüzyıla Dair Araştırmalar* (Akademi Kitabevi, 1992), 1.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁰⁸ Sami Efendi, *Avrupa Risalesi*, 113-115.

²⁰⁹ Baykara, *Osmanlılarda Medeniyet Kavramı*, 24-25.

²¹⁰ Christoph K. Neumann, *Araç Tarih Amaç Tanzimat: Tarih-i Cevdet'in Siyasi Anlamı* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), 10.

Neumann's revision with a careful reading for the purpose of tracing how Cevdet regarded the concepts of civilization and West.

In Cevdet's view, civilization is an abstract notion and not necessarily a Western phenomenon. He dates the origins of civilization to the first settlements as he deems central to the birth of civilization the transition from *bedeviyet* to *hadariyet*. From these first settled societies emerged a social contract and the state, and the emergence of the state is a milestone for Cevdet's conception of civilization. He portrays human beings as naturally having a tendency to act like animals and therefore they need to be ruled by an authority in order to prevent chaos and anarchy in the community. With all this order comes into life division of labor.²¹¹ Moreover, societies cannot always have the same level of civilization, as the Ottoman Empire was discussed as an example. Just as human beings who reach their most productive age one day get older and lose their productivity and health, societies fall behind others and lose their civilizational superiority.²¹²

Moreover, there is a moral-religious aspect of civilization in Cevdet. He sees the arrival of Islam as a marking point in history: prior to Islam is labelled as ancient history whereas after Muhammad was modern history. He associates the ancient history with foundation and decline of great states like the Assyria, the ancient Egypt and Greece, and the Roman Empire, all of which were sent a prophet or a messenger by God. Yet, in this classification he still underlines the fifteenth century as a special period where European advancement in sciences and arts started to triumph.²¹³ Religion is also important in the claim of moral superiority: Asia, as he positions against Europe, was the birthplace of earlier civilizations, and contrary to the latter, Asian civilizations did not solely depend on material development because Asia was where many prophets and the monotheistic religions were sent by God.²¹⁴

When he starts to compare the Islamic world, more precisely the Ottoman realm, with Europe, Cevdet has certain assertions that include references to religion and culture as homogenous and determining entities. He sees the *anasır-ı asliye* of the Ottoman state as the Turks, who, after Selim II's conquest of Egypt brought caliphate to the Ottoman realm and achieved the greatest level of civilization the empire ever experienced during the reign of Suleyman. After the late sixteenth century, civilization in the Ottoman realm started to gradually die out, or to put it

²¹¹ Ümid Meriç, *Cevdet Paşa'nın Cemiyet ve Devlet Görüşü* (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınevi, 1975), 23-27.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 28-29.

²¹³ Sendesni, *Regard de l'Historiographie Ottomane*, 123-124.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 120-122.

better, it moved away to the West.²¹⁵ Now, admitting the fact that the empire was behind the West where he sees the current address of civilization, Cevdet needed to discuss the issue of borrowing and learning from the better.

According to Cevdet, God's law is, beyond discussion, better than any law made by humans; it is perfect and does not need any changes. Yet, societies also need secular laws to govern certain worldly matters and these laws need to change, as do the needs of people.²¹⁶ Ottoman secular law could be changed and adapted to the present realities accordingly. Yet, was it appropriate to borrow from the Christian West? He regards Europe as a single, homogenous entity even though he is capable of distinguishing different categories among Europeans, such as atheist revolutionaries in France and monarchies in the rest of Europe. He regards Europe as a whole in terms of its advancements in science, technical knowledge, and education.²¹⁷ Regarding such advancements positively, Cevdet nevertheless sees European civilization morally problematic: their civilization arose on the sufferings of slaves in ancient Greece and Rome and later in the feudalism of Middle Ages. Islam on the contrary, discouraged class differentiation and encouraged brotherhood on the basis of common faith.²¹⁸

In addition, in Cevdet's thinking, Ottoman form of government was superior to the European forms of government of the period in that, there was a single ruler who embodied both political and religious authority.²¹⁹ Borrowing was, under these conditions, a serious matter to be discussed: transplantation does not work as European political institutions have a peculiar history of themselves and were built upon a European tradition whereas the Ottoman Empire was not part of that same history and it has a different tradition set by Islam.²²⁰ If, however, there is something to borrow, first thing to be done necessarily is a debate of the potential benefits and harms of that borrowing to the wider community.²²¹

Early Nahda Intellectuals

Nineteenth-century problematization of civilization was not limited to the Istanbul-based intellectual elite. There were of course nuanced perceptions and interpretations of the concepts

²¹⁵ Neumann, *Araç Tarih Amaç Tanzimat*, 80-85; Meriç, *Cevdet Paşa'nın Cemiyet ve Devlet Görüşü*, 32-35.

²¹⁶ Meriç, *Cevdet Paşa'nın Cemiyet ve Devlet Görüşü*, 38.

²¹⁷ Neumann, *Araç Tarih Amaç Tanzimat*, 145-147.

²¹⁸ Meriç, *Cevdet Paşa'nın Cemiyet ve Devlet Görüşü*, 43-45.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

²²¹ Neumann, *Araç Tarih Amaç Tanzimat*, 148-150.

of civilization and West between the Ottoman intellectual elite, who were also embedded to the ruling elite, and Ottoman Arab intellectuals, perhaps more so with the Christian Arabs. Yet, since both parties were part of a common intellectual context shaped by European imperialism and subject to a common Orientalist discourse of civilization, one can expect their responses to have common arguments. Thus, for a comparative perspective, I reflect on some of the leading Nahda intellectuals of the same period.

To begin with Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), he had a similar observation on the French people six years before Mustafa Sami wrote his treatise:

Change and caprice also are of their nature; they will change immediately from joy to sadness, or from seriousness to joking or vice versa, so that in one day a man will do all manner of contradictory things. But this is found in small matters; in great things, their views of politics do not change; every man remains in his beliefs and opinions.²²²

Tahtawi's work was translated into Turkish upon Muhammad Ali's demand, in 1838, to be read by his officials.²²³ It was also sent to Istanbul. One possibly true speculation on the similar remarks on France and Europe would be to suggest that these people were, even if not in close contact, at least aware of each others' works and intellectual milieu. A direct proof is Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi (d. 1890) advising his audience to read Tahtawi's *Takhlis al-Ibriz*, especially the chapter where he discusses the arts and sciences in France.²²⁴

In his account, Tahtawi criticizes certain social customs, like men's openness towards women, but he also glorifies certain other aspects of the French society, such as cleanliness of the streets, openness to learning new things, prolonged and planned education of children, work discipline, and disapproval of laziness.²²⁵ What makes Tahtawi's work important was, however, more than mere observations of France as what Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi had done in the previous century: Tahtawi was, in Youssef Choeiri's words, "perhaps the first to consider the rise of Islam as the result of 'the national bond' which united the Arabs into one single body."²²⁶ Taking pride in the Arab past, including the pre-Islamic ancient Egypt, Tahtawi made special reference

²²² Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 305. (as quoted in hourani)

²²³ Daniel L. Newman, "Part One: Introduction," in *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)* (London: Saqi Books, 2011), 46.

²²⁴ Youssef Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 18.

²²⁵ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 71.

²²⁶ Youssef Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History Nation and State in the Arab World* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 69.

to the Arab identity and made an early contribution to the discursive construction of Arab nation. In his history of Egypt which he wrote in 1868-69, he spared a part on ancient Egypt as well, explaining this by asserting that every person wants to know about their past to see how come they arrived at the present day and celebrate the achievements their country had.²²⁷ For Tahtawi, even long before they were introduced to Islam, the Arabs were generous, noble, and ready to help those in need. Whether Christian, Jewish, or pagan, the Arabs had been sharing these features.²²⁸

He opens his account by explaining the reason why he wrote it in the first place:

... to urge Islamic countries to examine the foreign sciences, the arts and the crafts. To be sure, the perfection of this to be found in the lands of the Franks... By God, during my stay in this country, I was grieved by the fact that it had enjoyed all those things that are lacking in Islamic kingdoms.²²⁹

The tension in his vision between the Western modernity and the condition of the East in general, or the so-called Muslim world in particular, is clear. Yet he does not see the West as developed because of its culture or religion, on the contrary, he universalizes the concept of civilization and seeks to trace the basics that contributed to the material progress of the Western countries, the basics, which can help Muslim societies to achieve civilization as well.

Tahtawi begins with a definition of civilization and a description of the contemporary condition of the Arab peoples. According to this, human beings did not possess any sort of prior knowledge about the matters of everyday life but gradually, willingly or accidentally, they started gaining knowledge about hunting, cooking, writing, building, and other crucial things concerning the life on earth. Some peoples went after their curiosity whereas the rest found enough of what they possessed.²³⁰ It is thus safe to say that according to Tahtawi, civilization and material progress were not taken for granted for any society. Framed within this context, he argues that Islamic countries had abstained from some of the philosophical branches, *al-ulum al-hikmiyya*, meaning positive sciences, so that now they had to borrow the knowledge from the West. This borrowing was contingent on historical processes and economic, military, technological, and scientific superiority was not intrinsic to what was deemed the Western

²²⁷ Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography*, 22-23.

²²⁸ Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism*, 71.

²²⁹ Newman, "Part One: Introduction," 105.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

civilization. At some point in history it was the Arabs who taught the rest of the world about philosophy and sciences, who also had borrowed from others.²³¹

In addition to universalization of the concept of civilization, one can observe de-Christianization of it as well. God favors the Franks, Tahtawi believes, but it “does this only because of their human qualities and because of their sciences – not because they are Christians.”²³² Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi shares the same reasoning and principally rejects the idea that the European success depends on Christianity: “Although it does urge the enforcement of justice and equality before the law, Christianity does not interfere in political behavior, because it is founded on the concept of retirement from the world and ascetism.”²³³ Yet Tahtawi further elaborates on his argument by asserting that:

You should know that the Parisians distinguish themselves from many Christians by their keen intelligence, profound perceptiveness, and depth of mind when treating recondite issues. They are not like the Coptic Christians, who display a natural tendency towards ignorance and stupidity.²³⁴

In contrast with Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi, who was dispatched as an Ottoman ambassador to France in 1720, Tahtawi finds a lot in France as to be taken as a model for reforms at home. Yirmisekiz Mehmed had held a positive view of the French courts, libraries, hospitals, factories, and fortresses but he had also criticized certain aspects of the social life. He had refrained from presenting the French as an example to follow.²³⁵ We can understand he was surprised when he mentions that in France, women have a stronger reputation than men, they do whatever they want, and men cannot reject their wishes; even the most royal man respects the lowest of women.²³⁶ This astonishment recurs in Tahtawi: “The men are slaves to the women here, and under their command, irrespective of whether they are pretty or not.”²³⁷ Yet Tahtawi, although feeling himself required to justify his argument with reference to Islamic tradition, does not take social differences as an obstacle before following the French model as was the case with Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi. Moreover, as Aydın argues and I discussed in the Ottoman intellectual context with specific examples, after the 1830s there emerged a new conception of

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

²³² *Ibid.*, 114.

²³³ Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, *The Surest Path: The Political Treatise of a Nineteenth-Century Muslim Statesman*, ed. and trans. Leon Carl Brown (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 80.

²³⁴ Al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris*, 176-177.

²³⁵ Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 17-18.

²³⁶ Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi, *Paris'te Bir Osmanlı Sefiri: Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi'nin Fransa Seyahatnamesi*, ed. Şevket Rado (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 19.

²³⁷ Al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris*, 180-181.

the West as a singular and universal geographical unit.²³⁸ Thereafter the debate about whether it was appropriate to borrow from the West would be built upon this assumption of the West as a coherent unit, as I have also discussed in the Ottoman intellectual context with specific examples.

For Tahtawi, the French is an example to be followed because it proves that hardworking and curiosity to go after more are the prerequisites for civilization. After comparing the climate, soil, and water in Egypt and Paris, he asserts that “If it were not for the Parisians’ sagacity, skill, excellent organization and their commitment to the interests of their country, their city would be worth nothing at all.”²³⁹ Even though he takes pride in his Arab identity for his idealized Arab golden age, he accepts the contemporary situation as Western superiority over the rest of the world and sees no harm in taking the knowledge from where it is. Referring to a famous *hadith*, which encourages Muslims to “seek knowledge even if it is in China,” Tahtawi tries to legitimize his argument for learning from the West. In his view, if this kind of relationship involves an advantage for Muslims, then there is no harm in it.²⁴⁰ This argumentation would be an earlier example to the later discussions on the topic by such intellectuals as Mustafa Sami Efendi, Sadık Rıfat Paşa, Butrus al-Bustani, Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, and, the Young Ottomans.

A problem with Tahtawi’s view is that he does not regard the development of sciences in Europe as a historical process. It was what the Arabs had possessed before; Europeans borrowed the knowledge from the Arabs at a time of political instability in the Arab countries; and now that there was a strong leader, Muhammad Ali, around whom was established a centralized government, the Arabs could return back to their dealings with the sciences and take back from Europe what was theirs.²⁴¹ Another problem is perhaps the linear understanding of time and progress: he suggests that “The more you go back in time, the more you see the backwardness of people in regard to human industry and the knowledges of civilization. And the farther forward in time we look, the more you can see their progress and advancement.”²⁴² Combination of the two makes it easier in Tahtawi’s eyes for Arabs to reclaim civilization and leave Europe behind again.

²³⁸ Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 16-18.

²³⁹ Al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris*, 173.

²⁴⁰ Newman, “Part One: Introduction,” 115.

²⁴¹ Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography*, 29-30.

²⁴² Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, “Introduction,” in *An Emerging Modern World 1750-1870* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 26. [As quoted by Conrad and Osterhammel.]

Dyalah Hamza rightly criticizes the current literature on Arab intellectual history by suggesting that Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* has set the framework for the historiography since it was first published; all its in-depth analyses and information aside, there is one misleading aspect: Hourani establishes a dialectics of impact and reaction as a general framework into which he situates the Arab intellectual currents in the nineteenth century.²⁴³ An example of his influence on the literature can be seen in the way Anouar Abdel-Malek, a political scientist, presents the edited volume, *Contemporary Arab Political Thought*, which was first published in 1983:

The texts presented here have been chosen as a way of answering one main question: what is the content of contemporary Arab thought? There is no longer any doubt that such thought exists. Even since 1945, and particularly since 1952, the western social sciences – invariably rooted in the Eurocentrism which issued from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment – have begun to seek ways of understanding the ideas, the mentalities, the way of thinking, the motivations, and sometimes the theories and the visions of the new social forces and political movements operating within a colonial world struggling for its liberation and national rebirth.²⁴⁴

The tone of this statement reveals the still effective idea of Western superiority and the doubtful approach towards the intellectual history of the colonized on the grounds that there could be no merits at all in studying it. The problem of weighing in too much into the Western impact vs. the Eastern reaction arises from Hourani's disregard for the two most central agents of change in the Middle East at the time: the printing press and the periodical press, according to Hamza.²⁴⁵ Taking this critical approach into consideration, I will thus continue by taking these central agents of intellectual change as a framework for the post-Tahtawi intellectual context.

First periodical in the Arabic-speaking world was published upon the orders by Napoleon, in French, in 1798. This periodical was almost exclusively designed for consumption among the French army to learn about the daily developments in Egypt as well as for military communications. Inspired by what he saw, Muhammad Ali would establish first the *Jurnal al-Khidivi* in 1827 for official communications, later to be succeeded by *Waq'a'i al-Misriya* in

²⁴³ Dyalah Hamza, "Introduction: The Making of the Arab Intellectual (1880-1960)," in *The Making of the Arab Intellectual: Empire, Public Sphere and the Colonial Coordinates of Selfhood*, ed. Dyalah Hamza (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

²⁴⁴ Anouar Abdel-Malek, ed., *Contemporary Arab Political Thought* (London: Zed Books, 1983), 1.

²⁴⁵ Hamza, "Introduction: The Making of the Arab Intellectual (1880-1960)," 7.

1828.²⁴⁶ In the context of competition between the Ottoman suzerain and its vassal in the course of modernization, this move can be considered as the origins of Mahmud II's *Le Moniteur Ottoman* and later *Takvim-i Vekayi*, except that, as Groc and Çağlar underlines, it was not in French. In his turn, Muhammad Ali would establish *Le Moniteur Egyptien* in 1832, in French.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, as Ayalon asserts, both attempts were for primarily government purposes and did not draw too much attention from the local populations except for small intellectual circles. There was an attempt in Egypt to make *Waq'a'i al-Misriya* attractive, with Tahtawi appointed as the editor for the years between 1842 and 1850, during which he did try to add some literary and poetic works in the newspaper, but it was still considered as a government organ.²⁴⁸ As the number of private newspapers increased in the 1870s, such official organs would lose their primacy.²⁴⁹

When it comes to press in the Middle East, a Beirut-centered history prevails. Ami Ayalon explains this phenomenon with reference to the important actors of the Beirut-centered press as being Christians, who, by their religions, did not have the same kind of trouble that the Muslims had to deal with, that is, borrowing from the Christian West: they had been in a close dialogue with the Western missionaries for a long time as well, since the mission had turned to re-Christianize the Middle Eastern Christians as it was impossible for them to reach out to Muslims and seek their conversion to Christianity. As a result, the Christian Lebanese became the forebearers of Arabic press.²⁵⁰ Another important explanation is offered by Hala Auji with reference to the American missionary press in Beirut: from the early 1850s to the late 1860s there was an apparent shift in the content of their publications because mostly the press was loaned out to the locals and used for purposes other than those of the Mission. Nasif al-Yaziji (1800-1871) and Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) could thus use the press to print secular books written by the local intellectuals. When the Mission bought a steam-powered press in 1855, it was also used for other jobs as well, this time with an increased efficiency.²⁵¹ The main reason behind this shift was the Board's decision to tighten the budget.²⁵²

²⁴⁶ Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1995), 11-15.

²⁴⁷ Gerard Groc and İbrahim Çağlar, *La Presse Française de Turquie de 1795 à Nos Jours : Histoire et Catalogue* (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1985), 11.

²⁴⁸ Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History*, 18.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁵⁰ Ayalon, *The Press in the Middle East: A History*, 29; Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 306-307.

²⁵¹ Hala Auji, *Printing Arab Modernity: Book Culture and the American Press in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 92.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 94.

Butrus al-Bustani's *Khutbah fi adab al-Arab* (Discourse on Arab Culture), a lecture given in an assembly of Westerners as well as young Arabs in Beirut on 15 February 1859, gives us insight into his thought. Secular knowledge, according to Bustani, was central to culture (*adab*) and sociocultural progress (*taqaddum*) as well as civilization (*tamaddun*) and reform (*islah*).²⁵³ The necessity of learning positive sciences and modern education is a central theme in Bustani's solution to the decay of the Arab peoples because reform, or *islah*, requires secular knowledge and if reforms are successfully made and implemented, then modern civilization would be achieved.²⁵⁴ Similar to Tahtawi's attempt to justify his suggestion to take a lesson from the secular French law since it included something beneficial for the Muslims, even though it did not derive from the *shariah*,²⁵⁵ Bustani justifies his proposal for cultural borrowing with reference to the Abbasid caliphs and Avicenna: they were open to learning from others regardless of their religious differences; that was how they created a better civilization, which, when observed from the present, seems a golden age for the Arabs and the Muslims. If the Arabs now want to catch up with the Western modernity, they need to borrow again.²⁵⁶

He argued that they needed to take what is good from Europe, but not indiscriminately. For Bustani, rejecting the values of Europe on the basis that they are foreign was as absurd as accepting them because they are foreign. The Arabs could still take pride in their glorious past, but just as the Europeans learnt from the Arabs when they were left behind the Arab civilization, now the Arabs needed to take from the European civilization. Although he acknowledges the necessity of learning from European experience, Bustani still glorifies the Arab civilization by arguing that if the Arabs were willing to learn, they would achieve the level of development that the Europeans had achieved in a shorter time period.²⁵⁷ Common remarks can be seen in Tunisi as well, but before that, I would like to continue with secularist character of Bustani.

Writing in the mid-1850s and 1850s, early Arab secularists like Bustani did not target the Ottoman sultan, nor did they mention about a proposal of separation of powers between religious authority and political authority with reference to Islam and the Ottoman Empire. Their criticism was directed towards the Church, mainly because they were Protestants who did not want problems with the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim Arabs.²⁵⁸ Upon the bloodshed

²⁵³ Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 20.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

²⁵⁵ Al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris*, 197.

²⁵⁶ Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 28-31.

²⁵⁷ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, 100.

²⁵⁸ Nazik Saba Yared, *Secularism and the Arab World* (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 24-25.

during the civil war between the Maronites and the Druze, in 1860, Bustani began publishing *Nafir Suriyya*, where he called for patriotism over sectarianism and factionalism.²⁵⁹

Bustani attempted to bridge the gap between different religious loyalties among the Arabs by underlining the idea that every single one of them were in fact worshipping the same God with trivial differences. Instead of religious loyalties that divide the Arab people, in his view, they should have placed the idea that *hubb al-watan min al-iman*, that is, love of country is an article of faith, which he used as the motto of his periodicals at the time. In the broadsheets of *Nafir Suriyya* that he published during the crisis of 1860, he addressed to *abna' al-watan*, his fellow countrymen, and signed the issues as *muhibb al-watan*, him who loves his country.²⁶⁰ Bustani's country was Syria, and by the love for country he openly meant patriotism. Despite the fact that it is impossible and simply absurd to talk about a Syrian nation at the time, it would be fair to say that Bustani considered the Arabic-speaking people living on the piece of territory that was named Syria with no certain borders as his fellow countrymen. On the other hand, this did not mean any alternative vision to the Ottoman political framework. In fact, he was hopeful for the Ottoman reformers to create a new political configuration that would be inclusive for the non-Muslim communities as well as the Muslims.²⁶¹

Nafir Suriyya consisted of eleven broadsheets that Bustani named *wataniyat*. These broadsheets were prepared in the form of advice sheets to call for peace and order through reforms. The first piece was published in September 1860 and the last one in April 1861. Time period between publication varied from ten days to two months. Still, it was important because it was the first political publication in Arabic seeking a political goal.²⁶² The main idea that Bustani was promoting in *Nafir* was secularization. He wrote as a Christian Arab to mainly a Christian Arab audience, but since he used references to Islam as well as the Christian Bible, one can argue that he also wanted to reach the Muslim Arabs. Witnessing the massacres, he urged in these *wataniyats* for secularization as a vital step for peace: "It is obvious to anyone who has looked at the histories of confessional communities and peoples [*al-milal wal-shu'ub*] that damages are affiliated with the people and religions [*al-nas wal-adyan*] who have meddled in political matters, and who mix religious with civil matters. There is an inherent great distance between the two."²⁶³ Moreover, in 1863, still under the impact of the bloodshed in Mount Lebanon and

²⁵⁹ Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State*, 40.

²⁶⁰ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, 101.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁶² Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 46-48.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 50.

aiming at creating a sense of patriotism regardless of religious faith, Bustani also opened a National School in Beirut, with a secular curriculum. This school would have close relations with the Syrian Protestant College, which is the American University of Beirut today.²⁶⁴

Whereas Bustani was concerned with a more inclusive government and worked for that cause at the intellectual level, Tunisi found the opportunity to prepare a constitution draft for it.

Tunisi defines his task as to “warn the heedless among the Muslim masses against their persistent opposition to the behavior of others that is praiseworthy and in conformity with our Holy Law...”²⁶⁵ He then goes on to explain that there is no reason to reject or ignore something that is correct and beneficial simply because it comes from other nations. He legitimizes his point with constant references to *shariah* and Islamic thought: “if we had formerly possessed it [civilization] and it had been taken from us ... there is an obligation to restore it and put it to use.”²⁶⁶ He then gives the example of the French, who emulated what was good in the others and reached at a level that everyone admires. “Wisdom is the goal of the believer. He is to take it wherever he finds it.”²⁶⁷ He places justice and security at the center of the reason why Europe is more civilized than the rest of the world, but then again, he finds a reference in Islamic sources: he cites a *hadith* which suggests that “Justice brings glory to the religion, probity to constituted authority and strength to all orders of the people, high and low.”²⁶⁸ His argument for a more inclusive decision-making mechanism also finds its foundations in Islamic tradition: Tunisi underlines that the prophet Muhammad, although received revelations directly from the God, still appealed to the consultation and asked others’ opinions before making the final decision.²⁶⁹

What distinguishes Tunisi from others is his active involvement in the process of constitution-making. Together with Ahmad ibn Abi Diyaf (1802-1874), Tunisi had an important role in the early constitutional experience of Tunisia. Abi Diyaf had prepared a draft in 1857 and Tunisi drafted the constitution of 1861. Different than Abi Diyaf, Tunisi was more precise in his proposition for government: there was supposed to be a Grand Council, which would check on the ministers that were appointed by the ruler. The budget, on the other hand, would be made

²⁶⁴ Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography*, 41.

²⁶⁵ Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, *The Surest Path*, 74.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

by the ministers freely.²⁷⁰ Both drafters argued for the necessity to limit the powers of the ruler with reference to religion and reason: a ruler was ideally wise and capable of exercising his power for good government, but in reality, he lacked either one or both. Thus, there was a need for a consultative body to help him out and discuss matters of government. Yet, this body should have been checked from the outside as well, because the combination of a ruler and his ministers could easily turn into arbitrary government; therefore, there was the need for a second body to check on the ministers. In making his argumentation, Abi Diyaf goes further than Tunisi and suggests that obeying the bad ruler is recommended by Islam, but it is not obligatory.²⁷¹

The constitution of 1861 was a novelty in the whole region in terms of prescribing the ruler to govern together with an assembly. In theory, it even had the power to dismiss the ruler in case of the ruler rejecting to rule according to the constitution.²⁷² Another novelty was that the references to Islam and *shariah* were reduced to a few sentences in the introduction. Yet, this was not in any way a sign of secularization of the judicial system: the constitution overall complied with the principles of *shariah* and did not intervene in its domain.²⁷³

All the three prominent men of early Nahda, that is, in its intellectual phase that took place for the most part in the first half of the nineteenth century, which would be followed by its political phase in the second half of the century,²⁷⁴ tried to respond to the challenges arising from recognizing the superiority of what they deemed a more or less homogenous entity of the West and the sense of need to reach at the level of civilization that Europe had achieved. Their responses were different and nuanced because they were not coming from a common cultural and religious background, nor did they have a common occupation. Tahtawi was an imam in Muhammad Ali's army and continued serving him in his intellectual capacity; Bustani was a Protestant intellectual in close relationship with American missionaries and worked for the Mission; and Tunisi was an Ottoman statesman playing an early but important role in the constitutional experience of Tunisia.

²⁷⁰ Thomas Philipp, "From Rule of Law to Constitutionalism: The Ottoman Context of Arab Political Thought," in *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda*, ed. Jens Hansen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 151.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

²⁷² G. S. van Krieken, *Khayr Al-Din et La Tunisie (1850-1881)* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 49.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁷⁴ Fruma Zachs and Sharon Halevi, *Gendering Culture in Greater Syria: Intellectuals and Identity in the Late Ottoman Period* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 4-5.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I tried to demonstrate a snapshot of the intellectual context of the first half of the nineteenth century with references to political developments of the period. The sharp civilizational bias that I exemplified with a quotation from John MacDonal, at the height of the First World War, was not always present; on the contrary, it was, as I discussed in the following part of the chapter, contingent upon diverse factors, including the long story of institutionalization of ancient Greek and Roman classics in European elite education prior to the nineteenth century as well as the short term and emotional developments like Lord Byron's support for the Greek War of Independence, that resulted in an important impact on the European perception of civilization. Combined with the European political, military, scientific, and economic superiority over the rest of the world at the time, there came a non-Western response that was two-fold: in the political context, there were reform attempts in order to catch up with what was assumed as a unitary and homogenous civilization of Europe; in the intellectual context, there were attempts to respond to civilizational superiority claims put forward by European Orientalists.

CHAPTER 3

ALI SUAVI'S LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS

From the further particulars we have received by special telegram of the disturbances in Constantinople, it appears that the body of men who forced their way into the Tcheragan Palace were led by Ali Suavi Effendi, late Director of the Imperial Lyceum, who is considered to have been of unsound mind. With a revolver in each hand he killed three soldiers, and was then himself killed. Our correspondent attaches no importance to the matter, and thinks that the failure of the attempt will probably strengthen the Sultan.²⁷⁵

Ali Suavi was perhaps the most interesting character among the Young Ottomans. He started his career as an imam, continued as a journalist, and ended up being the director of one of the most prestigious schools of the Empire. It was nothing to expect of a man of such career to attempt overthrowing a sultan by organizing a group of unaware refugees to march towards the Çırağan Palace, and shout “Long live the Sultan!” where, the resident was not the present sultan Abdulhamid II but the ex-sultan Murad V.²⁷⁶ Although he was such an interesting historical actor, there are few comprehensive academic works on Ali Suavi; all we have other than Hüseyin Çelik’s book²⁷⁷ and Aaron Johnson’s doctoral dissertation²⁷⁸ is incomplete information in articles or book chapters.

In non-academic sources one can come across extreme cases of bias, associating Suavi with multiple and contradicting identities such as an Islamist, the first Turkist, and even a secularist. Besides, I have not seen his name, not to mention his attempt to overthrow the sultan, in the history textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education. This can be explained with reference to the initial decision by the Ottoman government to avoid mentioning Ali Suavi’s real intention behind his attempt. The official statement did not speak of his effort to overthrow the sultan and replace him with the ex-sultan Murad, but instead, underlined “his ‘long-established wickedness’ (*minelkadim caygir-i zamir-i habâset*) as being the motive for his actions.”²⁷⁹ This case would later be opened for various purposes; to rediscover Ali Suavi’s revolutionary side as embodied in his attempt to overthrow someone who would later become

²⁷⁵ *London Daily News*, May 23, 1878.

²⁷⁶ For a more detailed description of the events, see: İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, “Ali Suavi ve Çırağan Sarayı Vakası,” *Belleten* 8, no. 29 (January 1944): 71–118.

²⁷⁷ Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994).

²⁷⁸ Aaron S. Johnson, “A Revolutionary Young Ottoman: Ali Suavi (1839-1878)” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Montreal, McGill University, 2012).

²⁷⁹ Florian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 61.

a despot²⁸⁰ or to reassert that he was a charlatan mistaken for a revolutionary thanks to his last action before his death.²⁸¹

For the lack of new academic sources, I can refer to Nazan Çiçek's explanation: she suggests that Şerif Mardin's *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, published first in 1962, became an authoritative study on the Young Ottomans and later historians used it as if it was a primary source. On the one hand, Mardin's work was the most elaborate monograph on the Young Ottoman thought; on the other hand, treating it as if it had everything in it has discouraged later historians who could work on the subject. Thus, the Young Ottomans had not been reconsidered for a long time.²⁸² To this, I will add that Hüseyin Çelik's book on Ali Suavi, first published in 1994, became the authoritative work on Ali Suavi, and almost two decades, nothing had been written until Johnson's dissertation. In this chapter, I start with a literature review, then give a short biographical information on Ali Suavi, and finish with his intellectual networks.

Current Literature on Ali Suavi

Early works on Ali Suavi came after the heat of the early republican era and revealed that they were influenced to an important extent by the intellectual atmosphere of their period. The earliest one with which I will begin is İsmail Hami Danişmend's *Ali Suavi'nin Türkçülüğü*, published first in 1942. Danişmend is well aware of all the adjectives attributed to Ali Suavi, such as hero, lover of liberty, an Istanbulite, a Turkist, a mad person who pretends to be an intellectual, etc. Yet, he contends that what concerns him the most about Suavi is his Turkism, and he will focus on this issue for the rest of his leaflet.²⁸³ If "he was created for revolution, he lived for revolution, and he died for revolution," this was because Turkism could not be separated from the idea of revolution, Danişmend suggests.²⁸⁴ In his short work, Danişmend deliberately limits his sources to a few issues of *Ulum Gazetesi*, which he argues reflect Ali Suavi's thought the best,²⁸⁵ and thus his highly selective approach helps him in his portrayal of Suavi as a Turkist.

²⁸⁰ See Kuntay and Atay's books: Mithat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi* (İstanbul: Ahmet Halit Yayınevi, 1946); Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Başveren İnkılapçı* (Dünya Yayınları, 1951).

²⁸¹ Mardin's account can be seen as an example: Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse University Press, 2000).

²⁸² Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 6-8.

²⁸³ İsmail Hami Danişmend, *Ali Suavi'nin Türkçülüğü* (İstanbul: CHP Genel Sekreterliği, 1942), 7.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9. [The phrase in quotation marks is my translation.]

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

Writing a decade later, Falih Rıfkı Atay introduces the reason for writing his *Başveren İnkılapçı* as being influenced by Danişmend's work, after which he decided to delve deeper into Ali Suavi's thought.²⁸⁶ He then goes on to correct what he labels the distorted image of Ali Suavi that Suavi's contemporaries created. According to Atay, Suavi was a self-educated man who could read in Arabic, Persian, English, and French; if he had contradicted himself in certain subjects, it was not directly his fault. He used whatever was left to him by the preceding generation as an intellectual legacy. He was the first Ottoman intellectual to defend the status of Turkish language in the intellectual context. What is more, he was also the first man to uphold the principles of laicism, according to Atay.²⁸⁷ In a rather dramatizing way, Atay suggests that it was not Hasan Paşa's stick that killed Suavi, it was "our intellectuals' indifference" to him.²⁸⁸ In the final analysis, comparing Suavi to Namık Kemal, Atay is critical of the literature on late Ottoman intellectuals: if Namık Kemal, despite his letters to Abdulhamid, was still treated as a revolutionary hero, so should Suavi be, or perhaps more than that, when we consider the fact that there is no such document that can be used against him.²⁸⁹

Mithat Cemal Kuntay's work was, as Aaron Johnson also suggests, more scholarly than any other work written in this early period.²⁹⁰ Kuntay defines Suavi as "the first martyr of the first civil revolution in Istanbul."²⁹¹ Through the end of his work, he discusses what he calls different faces of Suavi, why there were so many and often contradictory faces, with possible reasons. Nevertheless, in closing his book, he suggests that the real face of Ali Suavi was the one at the exact moment of him as falling martyr for the cause of the revolution.²⁹² Yet, his discussion of Suavi's writings combined with biographical information makes his book a scholarly work which I will benefit from in the following part.

İsmail Doğan's work is a comparative analysis of Münif Paşa and Ali Suavi on the grounds that they shared a familiar pedagogic character, believing in the potential of education in the Ottoman Westernization process.²⁹³ According to Doğan, the reason why there were so many contradictory depictions of Suavi is that no one had read his work but depended on others'

²⁸⁶ Atay, *Başveren İnkılapçı*, 4.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹⁰ Aaron S. Johnson, "A Revolutionary Young Ottoman: Ali Suavi (1839-1878)" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Montreal, McGill University, 2012), 4.

²⁹¹ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 8.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 186-191.

²⁹³ İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimat'ın İki Ucu: Münif Paşa ve Ali Suavi (Sosyo-Pedagojik Bir Karşılaştırma)* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1991), 26.

views of him.²⁹⁴ Yet, Doğan's work is far from setting the pedagogic character of Suavi, mostly containing biographical information and a discussion of contradictory portrayals of him.

Hüseyin Çelik's *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi* is the most comprehensive work on the subject in terms of its reliance upon exhaustive research in archives and libraries. Çelik divides his book into three main bodies as Suavi's life, work, and thought. One of the central problems with Çelik's work is that it lacks contextualization: even though we are given Suavi's connections in specific ways that could help us understand why he did what he did or sometimes why he wrote what he wrote, it is not easy to make sense of his writing as part of a broader intellectual context. Moreover, Çelik has certain misleading conclusions that I will discuss in detail later in this chapter. Lastly, as Johnson also argues,²⁹⁵ the part where Çelik promises to present Ali Suavi's thought lacks analysis, and for the most part, filled with translations or descriptions of his texts.

A more recent study of Ali Suavi is a doctoral dissertation by Aaron S. Johnson. In introducing his project, Johnson mentions the deficiencies in the literature, criticizes the narrow framework of the literature, which seems to be stuck with the Turkish nationalist approach, and begins with a global historical context, all of which make his work promising. However, the organization of his work is not radically different than Çelik's book in that shortly after setting the nineteenth-century global framework, he shifts to the Ottoman modernization context from within which Ali Suavi emerged and narrates his life story in a chronological order. After this historical contextualization and personal history, he continues with Suavi's thought and works. Different than Çelik, Johnson prefers to offer a rebuttal for where he discusses how Suavi's image was distorted in earlier studies. Although he does what he intends to do, namely, challenging the Turkish nationalist conventional narrative that limits our understanding of Ali Suavi and other late Ottoman intellectuals, he does not propose an alternative framework in its stead.

The most remarkable among the studies that spare a chapter or a short section on Ali Suavi are those written by Şerif Mardin, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Kemal Karpat, and Madeleine Elfenbein. Mardin starts with a reckless denunciation of Ali Suavi by not attaining any merit to his writing and intellectual capacity at all. He suggests, for example, that not all the articles in *Muhbir* were written by Suavi and, to distinguish the ones he wrote from the rest, one should keep in mind he had a primitive style. Yet, one is still not guaranteed success because some

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁹⁵ Johnson, "A Revolutionary Young Ottoman," 7.

articles of good quality might have originally belonged to Suavi but edited by Namık Kemal.²⁹⁶ To prove his point on the primitiveness of intellectual capacity that Suavi possessed, Mardin compares Suavi to Kemal: while the latter wrote in favor of the separation of powers, Suavi followed his example but with a twist. Such separation was already present in the principles of Islam because there was the *mufti* to interpret the *shariah*, the *kadi* to judge, and the *vali* to govern. Yet, these were part of the same unitary *imamate*, and at best, there could be no separation of powers but the separation of functions.²⁹⁷ For Mardin, Suavi was an Islamist with a primitive set of ideas who borrowed from others without much reflection.

Mardin's accusation of intellectual incapacity based on the idea that Ali Suavi merely borrowed the concepts he was not familiar with and misunderstood them obscures our understanding of a past intellectual by destroying the possibility of having a nuanced reading. As Burak Onaran exemplifies: "The newspapers *Hürriyet* by Namık Kemal, *Ulum* by Ali Suavi and *İttihad* by Mehmed Bey published one after another with the same title, 'usul-i meşveret' (the consultation system). However, the functioning of this system described in the newspapers was not precisely the same. The most distinguishing point was the role they defined for the sultan."²⁹⁸ Similar differences of opinion were visible in their reception of the Western civilization as well, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Tanpınar points out to the contradictions in Suavi's thought but also challenges his portrayal as a charlatan mistaken for an intellectual: to arrive at a conclusion about Suavi, he asserts, one needs to contextualize his thought, first, within the Young Ottoman thought, and second, within the broader Islamic thought.²⁹⁹ Moreover, Kemal Karpat contributes to the corrections regarding the inaccurate portrayal of Suavi by underlining the personal relationship between Ali Suavi and Namık Kemal and Ziya, whose labeling of Suavi as a charlatan and unstable man was, in fact, a response to Suavi as he held them accountable for accepting payment from Mustafa Fazıl, who had returned to Istanbul to take a ministerial position.³⁰⁰ According to Karpat, an essential difference between Suavi and Kemal was that, while the former was from

²⁹⁶ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 362.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 367-368.

²⁹⁸ Burak Onaran, *Détrôner Le Sultan Deux Conjurations à l'époque Des Réformes Ottomanes : Kuleli (1859) et Meslek (1867)* (Louvain, Paris, Walpole: Peeters, 2013), 376. [my translation.]

²⁹⁹ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (İstanbul: Çağlayan Kitabevi, 1988), 240.

³⁰⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 127.

the lower class and turned into a populist, the latter was born into Ottoman bureaucratic circles and was a complete elitist.³⁰¹

Taking a different position, Elfenbein suggests that we should see Ali Suavi as part of a common purpose, agreed on by all Young Ottomans, of the democratization of the Empire. She proposes this alternative view because, as she rightly puts it, Ali Suavi had been portrayed as the lone wolf among the Young Ottomans with his resort to Islamist discourse vis-à-vis the perceived liberal constitutionalism of the group.³⁰² Since I do not regard Ali Suavi as an intellectual working towards the democratization of the empire but a lone wolf being part of a broader discursive movement rising from among the non-Western intellectuals critical of what they deemed the Western civilization, I situate Ali Suavi into a framework of the civilizational debate. I start with a short biography of Ali Suavi in the next section to be followed by three other parts: his critique of the Western civilization, his critique of the Ottoman Empire and the wider Muslim world, and lastly, his proposals for civilization.

Ali Suavi's Life and Intellectual Networks

What earned Ali Suavi his place among the Young Ottomans was his writings in *Muhbir*. For this reason, I start to this section with a description of his early life story and journalistic works that made him a potential ally for Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, by whom, after being exiled from the capital, he would be invited to Paris to join the Young Ottoman society. In the second part, I continue with his stay in Europe, where he made important intellectual connections with David Urquhart and Frederic Le Play that influenced his writing. I finish this section with his return back to the capital and directorship of the Galatasaray Lycée.

Ali Suavi was born in Istanbul in 1839, the year when the Tanzimat reforms started. During the reign of Abdulaziz, he became a *katip* in the *Dersaadet Yoklama Kalemi at Bab-ı Seraskeri*, where he worked for three years.³⁰³ According to Çelik, if Suavi worked there for two or three years, he must have entered there around the age of 13 or 14.³⁰⁴ After this position he worked as *muallim-i evvel* in *rüşdiye mekteps* in Bursa, Simav, and Filibe.³⁰⁵ His stay in Filibe has been

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 127-128.

³⁰² Madeleine Elfenbein, "No Empire for Old Men: The Young Ottomans and the World, 1856-1878" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Chicago, Illinois, The University of Chicago, 2017), 179-180.

³⁰³ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 5.

³⁰⁴ Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994), 43.

³⁰⁵ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 5.

put forward in the secondary literature, but he was already famous during his visit in Bursa. In 1861, when Suavi was in Bursa at the age of 22 or 23, he was invited by Sadrazam Ali Paşa to Istanbul. Upon his return to the capital, he stayed at Sami Paşa's place and was known to have close contacts with Ottoman statesmen.³⁰⁶ Later, in 1864, he served for a brief period as the head of the commercial court in Sofia.³⁰⁷ His stay in Filibe caused a problem as he became famous for his political incitement filled with religious references in his lectures at *mekteps*.³⁰⁸ After being dismissed from teaching, he returned to Istanbul in 1866 and started giving lectures and preaching in the Şehzade Mosque, where he harshened his language in accusing the Ottoman foreign policy with weakness regarding Egyptian Khedive Ismail and Cretan revolt.³⁰⁹ It was in this period that Namık Kemal, having no direct connection with Suavi yet, witnessed the latter's lectures and admired his style.³¹⁰

At the same time with his lectures at the Şehzade Mosque, Ali Suavi began his career as a journalist. *Muhbir*'s owner Filip Efendi needed a popular writer to attract subscribers; he invited Suavi to contribute to *Muhbir*. Suavi would accept the offer and write the first issue by himself and contribute short pieces to the following issues, as he mentioned himself later in *Ulum Gazetesi*.³¹¹ *Muhbir* started publishing on 1 January 1867 and continued until its 55th issue on 27 May 1867 when it was shut down.³¹² Necati Çavdar argues that, although Istanbul *Muhbir* owed its fame to Suavi and thus has been associated exclusively with him on the grounds that Filip Efendi was not a man of letters and the content was determined by Suavi, one cannot merely ignore Filip Efendi's role: he earned himself an important spot in the history of Ottoman press as he continued publishing famous newspapers from 1867 to 1900.³¹³

On the other hand, Elfenbein rightly underlines that it was Ali Suavi, not Filip Efendi, who was exiled after *Muhbir* published four separate texts criticizing the Ottoman government for the loss of the Belgrade Castle to the Serbians and again it would be Ali Suavi whom Mustafa Fazıl would recruit after the Suavi was sent into exile.³¹⁴ In this framework, one can safely say that one should focus on the articles signed by Ali Suavi. Still, one can also consider that the other

³⁰⁶ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 57-60.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 63. According to Çelik, Ali Suavi claims that the problems he had with the governor of Filibe were due to his criticism of injustice towards the Ottoman subjects.

³⁰⁹ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 21-22.

³¹⁰ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 65.

³¹¹ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 73; Johnson, "A Revolutionary Young Ottoman," 68; *Ulum Gazetesi* 15 (3 April 1870): 909-910.

³¹² Necati Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basımının Sivri Dili* (İstanbul: Kriter, 2017), xi.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 5-9.

³¹⁴ Elfenbein, "No Empire for Old Men," 192.

articles published in *Muhbir* were likely to be approved by Suavi, if not written by himself. Another important hint is that upon his return to Istanbul in 1876, Ali Suavi would restart his journalism career by contributing to nowhere else than Filip's newspaper *Vakit*.³¹⁵

Muhbir's raison d'être was made clear on its first issue with an article entitled "Mukaddime," where the source of happiness was addressed to civilization, which was dependent on knowledge, and it was spreading knowledge to the Ottomans and the wider Muslim world that *Muhbir* sought. For this purpose, a simple Turkish was preferred.³¹⁶ Çavdar states that articles on liberty, education, civilization, and progress were most likely to be written by Suavi.³¹⁷ News about the Cretan revolt and Muslims' condition also resembles Ali Suavi's incitement on these issues, yet one cannot make sure that Suavi himself penned them. Moreover, *Muhbir* was temporarily closed after its 32nd issue. On the 31st issue the newspaper had published Mustafa Fazıl Paşa's aid to the Cretan Muslims. This was followed on the 32nd issue with four separate texts about the Ottoman loss of the Belgrade Castle to the Serbians.³¹⁸ Among the four texts, there was none signed by Suavi: the first one was translated from an article previously published by a French newspaper based in Beyoğlu; the second text was an analysis by an anonymous author; the third piece was a question sent by a reader, and the fourth one was an answer to the reader's question.³¹⁹ Yet, according to Kuntay, Suavi had already signaled that he was siding with Mustafa Fazıl after the latter's open letter to Abdülaziz was republished on *Muhbir*.³²⁰

Mustafa Fazıl was İbrahim Paşa's son, and Muhammad Ali's grandson, whose claim to the Egyptian viceroyalty was cut off by Fuad Paşa in 1866. Before this, he had served in the ministries of Education and Finances between 1862 and 1864, and as the chair of the Council of Treasury in 1865, during which he had occasions with the sultan, complaining to him about Ali and Fuad Paşas. Following his departure for Paris, which was an exile imposed upon him, Fuad introduced a new hereditary regulation that would give the throne after Khedive Ismail to his son, not the oldest member of the family, namely, Mustafa Fazıl.³²¹ It was after this *ferman* that the first apparent contact between Fazıl and the Young Ottomans occurred. As Davison asserts, from the summer of 1866 to the winter of 1866-1867, the empire had to deal with the

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

³¹⁶ Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 9-11.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

³¹⁸ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 76-77.

³¹⁹ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 32-35.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

³²¹ Andrew Arsan, "The Strange Lives of Ottoman Liberalism: Exile, Patriotism and Constitutionalism in the Thought of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa," in *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century*, ed. Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016): 156.

Cretan revolt, leaders of which declared union with Greece; the Serbians who were trying to get rid of the last remaining Ottoman garrisons; Khedive Ismail's attempt for independence; and Roumania's autonomy. Under these circumstances, the Young Ottomans were seeking an ally against the weakening Ottoman administration, and Mustafa Fazıl was a strong opponent at the time.³²² On the other hand, Fazıl was desperate to establish a network with these young journalists, and he tried to reach them beginning from early 1867.³²³

Mustafa Fazıl, in his letter to *Le Nord* which he sent on 5 February 1867 and which was published on 7 February,³²⁴ “declared himself the representative of ‘the great party of Young Turkey’, composed of ‘all the men of progress and good patriots’ intent upon reforming the empire and staving off the domestic disarray of which the ‘Cretan insurrection’ was such a forceful, and worrying, reminder.”³²⁵ According to Fazıl, Muslims were as much oppressed as non-Muslims, and there was essentially a division not along the lines of religious faith but among the two parties as to the oppressor and the oppressed.³²⁶ He warned Abdülaziz about the treason and ignorance among his close men in the palace.³²⁷ The solution Fazıl proposed for saving the empire was a constitution.³²⁸ He finished the letter in a way to make his idea of Ottomanism clear: “It matters not whether one is Muslim, Catholic, or Greek Orthodox to be able to put the public weal ahead of private interest. For that it is sufficient to be a man of progress or a good patriot, which is one and the same thing. Such is at least, Sir, the inmost conviction of the great party of the *Jeune Turquie* which I have the honor to represent.”³²⁹ Furthermore, one day before this letter was published in *Le Nord*, there was an article in *Journal des debats* about the *Jeune Turquie* and Mustafa Fazıl's reform plans, arguing that, one year ago, Mustafa Fazıl had the opportunity to discuss with Abdülaziz about the necessity of reforms, but failed to convince him because of the sultan's informants. Still, this time circumstances were more favorable for the party.³³⁰ According to the author of the article, there were many elements in Turkey, as in Egypt, in favor of a representative, or at least a consultative regime.³³¹

³²² Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 201.

³²³ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 31.

³²⁴ Davison asserts that in a dispatch from Istanbul in January 1867, Mustafa Fazıl had already been called the head of the party of *jeune Turquie*: Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, 201.

³²⁵ Arsan, “The Strange Lives of Ottoman Liberalism,” 156.

³²⁶ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, 203.

³²⁷ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 29.

³²⁸ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, 204.

³²⁹ As translated and quoted in Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, 201.

³³⁰ *Journal des debats politiques et litteraires*, February 6, 1867.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

The alliance between Mustafa Fazıl and the Young Ottomans seems to have started in March 1867, if not before. Namık Kemal published an article series entitled *Mesele-i Şarkıyye*, from 10 to 13 March 1867, in *Tasvir-i Efkar*, criticizing the Ottoman government. Following was Ali Suavi's critique in *Muhbir*, as mentioned before. At the same time, Mustafa Fazıl's financial support to the Cretan Muslims was put on the first page of *Muhbir*.³³² On 14 March, the famous *Kararname-i Ali* was put into force for the government to regulate the Ottoman press and shut down newspapers easily.³³³ A month after being temporarily closed, *Muhbir* restarted its operations with its 33rd issue, where there was an announcement to the subscribers regarding the difficulty of distribution.³³⁴ The newspaper continued its operations until late May in 1867, to stop permanently with its 55th issue.

When he heard about Fazıl's invitation to Paris, Ali Suavi was in exile in Kastamonu. An intermediary invited him to Fazıl. On 18 May 1867, he secretly put himself on the road to Istanbul, from where he would sail to Marseille and then go to Paris to meet with Mustafa Fazıl.³³⁵ According to Kuntay, it was Fazıl who told Namık Kemal and Ziya that they could call anyone they wanted to work with from Istanbul, and their choice was Ali Suavi.³³⁶ Yet, later when Ali Suavi moved to London in early July 1867 together with Agah, Kemal, and Ziya,³³⁷ he would publish *Le Mukhbir* on his own, an act that, Kuntay and Tanpınar assume, was against the group decision.³³⁸ The first issue of *Le Mukhbir* was published on 31 August 1867, and it had no word on the Young Ottomans or the *Jeune Turquie* but referred to a *Cemiyet-i İslamiye* that sought to work for educational progress in the Ottoman Empire. The two purposes of the newspaper were stated as spreading knowledge and new ideas to contribute to the civilization of the Eastern peoples and correcting the misunderstanding of Europeans about the Muslims.³³⁹ These were not the primary concerns of the Young Ottomans if we consider that the first article of the Young Ottoman charter was to realize the reforms that were put forward in Mustafa Fazıl's letter.³⁴⁰

³³² Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 31-32.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 86.

³³⁴ Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 102.

³³⁵ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 88.

³³⁶ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 39-40.

³³⁷ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 96.

³³⁸ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 42; Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (İstanbul: Çağlayan Kitabevi, 1988), 232.

³³⁹ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 98-99.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-38.

Moreover, *Le Mukhbir*'s opening sentence suggests that Ali Suavi wanted it to seem like a continuation of the Istanbul *Muhbir*, which asserted that *Muhbir* finds a new country to publish where, it is not prohibited to tell the truth.³⁴¹ One can wonder why *Le Mukhbir* was, either an organ of the Young Ottomans or Suavi's initiative, published not in Paris but London. The reason was that Napoleon III's France was no freer than Abdülaziz's Istanbul.³⁴² More specifically, in France, the press was subject to laws prescribing severe punishment, and a newspaper published by a foreigner could be easily sacrificed in case of a complaint by the ambassador of his country of origin.³⁴³

Ali Suavi's relationship with the other Young Ottomans is a matter of dispute. In the literature, beginning from Ebuzziya Tevfik and continuing with Mithat Cemal Kuntay there is a widespread understanding that the group did not approve Ali Suavi's policy of publication with *Le Mukhbir* and their relationship turned into a dispute with Namık Kemal and Ziya's letter to Ali Suavi regarding the latter's use of the Young Ottomans sign on the first page of *Le Mukhbir*: Kemal and Ziya asked him to remove the sign since their principles were not compatible with the editorial policy of the newspaper.³⁴⁴ In addition to this, Kuntay presents Kemal's letter to his father, explaining that he was starting a new newspaper entitled *Hürriyet* because of Suavi's uncompromising character and discordance with the group.³⁴⁵ Ebuzziya also suggests that Ali Suavi imposed his idea of continuing *Muhbir* by himself in London while Kemal and Ziya were in favor of the idea of publishing a new newspaper entitled *Hürriyet*. They were somehow convinced to try Ali Suavi's plan and decided to start with his *Muhbir*, later to publish *Hürriyet*.³⁴⁶ Once *Hürriyet* started publishing, Ali Suavi became uncomfortable, Ebuzziya also states.³⁴⁷ Nazan Çiçek argues that during the Cretan Revolt, while Kemal was criticizing the Ottoman government for its inadequacy, Ali Suavi chose to defend the Ottoman cause and

³⁴¹ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 98; Cavit Orhan Tütengil, *Yeni Osmanlılardan Bu Yana İngiltere'de Türk Gazeteciliği 1867-1967* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1969), 34. The original phrase is "Muhbir doğru söylemek yasak olmayan bir memleket bulur, yine çıkar."

³⁴² Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 42; Ebuzziya Tevfik, *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi* (İstanbul: Hürriyet, 1973), 149.

³⁴³ Tütengil, *Yeni Osmanlılardan Bu Yana İngiltere'de Türk Gazeteciliği 1867-1967*, 4-5.

³⁴⁴ Tevfik, *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi*, 181-182; Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 57.

Ebuzziya Tevfik republishes the letter sent to Ali Suavi by Namık Kemal and Ziya: "*Muhbir* gazetesinde tutunmuş olduğunuz yol, daha önce öteki değerli arkadaşlarımızla birlikte ve tam bir fikir anlaşmasıyla kararlaştırılmış bulunan görüşlere gereği gibi uymamaktadır. ... Gazetenin başlığı altındaki 'Yeni Osmanlılar Cemiyeti' sözlerini ihtiva eden damga ile gazetenin yazıları birbiriyle çelişir bir manzara arz etmektedir. Bu durum gerçeklere uymadığı için, bundan sonra çıkaracağımız *Muhbir* nüshalarında artık bu damgayı kullanmamanız uygun görülmüştür."

³⁴⁵ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 62-63.

³⁴⁶ Tevfik, *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi*, 148.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

relegate the job of criticizing the Porte to a secondary position. “Since Namık Kemal and Ziya Bey, however, had no intention of transforming the *Muhbir* into the propaganda office of the Ottoman Empire in Europe ... the Young Ottomans split.”³⁴⁸ Based on this information, we must assume that the Young Ottomans were divided during the England period. Yet, it is not clear.

As Çelik points out, when *Hürriyet* made its first issue on 29 June 1868, *Le Mukhbir* had already published its 40th issue. In the first issue of *Hürriyet*, there was a good portrayal of Suavi and his newspaper.³⁴⁹ According to the first issue of *Hürriyet*, newspaper was among the most important means of forming opinions, and Ali Suavi, having a complete understanding of this fact, started publishing *Muhbir* in London since it was shut down in Istanbul for speaking the truth.³⁵⁰ This good impression would not change during the editorship of Kemal, and later of Ziya for the remaining issues.³⁵¹ Another important point is that Suavi contributed twice to *Hürriyet*, in its 28th and 78th issues, which were published under the editorships of Kemal and Ziya, respectively.³⁵²

In the first one, a letter as a response to an article in *El Cevaib*,³⁵³ Ali Suavi writes about the slavery and concubinage practices in the Ottoman Empire, arguing that the Europeans think it is similar to the condition of the slaves in the Americas. Still, Islam is different and in Islamic lands, there had been paşas and sultans who were initially slaves, who later rose ranks in the social order after becoming Muslims. He defends that it was not Islam that invented the institution of slavery, it was already there, and it is present in the Torah as well. Islam, on the contrary, should be seen as a religion that enhanced the condition of the slaves.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, in the 78th issue, Suavi criticizes Ali Paşa for his mismanagement of the empire’s finances. He says that in the eyes of the non-Muslims, the image of the Ottoman Empire in particular, and the Muslims in general, was losing credit because the empire was, in a way, the political representative of Islam. The failure of the empire was being interpreted in Europe as the failure

³⁴⁸ Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans*, 61.

³⁴⁹ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 186.

³⁵⁰ In *Hürriyet*, June 29, 1868, Ali Suavi was described as “fezâil-i ma’rûfesi cihetiyle vatana bâis-i iftihâr, erbab-ı hamiyet ve marifetin güzidelereindir.” Transcribed text in Alp Eren Topal, ed., *Sürgünde Muhalefet: Namık Kemal’in Hürriyet Gazetesi (1868-1869) Eksiksiz Tüm Koleksiyon 1* (İstanbul: Vakıfbank Kültür Yayınları, 2018), 3.

³⁵¹ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 186.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 188-190.

³⁵³ First Arabic newspaper in the Ottoman Empire, published between 1861 and 1884 and financially supported by the government. For more information, see Atilla Çetin, “El-Cevaib,” in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, n.d., <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/el-cevaib>.

³⁵⁴ “El-Cevaib Gazetesine Cevap,” *Hürriyet*, January 4, 1869. Transcribed text in Topal, *Namık Kemal’in Hürriyet Gazetesi 1*, 195-197.

of Islam. In closing his letter, Suavi calls Ali Paşa as a non-believer whose murder was an obligation upon the believers.³⁵⁵ In opposition to the claim that Ali Suavi and the others had a dispute during their stay in London, these two articles constitute a definite proof. In addition to these, as the last proof, Çelik points out that there was an advertisement for *Ulum* in *Hürriyet*'s 70th issue,³⁵⁶ which would not be likely to happen after Suavi moved to Paris if they had already a deteriorating relationship in England.

Considering these details, I would speculate that their relationship started to get worse after Ali Suavi stopped *The Mukhbir*³⁵⁷ and moved to Paris to start *Ulum Gazetesi*, but later than assumed. His article in *Ulum*'s 14th issue, entitled "Fazıl Paşa Takımı," was a direct attack on the other Young Ottomans for continuing to accept taking their stipend from Mustafa Fazıl: they were on the list with the amount of stipend they were receiving, written across their names.³⁵⁸ This conflict would get harsher in late 1870 with the question of printing copies of the Qur'an for mass consumption. Mustafa Fazıl was already seeking ways of printing copies outside the empire and importing them when Namık Kemal proposed him to print the copies in London, based on the version of the seventeenth-century Ottoman calligrapher Hafız Osman. This way, the smuggling of unreliable copies of the Qur'an into the empire would be no more a problem as the Ottoman Muslims would be able to have their copies based on this reliable version at an affordable price.³⁵⁹ Opposing this project, Ali Suavi wrote on *Ulum* that "the ink used to print it had been mixed with pig's grease (*hinzır yağı*) and was therefore ritually unclean."³⁶⁰ This was completely with the purpose of discrediting the project, since, as Brett Wilson underlines, animal fat was not used at the time for printing.³⁶¹

³⁵⁵ "Suavi Efendi Tarafından Gelen Mektup Sureti," *Hürriyet*, December 20, 1869. In his exact words: "Vallahu'l kerim katli farz olan kafir-i le'im işte bu zalim-i zem'im Âli Paşadır." Transcribed text in Topal, *Namık Kemal'in Hürriyet Gazetesi* 2, 172-174.

³⁵⁶ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 202.

³⁵⁷ After its 38th issue, *Le Mukhbir* changed its title to *The Mukhbir*.

³⁵⁸ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 239. In *Ulum Gazetesi* 14, p. 842, there is a list of people continuing to receive their stipends from Mustafa Fazıl, including Kanipaşazade Ahmed Rıfat Bey, Agah Efendi, and Kemal Bey. Suavi suggests that Mustafa Fazıl was used to be a member of the Young Ottomans but now "öküz öldü ortaklık ayrıldı, yani Fazıl Paşa cemiyetten ihraç olundu," on p. 841, calling on the others to stop accepting Fazıl's payment.

³⁵⁹ Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 56-57.

³⁶⁰ Quoted and translated by Wilson in Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an*, 59. The original text in *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 6, (9 November 1870), p. 83: "Litoğraf mürekkebi hınzır yağıyla mahlut olmak lazım geleceği cümlenin malumu olduğundan, Bab-ı Ali ricalinden İslamiyet'te henüz alakası bulunan bazı zevat bu keyfiyet-i dermiyan ile kelimullahın hınzır yağıyla basılmasının caiz olmayacağını beyan etmişler."

³⁶¹ Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an*, 59.

Their hostility was apparent on Kemal's side as well, as we can see in his letters to his son-in-law Menemenlizade Rıfat Bey. While Suavi liked Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi for his *Akvam-ül-Mesalik*, Kemal disliked al-Tunisi for the same book.³⁶² This hatred would peak with Suavi's failed attempt at Ciragan: Kemal would write to Rıfat that he believed that Suavi did what he did to provoke a Russian occupation of Istanbul.³⁶³ All this aside, as I mentioned before, we cannot make sure when exactly this started. Thus, based on the available information, the collaboration between Ali Suavi and the others can be regarded as a conditional one that did not rely on common ideological and political ends but one that had certain common interests that made the cooperation possible. I will discuss this in detail later in the section spared for Ali Suavi's thought.

Other than Suavi's relations with the Young Ottomans, his connections to foreign intellectuals should also be considered carefully to observe his intellectual networks and see how he formed his opinions. The most remarkable one is his close connection to David Urquhart (1805-1877). The first time Suavi mentions Urquhart was in an article in the third issue of *Le Mukhbir*, where he suggested that just as the Greeks thanked Lord Byron and Chateaubriand, the Ottomans should thank David Urquhart for promoting their cause in the West.³⁶⁴ In the 34th issue of *Le Mukhbir*, there is an interesting story: Ali Suavi is a guest to an English gentleman and his wife but their names are not given. The woman tells her kid that she would have liked to let him see the Ottomans but until the time comes, there would probably be nothing left of them at all, because of their imitation of the West. When Suavi wants the couple to elaborate more on this, the man asks what kind of a man Fuad Paşa is? Suavi attempts to describe him, but the man interrupts and asserts that he means whether he does look like an Ottoman or not.³⁶⁵ When Suavi remains silent thinking about it, the man makes his point: "Let me tell you: Fuat Paşa is not like an Ottoman, he is more like a French."³⁶⁶ What follows this story is Suavi's argument that even certain people in the West are aware of the dangers of the Ottomans leaving their path

³⁶² Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 71-72. Namık Kemal writes: "Hayrettin Paşa'nın Trablusgarp valisi olması Şura-yı Devlet riyasetine getirilmesinden hayırlıdır. İstanbul'a hiç gelmemesi daha hayırlıydı. Çünkü Paşa şöhreti gibi bir adam değildir. Akvam-ül Mesalik Kanipaşazade'nin (Rıfat) 'Hukuk' kitabından çok aşağı bir eseri nevehesanedir. Başka yerde, belki Buhara veya Tahran'da iyi bir sadrazam olabilir. Fakat biz, ne kadar aşağı olsak, Tunus'tan memur dilenecek kadar aşağı değiliz. Mehmet Ali Paşa'nın en mümtaz memurlarını almıştık, hangisinden istifade ettik?" as quoted by Kuntay.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 84. Going harsh on Suavi, Kemal suggests that Suavi was a man who would do things the devil itself could not think of: "Suavi'nin melaneti mücerret Rusya dostumuzu İstanbul'a sokmak için yapılmış bir şey olduğuna bence şüphe yoktur... Dünyada şeytanın irtikab etmeyeceği habaseti iki lira için kabul ederdi. Birtakım adamları, kendi maksadının hakikatini bildirmeksizin, can fedakarlığına götürmek, yüreğinde zerre kadar insafı olanların kabul edeceği hıyanetlerden midir?" as quoted by Kuntay.

³⁶⁴ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 113-114.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

³⁶⁶ As quoted in Tevfik, *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi*, 160, my translation.

and excessively emulating Europe. The same man, according to Suavi, also argues that the French were now aware that they lost what they had possessed before.³⁶⁷ His conclusion is thus that the Ottomans should stop it before it is too late.

Ebuzziya Tevfik questions the authenticity of this story and asks why Ali Suavi did not give the names of the couple who had participated in this conversation. But according to Çelik, this couple were Urquharts. His proof is that, on 6 June 1877, Ali Suavi wrote an article in *Basiret* upon the death of David Urquhart on 16 May 1877, where he glorified him and his wife for their intellectual capacity and friendship with the Ottomans, which had no semblance in England other than the Urquhart family.³⁶⁸ Irrelevant details aside, there were reasons for Suavi to establish close contact with David Urquhart. For Urquhart, the Ottoman effort to create a constitutional government was harmful, considering the social and ethnic composition of the empire.³⁶⁹ In fact, he opposed any Ottoman reform attempt that did not originate in the Ottoman and Muslim tradition in general. As Çiçek precisely puts it, he was “a militant opponent of the modernization project of the Tanzimat and a staunch believer in Islamic principles and institutions. He adamantly argued that salvation for the Ottomans, more correctly for Muslim Turks, did not consist of the importation of imperfect Western institutions into the Ottoman Empire but the return to the unspoiled application of the *Şer'iat*.”³⁷⁰

David Urquhart had joined the Greek War of Independence on the Greek side, playing a role in the defeat of an Ottoman squadron. Later, between 1831 and 1832, he was a confidential agent to Stratford Canning in Istanbul. As time passed on, he turned from a Turcophobe to a Turcophile. With his book *Turkey and Its Resources* (1833), he convinced King William IV to extend his stay in Istanbul to further report on the commercial and political condition of the Ottoman Empire and Central Asia.³⁷¹ In addition to his Turcophilia, he was a well known Russophobe. Following the Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty between the Ottomans and Russia in 1833, he wrote a pamphlet titled *England, France, Russia and Turkey*, where he speculated about a possible Russian occupation of the Straits thanks to the treaty.³⁷²

Following the king's death, his diplomatic papers were canceled, a development that came after the inconveniencies caused by his decision of leaving the British embassy in Istanbul to start to

³⁶⁷ Tefvik, *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi*, 162; *Le Mukhbir* 34, (13 May 1868).

³⁶⁸ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 128-129.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

³⁷⁰ Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans*, 63.

³⁷¹ Geoffrey P. Nash, *From Empire to Orient: Travellers to the Middle East 1830-1926* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 44.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 45.

“live like a Turk among the Turks.”³⁷³ According to Urquhart’s opening of his book *The Spirit of the East*, observation of the East in the vulgar sense, as had been done before by others, was possible and did not necessarily have to result in wrong impressions. Still, to come to grips with the East, one needs to learn how to think and act like an Easterner.³⁷⁴ He sees the problem with the Europeans traveling to the East, who limit their communication to Western residents in the East and the non-Muslim locals for a practical reason, that is, language: they do not try to learn the Eastern languages.³⁷⁵ The solution he offered was thus this: “To travel in the East with comfort or advantage, it is necessary to do so according to the rule or custom of the country.”³⁷⁶ In a further elaboration, he suggests that:

Placed among a strange people, if you inquire, you must use language not applicable to their ideas; if you argue, you deal with your impressions, not theirs; but when you put yourself in a position similar to theirs, you can feel as they do, and that is the final result of useful investigation.³⁷⁷

As these statements reveal, his sympathy for the Ottomans in particular or the East, in general, was for what he perceived as the traditional East and the Ottoman Empire, not the one that was trying to reform itself to catch up with the West. What he admired was clear from his own words: “The finer and minuter portions of the existence of former ages, not being recordable by words, are lost to our times and in our portions of the globe. In the East, those habits of the ancient days still live and breathe.”³⁷⁸ What frightened Urquhart about the reforms in the Ottoman Empire was thus the possibility of the destruction of what he deemed the exotic in the East: “all prudent reform in Turkey must reduce itself to a restoration of the ancient rule originally denied from, an lately revived in all its ancient purity in, Arabia itself.”³⁷⁹ Otherwise, “If the Turkish government has ceased to be Turks, how shall they exist?”³⁸⁰ he asked rhetorically.

He was also critical of what was going on in England and Europe. Comparing the Ottoman Empire and Europe in political terms, Urquhart suggests that when it comes to the Ottoman Empire, Europeans refer to it as a despotism. Then he asks about the despotism in England and

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

³⁷⁴ David Urquhart, *The Spirit of the East* (London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1838), xv.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, xvi.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁷⁹ As quoted in Nash, *From Empire to Orient: Travelers to the Middle East 1830-1926*, 51.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

Europe. In the East, despotism was present in the form of arbitrary rule by a single ruler, but in that case, there was still tolerance of religious minorities. In the West, however, there was what he labeled a despotism where an accidental majority's opinion became law and imposed on the rest of the society. He also finds political parties of England divisive.³⁸¹ Such ideas would be seen in Ali Suavi as well. In a letter he sent to *Vakit* which was published on December 19, 1876, Suavi would argue that there is no public opinion in England, no government in Europe, and the best policy for the Ottoman Empire is not to do politics.³⁸²

Moreover, for Urquhart, Islam was close to what he deemed the real character of Christianity: both Islam and Protestantism were against the use of symbols, adoration of figures, confessions, or prayers to saints. It was thus not wise for the British to think of the relationship with the Ottomans in terms of religious barriers.³⁸³ Urquhart's sympathy towards the Ottoman Empire was another significant factor for Suavi's close relationship with him.

Furthermore, Ali Suavi's second friend, who deserves mentioning, was Butler Johnstone (1837-1902). He was a member of the House of Commons between 1862 and 1878 for the Conservatives. As a follower of David Urquhart, Johnstone defended the Ottomans during the Bulgarian revolt in his writings. *The Eastern Question* (1875) and *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (1876), which was addressed to William Gladstone, were such writings. He was also the author of *The Turks: Their character, manners and institutions* (1876) where he argued that the Turks were a just and civilized nation.³⁸⁴ As Çelik points out, Suavi wrote a letter to Sami Paşa before Johnstone's visit to Istanbul in early 1876, warning the Paşa not to serve alcoholic beverages during the meal as Johnstone admires the traditional and authentic Ottoman character rather than its imitation of the West.³⁸⁵

Charles Wells (1839-1917) was another important contact for Ali Suavi in England. Wells spent an important time of his life as an academic at King's College, worked as a translator of the Eastern languages for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. He was known for his works on Turkish language and literature.³⁸⁶ Wells was a critic of the British and European policies regarding the Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire, as were Urquhart and Johnstone. He suggested that the Ottomans could have handled the

³⁸¹ Urquhart, *The Spirit of the East*, xxii-xxiii.

³⁸² Mithat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2014), 119.

³⁸³ Nash, *From Empire to Orient: Travellers to the Middle East 1830-1926*, 46-47.

³⁸⁴ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 132-133.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

Russians during the Crimean War without European support, yet the British and the French intervened for help to have a share from the already coming victory. He also criticized European intervention in the Ottoman Empire with regards to the situation of the non-Muslims: he asked whether the Ottomans had attempted to do the same for the Muslims under British rule or had sent aid to the Irish, and what would the British response be in that case. He blamed the British for hypocrisy, but he was also critical of the Ottoman reform attempt. Since the Ottomans could not set a single language to be spoken by all their subjects and used French and English in their diplomatic matters, English and French ambassadors and consuls were not bothering themselves to learn Turkish. They were communicating exclusively with the non-Muslim subjects through their languages.³⁸⁷ Last but not least, in an article published in first *The Times* and later in *Le Mukhbir*, Wells described the Cretan insurgents' demand to be annexed by Greece on the grounds that they spoke a common language and belonged to the same religious faith as nothing different than demanding the annexation of Ireland to France or Spain "because a majority of the inhabitants are Celtic race and Catholic religion."³⁸⁸

Suavi's French contact Frederic Le Play (1806-1882), a senator, a '*Grand Officier*' of the *Legion d'Honneur*, and a sociologist, was not essentially different in his view of the modern society and social change than the ones mentioned above.³⁸⁹ Çelik thinks that contacting Le Play must have been Urquhart's advice since he had been promoting Le Play in his writings for some time as a man against immorality and disorder.³⁹⁰ Nazan Çiçek also underlines their old friendship that "turned into a comradeship" around 1870.³⁹¹ Le Play was "deeply skeptical about the idea of progress, and critical of what he thought were brash notions of justice, reform and the rational reconstruction of society by governmental means."³⁹² He devoted himself to sociology after the revolutions of 1848 because he was concerned with what he regarded as the threat that the rapid social change posed to the established socio-political order. In his view industrialization was associated with the decline in morality.³⁹³ He also regarded the French property law of compulsory division as being "based upon the abstract principle of equality, and its consequence, Le Play said, was to ruin the family structure of France."³⁹⁴ What brought

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁸⁸ Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans*, 99.

³⁸⁹ Ronald Fletcher, "Frederic Le Play," in *The Founding Fathers of Social Science*, ed. Timothy Raison (Pelican Books, 1963), 51.

³⁹⁰ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 285-286.

³⁹¹ Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans*, 57.

³⁹² Fletcher, "Frederic Le Play," 52.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 53-56.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

Ali Suavi closer to him was his critical perception of the secular Western modernity as well as his conservative approach to the social order: Le Play was a man who once argued that he would prefer to see the Ten Commandments in the place of “the three false dogmas of the Revolution,” by which he had referred to the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity.³⁹⁵

Çelik also suggests that it was Urquhart and Le Play’s religious character that made it possible for Ali Suavi to get closer to them.³⁹⁶ He also goes further than that and argues that Ali Suavi was in favor of constitutional monarchy at the beginning, but, as Urquhart changed his mind, Suavi became an opponent of the idea of constitutional monarchy.³⁹⁷ To be able to arrive at such a conclusion, one must assure himself with reference to Suavi’s earlier writing, that is, before he moved to London, and see what he wrote. The first time there appeared in Istanbul *Muhbir* an article about forms of government was in the 28th issue, published on 4 March 1867. Entitled “Serbestlik (Liberty),” this article suggests that liberty means being accountable to laws in the country where the ruler is only the executive who takes actions in accordance with the law, and the law is above anyone else. In Europe, constitutional governments came into life after many struggles and in different forms because Europeans think that justice should come from below. On the other hand, Suavi argues, justice should come from the top down because it is easier to execute justice with a single person who is capable (*ehliyetli*).³⁹⁸ In this case, the Ottoman Empire was the perfect example to other nations to achieve this because there was already a sultan as the single political authority, waiting to be provided with the law.

What follows this article in the same issue is a dialogue between an *efendi* and an *ecnebi*. Notwithstanding, Kuntay regards this as a fictive dialogue made up by Ali Suavi as an intelligent twist to promote constitutional monarchy.³⁹⁹ According to this, Suavi was making the *efendi* speak in favor of limited liberty by criticizing the freedom of expression of the press in Europe so that he could mock the anti-constitutionalist party in the Ottoman Empire. This was the only possible way for Suavi at the time to promote the idea of the constitution, Kuntay

³⁹⁵ Elfenbein, “No Empire for Old Men,” 211.

³⁹⁶ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 286.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 124, 205-206.

³⁹⁸ “Serbestlik,” in *Muhbir* 28, (4 March 1867); transcribed version in Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınıının Sivri Dili*, 260-261. In his exact words: “Zahir oldu ki serbestlik ki edna ve âlâ herkesin başı kanuna bağlı olmak pekâlâ şeydir. Ama Avrupa milletlerinden her biri bunu tahsil için nice yollar tutmuşlar. Her yolda ifrat ve tefritten kurtulamamışlar. Avrupalılar isterler ki bu adalet aşağıdan yukarıya gider kuvvetle icra olunsun. Bunun için söz millet meclislerine ve nihayet bilir bilmezim ağzına düşüp görülen karışıklıklar oluyor yazık. Hâlbuki adalet yukarıdan aşağı bir kuvvetle gelmelidir. Çünkü adalet bir kocaman taş gibidir ki yukarıdan bir tek kişinin dokunmasıyla düşebilir. Aşağıdan yukarı atılması pek çok kuvvetlere muhtaçtır. Takriben üç bin sene evvel göçmüş olan Homeros bile ‘lâ hayri fi kesretür-rüsene’ dediğini Şehristanî tercüme etmiştir. Türkçesi ‘nerede çokluk orada bokluk’ demektir.”

³⁹⁹ Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilalci Ali Suavi*, 30-32.

asserts. Yet, considering the dialogue together with the preceding article, one cannot be as sure as Kuntay.⁴⁰⁰ As I will discuss later with references to his writings, Ali Suavi continued to keep his distance to the ideas of representative government and constitutional monarchy in the secular sense in that any form of government that was not established to execute God’s divine justice on earth through *shariah* would be illegitimate and immoral in his thinking.

Moreover, if it was not possible for Ali Suavi to speak freely at home, how can one explain his writings abroad, in London, Paris, and Lyons, where he did not speak in favor of a representative government or a constitutional monarchy in the secular sense as explained above? In France, for example, he was critical of the French republic and demonstrating it to his audience back home as an example of immorality, for it was based on the principle that sovereignty belonged to people, not God. Before passing on to his writings and discussing his thought, I would like to finish this part with an elaboration of his differences with the other Young Ottomans.

To begin with, comparing the mentalities of Ali Suavi and Mustafa Fazıl, it is not difficult to see that their relationship was conditional. In *Le Mukhbir*’s 28th issue, in London, Ali Suavi was still writing on the Ottoman Muslims being in an even worse condition than their non-Muslim counterparts because the non-Muslim Ottomans were able to seek help from the outside, which they were reasonably doing in the face of the arbitrary government, but the Muslims did not have foreign protectors, so the situation was worse for them.⁴⁰¹ This resembles Fazıl’s open letter to Abdülaziz, where he had asserted that Muslims and non-Muslims were together in being subject to arbitrary government but the Muslims had nowhere to go to seek help whereas non-Muslims were able to get help from the outside.⁴⁰² On the other hand, the same Mustafa Fazıl was suggesting in the same letter that if the religion does not limit itself to the spiritual realm and intervenes in the mundane businesses, it brings more harm than benefit, brings about a destruction for everything and eventually for itself.⁴⁰³ There is an adequate number of articles written by Ali Suavi to convince one that, even if he was calling for reforms, those reforms

⁴⁰⁰ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*; 565-566; “Şehir Postasıyla Gelen Varakadır,” in *Muhbir* 28, (4 March 1867); transcribed text in Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 262. Upon learning that the liberty in Europe was not all about the parliament and newspapers and their freedom of expression was also the engine of liberty, *Efendi* says: “Anladım, Avrupa’nın serbestlik sandığı, bilir bilmez boşboğazlıkmiş. Bizde böyle serbestlik olmadığı daha âlâdır.”

⁴⁰¹ Johnson, “A Revolutionary Young Ottoman,” 84.

⁴⁰² Tefvik, *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi*, 28. “Müslümanlar ki – yabancı devletlerden hiç birisi onları korumayı akıllarına bile getirmezler – bunlar Müslüman olmayan öteki milletlerden çok daha fazla ezilip harap olmuşlardır.” (As quoted by Ebuzziya.)

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 40-41. In his exact words: “Din, sadece, ezeli gerçekler ve onların yargıları olarak kalmazsa, yani dünya işlerine de müdahale ederse, fayda yerine zarar getirir; herkesi telef eder, sonunda kendisi de telef olur.”

were to be based on the principles of Islam; there was nothing close to Fazıl's idea of separation of the mundane and the spiritual in Suavi's writings. Furthermore, while Fazıl was describing liberty as a prerequisite for education and progress, because, as his reasoning goes, a nation that is not free, will not bother itself with education and that will prevent the whole society from progress,⁴⁰⁴ Suavi was putting forward education as a prerequisite for civilization, which would, in turn, bring about happiness.⁴⁰⁵ From this nuanced reading I conclude that he was not aiming for the same end with Fazıl, that is, achieving progress and civilization, Suavi regarded civilization as a means for a different end.

A similar nuanced reading can be done through Namık Kemal. Similar to Suavi, Kemal lived for some time in London that was enough for him to be impressed by the level of civilization he witnessed there. At the same time, one cannot see the similar sentiments in Ali Suavi's writings.⁴⁰⁶ In "Terakki (Progress)," Kemal begins with suggesting that there is no necessity to travel through all countries to find civilization since London already presents the best example: "If all the improvements in the world were photographed in a picture, the whole civilized world could only show as much as London."⁴⁰⁷ In the rest of his article, Kemal shares his admiration of London and its civilization.

In closing and making his argument, Namık Kemal states that "as Europe has got into this condition in two centuries, and they had to discover the means of progress, whereas we find those means ready to our hands, if the work be properly taken in hand, there is no doubt that in two centuries, at any rate, we shall be able to get into a condition to be counted one of the most civilized nations."⁴⁰⁸ Similar to Fazıl, what Kemal sought was also civilization as an end in itself, whereas in Suavi's writings civilization does not seem so. To cut this discussion short here only to continue in discussing Suavi's thought, they were both part of the same intellectual context and they utilized a common discourse of civilization. Still, they were not seeking the same goal.

Ali Suavi's life between 1870 and 1876 is in almost total darkness, as Tanpınar states.⁴⁰⁹ He settled in Paris first and started publishing a new newspaper that more resembled the form of a

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁰⁵ Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 113; "Mukaddime" in *Muhbir* 1 (1 January 1867).

⁴⁰⁶ Elfenbein, "No Empire for Old Men," 220.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibret* 45 (November 1872); translated text in Robert Landen, "The Young Ottoman: Namık Kemal's 'Progress', 1872," in *The Modern Middle East: A Sourcebook for History*, ed. Camron Amin, Benjamin C. Fortna, and Elizabeth Frierson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 406-407.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁴⁰⁹ Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 235.

journal than a newspaper, entitled *Ulum Gazetesi*. During the war between France and Prussia of 1870-1871, he moved to Lyons, and there he continued with *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine*. It was a sudden move when he could return Istanbul thanks to the approval of Abdulhamid II in 1876, which Tanpınar guesses, could happen possibly after Suavi's denunciation of Midhat Paşa in an article.⁴¹⁰ According to a correspondent to the *London Evening Standard*, Ali Suavi was supporting the sultan's decision to banish Midhat Paşa in a rather strange way, strange enough to be confused with sarcasm: Suavi was arguing that Midhat's banishment was "for the protection of liberty," and

... he modestly adds that in banishing him the Sultan has been actuated by just the same strong regard for liberty as that which actuated Louis Napoleon when he perpetrated the *coup d'état* of December 1851. When I first read this astounding comparison I was of opinion that it was merely a clumsy attempt at irony, but a perusal of the remainder of the article satisfied me that the writer, counting no doubt upon the ignorance of his readers, had seriously thought of convincing them that Louis Napoleon was a conspicuous apostle of freedom, and that the Sultan had done well to follow the example which had been set him by so enlightened a patriot. ... Ali Suavi has found out that by this conspicuous violation of the Constitution the Sultan has shown that it is inviolable, and has given his subjects a complete assurance that it will be observed.⁴¹¹

Then the correspondent quotes Ali Suavi: "Europe, which has perhaps believed that there is not in Turkey a Sovereign power which can execute the reforms, will now learn that there exists in Turkey a Padishah, and that the necessary power and influence exist in him."⁴¹² Suavi's attack on Midhat can be explained by his enmity with Namık Kemal as well as his fear that Midhat, whom Suavi depicted as an enabler of the British influence over the empire, would become someone like Ali Paşa one day, whom Suavi insisted on seeing as the source of all evil happening to the empire.⁴¹³

It is crucial at this point to consider Çelik's assumption that Suavi's appointment was not likely to be connected to his writings against Midhat because at the time neither Midhat was exiled yet, nor Suavi had written anything against him.⁴¹⁴ The official decree for the appointment was issued on 13 February 1877, but Suavi had already started working on 1 February.⁴¹⁵ On the

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 232-233.

⁴¹¹ *London Evening Standard*, February 19, 1877.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures*, 67.

⁴¹⁴ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 313.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 310-312.

other hand, between the two dates, on 10 February 1877, we see an article in *Vakit*, written by Ali Suavi after Midhat's exile, suggesting the latter to take lessons from Le Play in France.⁴¹⁶ Çelik also contradicts himself by stating that Suavi's first writing about Midhat's exile was published in *Sadakat* on 8 February 1877.⁴¹⁷ In my opinion, Suavi's mocking of Midhat after he was exiled as connected to his appointment remains a possibility.

Whether connected to this or not, Ali Suavi was able to receive Abdulhamid's *irade* to return to Istanbul, and on 1 February 1877, he would be appointed as the director to the Galatasaray Lycée. As Benjamin Fortna asserts, it was instead an unexpected decision to appoint to this position at the Franco-Ottoman lycée someone like Ali Suavi.⁴¹⁸ Fortna thinks that it was thanks to the similar ideas that the sultan and Suavi shared regarding the foreign influence over the empire and the necessity to preserve the Ottoman and Islamic values. Suavi had already demonstrated his uneasiness with the imperial education in an article he wrote for *Hürriyet* back in 1868: he had criticized the government for appointing French teachers and proposed instead to raise a new class of *ulema* having better knowledge, with a reform plan for the *madrasa*. For this, he had suggested injecting practical knowledge about worldly matters into the *madrasa* curriculum in addition to religious sciences. History, geography, and natural sciences had also become necessary for the new generation of *ulema* to know, he stated in the same article.⁴¹⁹ Having already put some thought into the reforms in education and reflecting on the issue for years now in his articles in *Muhbir* and *Ulum*, Ali Suavi started his directorship with reforms at the lycée.

In a report he sent to the sultan, Ali Suavi states that there was an inequality between Muslim and non-Muslim students in that, the ratio of Muslim students paying full tuition was higher than that of the non-Muslims and that there were certain teachers who had incited the Bulgarian students to join the Russian army during the war with the Ottoman Empire. Those were dismissed by Suavi.⁴²⁰ He also changed the curriculum: he added Islamic subjects such as *insha*, *kalam*, *adab*, and *fiqh* into the curriculum. Another measure he took was to make studying the main principles of Islam obligatory for Muslim students. Despite that all his reforms would have a posthumous influence over the following decades at the lycée, he was dismissed from

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 301. Çelik does not translate the date to the Gregorian calendar, leaves the date as 27 Kanun-ı Sani 1877 in the footnote.

⁴¹⁸ Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 105.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴²⁰ Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 321-324.

his post in November 1877.⁴²¹ This could have happened thanks to the British pressure on the Ottoman government, which was channeled through the English Ambassador Henry Layard, who informed the Foreign Minister in separate letters about the danger Ali Suavi posed to the British interests in his writings and later about his dismissal from the post.⁴²²

After his dismissal, Suavi continued preaching at mosques. Upon complaints about him inciting the people, he was arrested together with two other people, later to be freed. Tanpınar speculates that it must have been around this period that Ali Suavi was planning to replace Abdulhamid with Murad.⁴²³

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I tried to lay down Ali Suavi's connections that could have possibly influenced his thought. His close relationships with David Urquhart, Charles Wells, Butler Johnstone, and Frederic Le Play during his stay in England and France might have introduced to him the ideas of the previous century European political thought, if he did not himself read such names as Montesquieu, Rousseau, Locke, or Hume.

A better version of this chapter would provide more elaborate details on Suavi's contacts. Still, unfortunately, biographical information on him that we have from his contemporaries is for the most part devoted to showing the audience Suavi's so-called intellectual incoherence, his wife's British nationality as a proof that Suavi was a British agent, or his preference to wear shalwar during his directorship of the Galatasaray Lycée. Therefore, I decided to offer a limited biographical section before delving into his ideas on civilization. In the next chapter, I almost exclusively focus on his writing in the *Ulum* newspaper, which he published between 1869 and 1871 in France.

⁴²¹ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 108.

⁴²² Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 350-354.

⁴²³ Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 233.

CHAPTER 4

ALI SUAVI'S THOUGHT IN THE ULUM NEWSPAPER

In the second chapter, I had discussed how the concept of civilization was translated into the Ottoman context, beginning from the Tanzimat period, and how it was a novelty compared to the earlier problems of Ottoman political thought. In these examples, there was an effort at universalization of the concept, that is, redefining civilization as belonging to humanity rather than a particular culture and society. I also pointed out the parallels in the prominent Nahda intellectuals' thought in the broader context of intellectual response to the nineteenth-century Western orientalist claims of civilizational superiority.

Following this line of thought and taking civilization as an abstract notion detached from the holistic image of the West, Ali Suavi tries to define it in his article entitled "Mukaddime" in the first issue of *Muhbir*.⁴²⁴ Suavi presents his understanding of civilization as a historical necessity that arose from human beings' needs. His example is a savage man who has been nowhere other than stone caves: if this man was put into a simple room, he would not ask for more. On the other hand, Suavi continues, if you put someone with more knowledge and experience, for example, a villager, into a similar situation, you would see him seeking fire, a window, and a carpet. Since he had needs, he would have to search for them. Yet, however painful the effort might be, once he fulfills his needs, he will reach happiness. From this example, Suavi concludes that civilization arises from human beings' needs, human society can reach happiness if only these are met. As our needs increased in this age, he asserts, our need for knowledge and work increased as well.⁴²⁵ In his formulation, then, resembling Ibn Khaldun's proposition,⁴²⁶ civilization and happiness are interconnected, and human beings are civilized by nature.

More importantly, civilization is not associated with a specific culture or religion. Elaborating more on what he means, Suavi suggests that in his time, there is an increasing need for knowledge. First of all, civilization requires people of learning regardless of wherever the arts and sciences originate and whoever possesses them. People also need to know what is

⁴²⁴ Transcribed text in Necati Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili* (İstanbul: Kriter, 2017), 113-118.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 113. "Saadet celb-i menfaat ve def-i mazarat kısımlarına münhasırdır ve bunların lüzumunu bildiren medeniyettir. Medeniyet içtima ve ihtilat hasebiyle şu lüzumu bildirip lazımı tahsil için sahibini sa'y ve iştigale cebr eder. Sa'y müyesser olan lüzumu tedarik ettirir. Bu surette saadet sa'y ile olur denilecek yerde sa'y dahi saadettendir denilse sahih olur."

⁴²⁶ Erwin. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 103.

happening in their country and the whole world. To meet these requirements, people need newspapers. *Muhbir* comes out to provide people with knowledge, and for this, Suavi promises to use a simple language that everyone can understand.⁴²⁷ In the same issue, in an article entitled “Tarifat-ı Suavi,” he further elaborates on his conception of a universal human civilization: human beings and animals share a lot but the ability to understand the whole and the capacity to express and transmit ideas. A civilized person is, therefore, one who needs to communicate what one knows to another and learn from the latter what one does not know.⁴²⁸ It is thanks to this crucial difference that we are able to speak of human civilization.

This abstract and universal notion of civilization was, however, shaped by Ali Suavi’s preference for an Islamic framework, which he makes apparent by pointing out to *ahadith*, Sunni *fiqh*, and Islamic political thought as sources of his ideas, even though he was possibly influenced by the European political thought, especially the French intellectuals of the previous century, during his stay in France. I will discuss this alleged omission of European sources of his thought and his emphasis on Islamic sources at the end of this chapter. In this chapter, I focus on Suavi’s work to reflect on his understanding of civilization. In his thinking, civilization was possible in different ways, for example, in the way the French achieved. Still, what matters more for Suavi was that there was also a moral aspect of civilization that should distinguish Muslim societies from Europe. Muslims, according to this perspective, cannot merely follow the lead of Europe in reforming their education or government, the two crucial components of civilization and eventually of the path leading the community to happiness.

In the next part, I start with Suavi’s general aim for spreading knowledge with the idea of pushing the community forward in the way to civilization. He emphasizes the role of imperial education, makes comparisons with the non-Muslim education in the empire, and offers his solutions. Besides, he promises to utilize journalism as part of this broader purpose and inform people about the developments in the world as well as the political condition of the empire in his newspaper.

⁴²⁷ Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 115. “Tasrihi caiz olan her şeyi Asitane’de kullanılan adı lisan ile yani herkesin anlayabileceği ibareyle yazacaktır.”

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

Spreading Knowledge: Education and Journalism

In the second issue of *Muhbir*, in the article entitled “Maarif,” Suavi continues his problematization of civilization and how to realize progress. Presenting a comparison of the past and the present day, he tries to demonstrate how it became a necessity for people to increase their knowledge and how it was, compared to the past, easier to acquire knowledge. For a long time, the transmission of knowledge was realized through oral tradition; it was the ancient Egyptians that first used certain signs to express themselves; until the Andalusian Muslims invented paper, people had been used to utilize whatever was available to them, such as camel skin and tree bark.⁴²⁹ Now that in the nineteenth-century people were in a far better condition, they had nothing to complain about or provide as an excuse for their lack of knowledge. What is more, Suavi points out to a sense of responsibility falling upon each generation to leave better conditions for the new generation.⁴³⁰ This formulation gives the sense of a collective effort to create progress and civilization on a linear line of time or history.

Perhaps behind this formulation was Suavi’s idea of society as a necessity for human beings, who, he asserts in an earlier pamphlet entitled *Hukuku’ş-Şevari*, cannot leave on themselves but need to live together and cooperate to meet their needs. What follows is the question of public roads: these roads are open to common use, and therefore they must be kept expanded, flattened, and purified.⁴³¹ In later parts, Suavi also goes into the question of the abuse of common spaces by private persons,⁴³² provides a translation from al-Ghazali,⁴³³ and discusses different aspects of common use of public roads and spaces with references to Muslim intellectuals’ opinions and *fiqh*. His source for argumentation is Islamic tradition, but his understanding of civilization is not defined by hard boundaries; on the contrary, it is taken as a universal and abstract concept.

Furthermore, since civilization is not exclusively in this or that society’s possession, any society can achieve it through certain steps. As mentioned before at the beginning of this section, education was of central importance for progress and civilization, and the subsections in *Muhbir*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 120. “Artık insaf edelim. Ağaç kabuklarına ve deve derilerine yazarak okuyarak ulum ve sınai tahsil etmiş geçmiş olan insan kardeşlerimizin hallerini düşünelim. Bu hal ile sonradan gelecekleri düşünüp nice zahmetler ve meşakkatler çekerek bizlere bıraktıkları yadigarlardan utanalım.”

⁴³¹ Ali Suavi, *Hukuku’ş-Şevari* (İstanbul: Uhuvvet Matbaası, 1324), 3. “Medeniyet terakki eyledikçe vaki’ olan tecrübeler delaleti ve ahkam-ı şeriyenin şahadetiyle tahakkuk etmiştir ki: bu misillü yollar için vesaat ve istiva ve taharet, umur-u vacibeden ve muhafaza-i hukuk-u ammedendir.”

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴³³ Aaron S. Johnson, “A Revolutionary Young Ottoman: Ali Suavi (1839-1878)” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Montreal, McGill University, 2012), 67. Johnson suggests that this 16 page booklet is largely a translation from al-Ghazali but the translation from al-Ghazali’s *Ihya al-Ulum* starts on the 8th page and finishes on the 10th page with an Arabic phrase indicating the end of the translation part, after which Suavi goes on to continue his own problematization with references to other Muslim intellectuals.

that were entitled “Maarif” were written by Suavi. After his opening in the second issue with a historical background to the development of methods of gathering knowledge and how it became easier in the present day to acquire knowledge in comparison to the past, the newspaper received readers’ letters and published them in the following issues.

In the third issue, a reader’s letter starts with reference to the article in the second issue and finishes with the question of how Homer, a blind man, was able to educate himself with the limited opportunities of his age three thousand years ago. In contrast, in the present day there was no such man as Homer: Is it because people in the past were more intelligent or is it because the method of education and books in the present day are not good enough?⁴³⁴ Suavi’s response starts with a refusal of the possibility of people in the past being more intelligent and continues with a critique of *madrasa* education. They encourage the youth to study without considering the future, and at *madrasas*, an education of fifteen years was worth four years; in other words, there was a problem with the method of education.⁴³⁵ This critical approach continues in the following issues in a more interactive form.

In *Muhbir*’s seventh issue, new reader letters were published: one reader was asking how to reduce the time spent at *madrasa* without compromising from the curriculum whereas the other was asking why the discussion was made through solely the example of *madrasa* while there were different types of schooling and each profession required its schooling.⁴³⁶ In the following issue, there was a letter written by a certain Manavzade. Introducing himself as a son of a vegetable seller, the author complains about his education, suggesting that he studied without knowing what for. Despite spending years at the *madrasa*, he was unable to write eloquently a letter in Arabic or Turkish. Did he not have books? He did have them. Did he not study enough? He did study hard. Yet, alas, he did not benefit from his *madrasa* experience.⁴³⁷ After his article ends, a question and answer session between Manavzade and an unnamed random person begins when the latter asserts that Manavzade cannot claim not to have benefited at all from *madrasa* after spending all those years there. Yet, at the end of their dialogue, both conclude that there was an urgent need to reform education. The new understanding in the society was that education would save one from hardworking jobs and open the doors of bureaucracy where one could earn his monthly stipend from the state regularly without working hard. They argue that this understanding must change, and each person should receive the type of education that

⁴³⁴ Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 126.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 147-148.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

he needs for his profession.⁴³⁸ This might be a real conversation that corresponded to *Muhbir*, or it could be a fictive one prepared to support Ali Suavi's case.

Division of labor requires unique curriculums for different professions and people should not rush to education without knowing to what ends they will study, this is clear. Other than that, Suavi does not propose a reform agenda for imperial education. The role he attributes to education in the path of civilization recurs later in the 25th issue of *Muhbir*, which is still nothing more elaborate than what he had written for the first two issues: there is nothing other than the knowledge that differentiates human beings from animals and a man who does not have knowledge has a sick heart and is doomed.⁴³⁹

Moreover, another recurring theme was the role of the newspaper in forming public opinion and how central it was to civilization. In the 28th issue, Suavi argues that thanks to the newspaper, people learn about their government's actions, foreign governments' intentions, and form their opinions. The newspaper is sort of a school that spreads knowledge. Not less important is the role that it plays in the coordination of aid campaigns for the poor.⁴⁴⁰ To be more effective in this, Suavi calls on other journalists to use a simple and lucid Turkish.⁴⁴¹ It would thus be possible to reach out to a bigger audience. The deliberateness of his decision to utilize a simpler language would become more apparent later after he started publishing *Ulum Gazetesi* in Paris. In *Ulum*'s 15th issue, Suavi would reveal that he both distorted the language -meaning its simplification- and planted in the country the seeds of freedom of expression.⁴⁴²

Suavi's emphasis on education as having a significant role in progress continues in *Ulum* as well. In comparison to *Muhbir*, he seems more critical and elaborate in *Ulum*. Upon a new regulation concerning the imperial education, Suavi wrote an article entitled "Maarif-i Umumiye" in *Ulum*'s 7th issue, discussing the history of education in the Ottoman realm and what contribution the new education has made to the country yet. According to this, for a long time the sources of education had been two: *mekteps* and *madrasas*. *Sıbyan mekteps* were present in every neighborhood and village.⁴⁴³ Since Islam prioritizes education as necessary for

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 243-244. "İlmi olmayan herifin kalbi hastadır ve helakı muhakkaktır." Later he makes it clear that he points out to the soul with the term heart: "Kalpten muradım lisan-ı şer'i üzere ruhtur." on p. 246.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 259. "Haydi ittifak edelim. Mesela şarap diyecek yerde 'ab-ı ateşrenk' demeyelim. Düzce 'şarap' diyelim vesselam. Muradımız mesele anlatmak iken niçin halkı bir de ibare için düşündürelim. Gazeteleri İstanbul'da avam lisanı olan Türkçe ile yazalım."

⁴⁴² *Ulum Gazetesi* 15 (3 April 1870): 909. "Hem lisanı bozdum hem memlekete hürriyet-i ekلامي soktum."

⁴⁴³ "Maarif-i Umumiye," *Ulum Gazetesi* 7 (11 October 1869): 390-391. "Minelkadim menabi-i ulum iki idi. Biri mekatib diğeri medaris. Mekatib-i sıbyan her mahallede ve her köyde mevcut ve ekserisinde müteaddid idi. ...

devout Muslims, Suavi suggests, anyone who builds a mosque would also build a *mektep* next to it. That was why there were so many *mekteps* back in the day, and there is nothing to be surprised about the number, he asserts.⁴⁴⁴ He then goes on to state that it was only 5% of the total population of Muslims that did not study at these *mekteps*, and most likely, this 5% were from among the disabled.⁴⁴⁵ Following this, Suavi gives a historical account of the development of education in the Ottoman realm, beginning with Mehmed II and coming down to his present day, with a list of the schools and their curricula.

In the present day, the problem was not what the Europeans assumed, Suavi thought. In opposing the European accusation of the Ottoman Empire to be sectarian in the matters of education, or more precisely, caring only about its Muslim population and basing its education on Islamic tradition and teachings, Suavi asserts that since the antiquity, education was a free business for everyone in the empire.⁴⁴⁶ He argues that the Ottoman government has never intervened in education, not even to serve the Muslims. If Muslims were in better condition, it was due to their collective efforts.⁴⁴⁷ Suavi then continues with the new education, starting with listing the shortcomings, explaining what has been done so far by the government and listing the remaining problems.

In *mekteps*, such courses as geography and arithmetic (*hesab*) were lacking; in *madradas*, for the quantitative (*riyaziye*) and philosophical (*hikemiye*) courses, there should have been more time spared. Some important sciences (*fünun*) were not given importance and this was also another problem. Whether the teachers were capable of teaching was also unknown because there was no permanent institution to check regularly on teachers. Yet, the more important problem for Suavi seems to be the separation of non-Muslims in imperial education.⁴⁴⁸ For the

Fi 1197 hicride (... olvakit İstanbul kadısı efendinin vermiş olduğu ... cedvel-i resmîyesinde mukid olduğuna göre) yalnız İstanbul şehrinde bin iki yüz elli beş mekteb-i sıbyan vardı.”

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 391. “Zamanımızda mevcuda kıyas edip de bundan 89 sene akdem 1255 adet mekatib vücudu garip görülmemelidir. Zira herkesin bildiği bir meseledir ki bizde cami ve mescid bina eden ehl-i hayır elbette bir de mekteb inşa ve ... etmiştir. Tarih-i mezburda dokuz yüzü müteceviz cevami ve mesacid vücud olduğundan bu miktar mekatib yek kalemde müsbettir.”

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 391-392. “Memleket-i Osmaniye’de mektebde tahsil etmeyen Müslüman adedi yüzde ancak beş nisbetindeydi. Bu beş ise elbette bir vech ile ashab-ı azırdandır.”

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 395. “Ulum-u memleket-i Osmaniye meselesi üzerine Avrupa’da mevcut büyük galetlerden biri dahi şudur ki hükümet-i Osmaniye’yi Heyet-i Maarif-i Umumiye teşkiline değin bu meselede *sectarian* tesmiye ederler. Demek isterler ki bu hükümet mukaddeman neşr-i ulumca yalnız İslam’a hizmet edermiş. Bu isim bid’ayı nazarda hafif el-mana bir kelime görünürse de büyük büyük meselelere asıl olmuştur.”

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.* “Kaldı ki hükümet-i Osmaniye İslam ulumuna dahi karışmaz idi. İslam’da görülen ulum hükümetin müdahalesiyle ileri gelmedi. Ancak millet-i İslamiye himmetiyle İslam’da meşihat vardı denirse, millet-i Gayrimüslime’de patrik ve haham var idi. Ve Ebu’l-Feth gününden bırakılmış idiler.”

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 396.

government to solve these problems, Suavi suggests, a permanent institution has been founded, namely, *Maarif-i Umumiye*. According to the new organization of education, there would be three levels of education: *mekteb-i sıbyan*, *mekteb-i rüşdiye*, and *mekteb-i aliye*.

Regarding the first one, Suavi is not satisfied with what has been done yet: the number of *mekteps* have been steadily decreasing.⁴⁴⁹ In the second place, *mekatib-i rüşdiye* were in good condition in terms of their curricula, and he was personally able to witness to this since he had been a student in *rüşdiye mekteps*. Still, the problem was that there was no sense of obligation for the population to continue to education at this level after graduating from *mekteps*.⁴⁵⁰ Number of *rüşdiyes* was rising not only in Istanbul but the whole empire, from Rumeli to Anatolia, but this was not achieved by the government, most schools were opened thanks to the local populations' efforts, he underlines.⁴⁵¹ Last but not least, *mekatib-i aliye* were originally to be founded upon the model of Europe as the then-Minister of Mekatib Kemal Efendi was sent to France, England, and Germany to observe their higher education, but upon his return, it was deemed to be too expensive, and therefore, instead of opening new schools, it was decided to reform the present ones. He then gives a list of institutions of higher education that started operating recently.⁴⁵²

Critical of the steps the Ottoman government has taken so far in reforming education, Suavi wrote a short piece about Muhammad Ali's efforts in this same domain in *Ulum*'s 11th issue. According to this, Muhammad Ali founded a printing house that published 243 books, out of which 198 were in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. At the same time, the rest were translated from European languages, most of them being French and the remaining being English. Most of this translation work was done by those who studied at *Mekteb-i Mısri*, which Muhammad Ali had founded in Paris.⁴⁵³ Suavi's promotion of Muhammad Ali's Egypt as a good example to follow can be seen in his other writings as well.

Suavi did not leave untouched the question of non-Muslim education in the empire, either. In "İstanbul'da Hristiyan Mektepleri"⁴⁵⁴ he starts with complaining that the non-Muslims were

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 401. "Fi 1197, aded-i mekatib 1255 iken (yalnız İstanbul'da), fi 1268, ilan-ı resmiye göre 396 adede tenzil etti. Ve geçen 1284 İstanbul ma'a bilad-ı selase, aded-i mekatib-i sıbyan 28 kaldı. Bu tenzilin sebebi ise küçük küçük mekatib birleştirilerek büyücek mekatib itihazımı gibi bir şey olmayıp ancak yanan yapılmadı, harab olan bakılmadı..."

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 402.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 403. Suavi uses the term "mekatib nazırı," therefore I did not prefer to translate it as Minister of Education.

⁴⁵³ "Merhum Mehmed Ali Paşa Vaktinde Mısır Maarifi," *Ulum Gazetesi* 11 (19 December 1869): 671.

⁴⁵⁴ "İstanbul'da Hristiyan Mektepleri," *Ulum Gazetesi* 5 (12 September 1869).

still not integrated to the imperial education. As indicated in the British Consulate's report to the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he states, non-Muslims should have participated in the imperial education to help build a coherent Ottoman social structure, that is, they could have had better relations with their Muslim compatriots. Yet, Suavi asserts, they did not make any effort to attend to the imperial system of education, nor were they willing to develop an organization themselves at the local level. As a result, as Suavi sees it, there emerged the problem of the integration of non-Muslims to the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵⁵ From this point on, it is not clear whether he regards the problem of integration as a dangerously continuing one or whether he does not care about the non-Muslims' integration at all. Continuing, he suggests that recently there were good developments on the side of the non-Muslims: when he was teaching in Filibe, he had non-Muslim students sitting side by side with the Muslims, willing to learn.⁴⁵⁶ This willingness was not partial or limited to a number of individuals but an example of a more general trend, according to him.

In recent years the non-Muslims of Istanbul started to build many schools and hospitals, he underlines, and then notes that there is something to make an example of for the Muslims. Suavi makes it clear that by pointing out to the non-Muslim education, he means the new education.⁴⁵⁷ Giving a list of non-Muslim schools opened in Istanbul, together with their curricula, Suavi suggests that even though the imperial education was already organized and more or less functioning, there was a new model to try out for the Muslims.⁴⁵⁸ This way, Suavi regarded progress more likely to come with a collective effort rather than leaving the domain of education almost exclusively to the government. On the other hand, he did not propose these designated Muslim private schools to act independently from the government. He was impressed by the non-Muslim efforts and perhaps proposed this solution as a way to not only civilize the empire but also win the battle against the non-Muslims. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Ottoman bureaucrats were already in admiration of the foreign missionary schools and non-Muslim local

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 288. "Fil vaki' bunlar öteden beri hiç mani bulunmadığı halde maarif ve adab-ı mahalliyeye bile tahsile rağbet etmediler. Acınacak halde idiler. Hatta bu memlekette Ermenice ve Rumca ve Bulgarca asarı okumaya yazmaya muktedir müteaddid-i İslam bulunur, beri taraftan onlara bari müsavi adette olsun lisan-ı mahalliyeye okur yazar bulunmazdı. Bunlar böylelikle ne devletin nizam-ı mevcudesini anladılar ne de oturdukları vatanın asarını duydular."

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 288-289.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 289. "Şurası elbette malumdur ki Hristiyan mektepleri dediğimiz vakitte muradımız menabi-i maarif olmaya elverişli, yeni usulde mekatib demektir."

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 292. "İslam'ın mahalle ve rüşdiye mektepleri ve medreseleri var ise de Hristiyanların kendi mekteplerine kendileri baktıkları misillü bunlar dahi semt semt cemaatler teşkil ederek kendileri idare etmek ve külliyyat-ı umurda yine Maarif-i Umumiye'nin nezaret ve himmeti altında bulunmak şartıyla ahlak ve hesap ve ticaret ve diğer maarif iktibas olunacak mektepler açsalar terakkiye tesri' etmiş olurlar... bazı mahalle-i münasip bulunan medreselerin kimi ilm-i fıkha ve kavanin ve kimi hikmet-i tabiiye ve elhiye gibi uluma tahsis kılınca matlub olan terakki bir kat daha tesri' edilmiş olur."

schools; they had seen this as a battle for civilization.⁴⁵⁹ Ali Suavi might have shared the same sentiment.

In addition to increasing the number of schools throughout the empire, ameliorating the quality of education was also a problem waiting to be solved. In *Ulum*'s seventh issue, Suavi goes on to discuss a reform plan presented to the sultan, which included such measures as increasing the number of schools to match the population figures in the whole empire; appointing qualified directors and teachers to these schools; solving the problem of lack of higher education for the graduates of *rüşdiye mekteps* who had nowhere to go but military schools after graduation; solving the problem of lack of a precept (*kaide*) to force the population collectively to attend to the imperial education; solving the problem of lack of inspection on the system (*teftiş*.)⁴⁶⁰ After listing the measures intended to be taken by the government, Suavi suggests that instead of going all through the provinces the government should start with multiplying the number of *sıbyan* and *rüşdiye mekteps* in Istanbul first, open *idadiyes*, *darümuallimin*, *darümuallimat*, and *darülfünun*, and until they raise their teachers, employ non-Ottomans who are capable.⁴⁶¹ Yet, he was also careful with foreign impact on imperial education.

Referring to the government decision to found an office for translation of books from foreign languages to be used in education, Suavi proposes the *Daire-i İlmiyye* to translate *Istilahat-ı Ulum* first: this should be the first translation, and no translator should use any other guide than this one so that European terms of sciences, which were non-Islamic, would not enter into the empire.⁴⁶² He advises to use first what they already have; for the things they did not have, they could look to translation from European sources. He was also critical of the discourse of duality in imperial education. After the *Maarif-i Umumiye* was founded, there emerged a new discourse of duality, he suggests, and this was misleading as there was never an opposition to what was called *usul-i cedid*.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁹ For this argument, see Emine Ö. Evered, *Empire and Education under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

For a general history of Ottoman education in the nineteenth century, see Somel, *Osmanlı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi (1839-1908): İslamlaşma, Otokrasi ve Disiplin*; Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*.

⁴⁶⁰ "Nizam-ı Cedid Bera-i Maarif-i Umumiye," *Ulum Gazetesi* 7 (11 October 1869): 404-412.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 408. "Bizde muallim yetişinceye dek mekatibde tedris olunacak bazı fünun-ı mahsusa için tab'an devlet-i aliyyeden olmayan erbab-ı daniş ve kemalin istihdamı..."

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 411-412. Suavi does not indicate the author's name; he might have shortened the title as well: there is one book with a similar title published in 1862 in Calcutta, that is, Tehanevi's *Keşşafu Istilahatı'l-Fünun ve'l-Ulum*. For more information about the book, see Nasuhi Ünal Karaarslan, "Keşşafu Istilahatı'l-Fünun ve'l-Ulum," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, n.d., <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/kessafu-istilahatil-funun-vel-ulum>.

⁴⁶³ "Nizam-ı Cedid Bera-i Maarif-i Umumiye," 412. "Memleket-i Osmaniye'de öteden beri menba-ı ulum vahid iken Maarif-i Umumiye teşkiliyle menba usul-i atika ve usul-i cedide diye ikiye taksim etmiş. Biz deriz ki

Suavi was also concerned with the face-to-face interaction between the teachers and the students. In “Hatime,” he presented a piece of translation from Ghazali’s *İhya el-Ulum*, where teachers were warned of potential mistakes and advised how to avoid them.⁴⁶⁴ According to the translated part, a human’s condition in acquiring sciences resembles that of a merchant. In the first phase, a merchant makes a profit; the second phase is the concentration of profits to be used to meet other needs; in the third phase the merchant can spend for himself so that he can benefit from the result of his labor, and the fourth phase is giving away to the others. Acquiring sciences resembles this experience in that to become a teacher and teach others what one learned, one has to pass through the first three phases so that one can become capable of teaching others. The rest of the article comprises a number of advice listed for teachers, such as not to teach students more than they can understand, to be patient with the pace of the students, or not forcing the student to learn more than the teacher himself knows.⁴⁶⁵ Following this list of advice, Suavi concludes his translation from Ghazali and proposes that separate schools and classrooms should be set up for students at different levels.⁴⁶⁶ In general, one can say that Suavi had spent some time thinking about how to improve the condition of education in the empire, but he did not come up with a clear agenda; it was more about general principles to take into consideration.

Spreading knowledge as far as possible was a recurring theme in Suavi’s writings. I will come to the role of journalism and what role he ascribes to it. Still, before that, it would be better to begin with his discussion of dictionaries as part of the general purpose of making education available for a wider audience. In “Şark’ta Ulum ve Maarife Büyük Hizmet,”⁴⁶⁷ Suavi discusses the role of dictionaries in spreading knowledge in general, and education more specifically; what had been done before in this regard; and what could have been done for a better outcome. He starts by asking “what would be the biggest service to sciences and education in the East.” He responds shortly: preparing a dictionary organized according to the spelling of words and selling this dictionary at the price of 100 *kuruş*. The dictionary he discusses in this article is the

politika tabirleri ekseriya manasız olduğuna işte bu tabirlerin manasızlığı dahi şahadet eder. Bizde bir eski usul tutup cedidi kabul etmemiş bir fırka yok... Ben Filibe’de hesap ve mesah ve hendese ve hikmet-i tabiiye okuttum. Her medreseden sohtalar gelir ders alırlardı. Müderris efendilerden hiçbirinin bu uluma dair bir itirazını işitmedim.

⁴⁶⁴ “Hatime,” *Ulum Gazetesi* 7 (11 October 1869).

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 386-388.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 389.

⁴⁶⁷ “Şark’ta Ulum ve Maarife Büyük Hizmet,” *Ulum Gazetesi* 24 (1870).

one prepared by Feyruz İbadi.⁴⁶⁸ According to Suavi, İbadi's dictionary is an important service, but it is also inadequate.

As is well known, Suavi asserts, to find a word in the dictionary, one needs to check its first and last letters: to find *hüsn*, one needs to go through the letter *n* and find the word *hüsn*. But if the word one seeks to find is a long one and derives from Arabic, since words are prolonged differently in Arabic than in Turkish, it would be a lot harder an operation. One example he gives is the word *diye*, which seems to be found in the dictionary by checking the letters of *d* and *y*, but since the word derives from the Arabic base of *v-d* (*vede'a*), one cannot find *diye* in the dictionary. Or when one wants to find the word *tasdi'*, one cannot find it easily because it derives from the word *saded*.⁴⁶⁹ An excellent service would be to give the derivations, then.

He further elaborates on his argument: in this age, it is required to make sciences and education available, but how come it would be possible with dictionaries being limited to the exclusive use of a limited number of *ulema*?⁴⁷⁰ Besides, even *ulema* are likely to be confused: some words were possibly have derived from more than one root, and it is easy to confuse them with similar-looking words; even *ulema* might be misled by the dictionary, and even though they will eventually correct their mistake, they will have spent some of their precious time for this correction. Moreover, there usually are words in every dictionary that are not native to that language but borrowed from other languages. The editor of the dictionary perhaps knows where these words come from and notes their origins as far as he knows, but the reader cannot check if the given roots are correct or not. Noting these potential problems, Suavi suggests that it is even harder for ordinary people to use a dictionary.⁴⁷¹ In closing his article, he proposes ideas for a new dictionary to make it more useful and affordable for ordinary people, such as using *harekes* for Arabic words and writing them in bigger puntos.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1380. “Kamustan muradım, Feyruz İbadi'nin matbu ve malum kamusudur. Her talib ve katip kamusu satın alır, zira muhtaçtır. Fakat aradığı lügatı içinde bulamıyor. Zira kamusun tertibini ne kadar iyi bilse sarf ve iştikak ve i'lal ve id'amı ve hususen Feyruz İbadi'nin bildiğini bilmiyor.”

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1380.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1381. “Demek olmadı mı ki kamustan istifade etmek sarf-ı Arabi'de ziyadesiyle mahir olan havas-ı ulemaya mahsustur. Halbuki şu zamanede ulum ve maarifi herkese tamim eylemek matlub.”

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1382. “Avam-ı nasa gelince... onlar adeta ziyade babdan kelimat-ı meşhureyi dahi bulamazlar... Mesela istihsan kelimesinin hüsn bab ve faslında bulunacağını dahi bilmezler... Feyruz İbadi şu kamusu gayet faydeli ve sanatlı tertib etmiş olduğunda dahi şüphe yok ancak bu faide ulemadan bir fırka-i mahsusa için olup umum için değil.”

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 1383. If his proposal is taken into account and a new dictionary is prepared along those lines, it would be possible to sell it at 100 kuruş and everyone can benefit from it: “Okumak yazmak bilen herkes satın alır. Okur yazar her kimse böyle kamusta aradığını bulur.”

As I discussed above, Ali Suavi's idea of civilization was highly dependent on spreading knowledge as much as possible. Education was the first thing coming to mind as a means of raising an informed generation to progress, but journalism was a means of spreading knowledge in a more general sense as well. In *Ulum*'s 15th issue, he spared an ample space to introduce to the Turkish speakers the condition of journalism in the world. He does not spare too much space for Africa and Asia, which he counts as continents, but pays attention to European and American newspapers. He is critical of the Ottoman journalism based in Istanbul, and perhaps he wants to give examples to journalists based in Istanbul to follow. He mostly emphasizes on England and France, probably because he had been to these two countries long enough to make observations and publish his newspapers.

In England, according to Suavi, there were 500 newspapers in his present-day while there were only 79 back in 1786. He then goes on to give information on the number of English newspapers outside England, including Ireland, Scotland, Calcutta, Bombay, and Australia. After this general informative section, he continues by introducing the most popular newspapers in London. He lists *The Times*, *The Morning Herald*, and *The Morning Post* as the most popular ones giving voice to the aristocrats, merchants, and industrialists. *The Morning Chronicle* was close to the Whig while the *Courier* and *Club* were supporting the Tory.⁴⁷³ His second country of emphasis was France.

In France, since the Revolution, there was an extreme number of new newspapers. In 1789, thanks to the freedom of the press, 350 new newspapers came into life. Yet, it was only 140 of them that made it to the next year. The number kept diminishing in the following years: 85 in 1791, 60 in 1792, and 50 in 1793. Giving these numbers, Suavi asks what could have been the reason that despite the freedom of the press, the number of newspapers was decreasing steadily.⁴⁷⁴ There was a lesson for the Ottoman journalists to take.

⁴⁷³ "İngiltere," *Ulum Gazetesi* 15 (3 April 1870): 876. Suavi explains the political parties and their stance in the English political spectrum: "Morning Chronicle Whig taraftarıdır. Whig İngiltere politika fırkalarından biridir ki Tory'ye mukabildir, yani usul-ü kadim-i devleti ibka taraftarlarına mukabildir. Bunlar hukuk-u milleti hukuk-u saltanata tercih ederler. Ve cumhuriyet taraftarı olmayarak hürriyet-i amme isterler. Club ve Courier gazeteleri Tory taraftarıdır." "

⁴⁷⁴ "Fransa," *Ulum Gazetesi* 15 (3 April 1870): 877-878. "Tarih-i kalba dek (1789) çat pat curnaller peyda olmakta idi. Sal-i mezburede hürriyet-i tab sebebiyle 350 ... curnal çıktı. Ertesi yıl 140 ve 1791'de 85 ve 1792'de 60 ve 93'te 50 kaldı. Sebeb nedir ki Fransa'da tarih-i kalbda hürriyet-i metabi' kema yenbaği tahmil olunmasıyla 350 curnal birden çıkmış iken kimi bir mesah kimi beş mah yaşayabilip ölsün? İşte burada bir mesele söyleyeceğim. İstanbul gazetecilerine tuhaf gelir ama İstanbul'da ayda iki, ayda bir gazeteler çıkıp batmasına dair izhanda olan müşkül-i hale medar olur."

The reason for a newspaper to survive or disappear, Suavi thought, laid primarily in its utility to the broader public. A newspaper merely repeating in its pages what had already been heard and discussed and not offering any insight into the news has no chance to survive, he asserts. The newspaper he listed in discussing English journalism, he explains, could stay alive because they were supporters of an idea. As long as newspapers promote ideas shared by various groups of people, they have the chance to survive because their subscribers will support the newspapers they want to read, no matter what happens. If, he exemplifies, the French newspaper *Revolution de Paris* could survive for a long time after 1789, and some days it sold 200000 issues, it was thanks to having a cause and promoting an idea.⁴⁷⁵ *Ulum*, in this case, was a supporter of the idea of founding a national council and a council of deputies; Istanbul newspapers, however, were pointless.⁴⁷⁶ In a separate section, he discusses the condition of journalism in the Ottoman Empire as well, but it is mostly devoted to the historical development of journalism. In his conclusion to that section, he repeats what he already said: there has not yet been any newspaper in the empire to promote an idea.⁴⁷⁷

In short, to sum up what has been discussed above, Suavi's idea of civilization had primarily two bases: education and journalism. Both were key to spread knowledge, which was the most essential path to civilization. In the following section, I will focus on his defense of Islamic civilizational achievements and contributions to the broader human civilization. In Suavi's thought, as far as I can follow it, civilization is an abstract notion that can move in time and space. It was in possession of the Muslims in the past, now it was in the West, but it could come back anytime, because religion and culture were not essential to it. Yet, for the Muslims, it should have been accompanied by morality, and that was only possible through an "Islamic way" of civilization. From this formulation, we arrive at the glorification of past "Islamic civilization" and the idea of preservation of what is left from it.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 878. "Bir gazete bir fikre taraftar olmalı. O halde o fikrin taraftarları o gazeteyi tutarlar, düşse kaldırırlar. Yukarıda saydığım Londra gazeteleri şerh ettiğim vech ile her biri politikada bir fikir tutan bir fırkaya taraftar olduğu için devam etmektedir."

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 879. "Mesela bizim şu Ulum Gazetesi, millet meclisi ve şura-i nuvvab-ı ümmet taraftarıdır. Memleketimizde bu efkarda olanlar elbette müşteri olurlar. Gazeteye bir kaza gelse tecdid ve ihyasını düşünürler. İşte bir fırkanın fikrine taraftar olmadıkça, yani bir maksad-ı muayyen üzerine fikri olmayan politika gazetesi yaşayamaz. Demek ki gördüğünü işittiğini derleyip toparlayıp ve mevcut ve medmavil matbuattan tercüme edip beyaz kağıtlara karalayan İstanbul gazeteleri ki maksadsızdır ve bir fırkaya taraftarlık nedir bilmez."

⁴⁷⁷ "Türkiye," *Ulum Gazetesi* 15 (3 April 1870): 885. "Bir fikri tervec üzere hala bir gazete çıkmadı."

Ali Suavi's Ideal Government and its Role in Preserving the Islamic Essence

As mentioned in the third chapter, in his article “Serbestlik,” in *Muhbir*'s 28th issue, Suavi likens the European attempts at forming a democratic government to establish justice to moving a massive stone from the foothills of a mountain to its summit, stone representing justice. Demanding justice from a single ruler who is capable, on the other hand, is a lot easier for Suavi, and this form of government was already present in the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁷⁸ As I will discuss in this section, the ideal government in his thinking is a monarchy that executes divine justice with the guidance of *shariah*. This, from a broader perspective, seems to have a connection with his notion of civilization as linked with morality.

In *Le Mukhbir*'s 26th issue and also in an article in *Echo d'Orient*, Ali Suavi makes it clear that formation of a parliamentary regime should be based on Islamic principles and at the same time it is a necessity deriving from Islam itself: “We are Muslims, and we know very well that the parliamentary regime is commanded upon us by the Qur'an, by the *Sunnah* (sayings of the prophet), and all the Muslim legislators. The necessity of this regime, also the reason, proves that to us.”⁴⁷⁹ Suavi was consistent on relying on Islamic sources in proposing ideas for reform, in legitimizing new ideas for reform that did not originally derive from Islamic sources, or opposing an idea of reform as it was not compatible with the principles of Islam. More precisely, his glorification of the past Islamic societies was to demonstrate that Islam was not incompatible with progress and civilization; his justification for a new form of government, which was associated with the Western practice at the time, was also with reference to the Islamic past: the Ottomans had to preserve what they already had but also had to take back what was theirs before. In this regard, Suavi does not radically distinguish from the Middle Eastern intellectuals discussed in the second chapter.

In *Muhbir*'s 11th issue, Suavi refers to an announcement in *Tasvir-i Efkar*, calling Muslims to collect money in a more central way to redistribute it more efficiently to the Muslims in need. Suavi suggests that collecting money from those who want to help the poor and redistributing it to those in need through a central authority was originally an Islamic practice dating to the time of Abu Bakr and Omar.⁴⁸⁰ Instead of imitating the Western version, then, he proposes to

⁴⁷⁸ “Serbestlik,” in *Muhbir* 28, (4 March 1867); transcribed version in Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 260-261.

⁴⁷⁹ “Nous sommes musulmans et nous savons bien que le régime parlementaire nous est commandé par le Koran, le Sunnet (paroles de Prophète) et tous les législateurs musulmans. La nécessité de ce régime, la raison aussi nous le prouve.” As quoted in Johnson, “A Revolutionary Young Ottoman,” 91. [my translation]

⁴⁸⁰ Suavi states that “Millet-i İslamiye'nin kitaplarında usul-i mezbure gibi güzel tedabirleri olup da milletlerine o yolda haber yapan ecnebilere niçin gıpta ve haset olsun etmeyelim? Kendi usulümüzü kendi elimizle

form a central mechanism to collect *sadakat* and *zekat* to redistribute to the poor, under the authority of the Ottoman government.⁴⁸¹

Again, in *Muhbir*, in the 29th issue, Suavi would argue that the principle of equality before law was already present in the Islamic tradition. In “Müsavat,” he asserts that what the Europeans call *müsavat* simply connotes being equal before the law, and the notion of *müsavat-ı hukuk* corresponds to being just and fair as advised in the *shariah*. He then goes on to explain the concept: one can be better than the other in certain matters, but before the law, they would be equal.⁴⁸² Moreover, it was the same motivation that pushed him to write that liberty was to be bound by something, that is, by law, but that was already an Islamic principle as well. While Europeans had been struggling for hundreds of years to establish a just government, Muslims did not need to follow their example because it was a problem that they could solve by demanding justice directly from their ruler. Suavi does not see a requirement of checks and balances on the ruler as in Europe, because in Islamic tradition, he puts, the law is above the ruler.⁴⁸³ Making the ruler guided by law would thus suffice to establish a just government. Suavi’s political thought becomes more explicit in his writings in *Ulum*.

In the first three consecutive issues of *Ulum*, Suavi spares an ample space to the article entitled “El Hakim Hüvallah,” where he argues that what form of government adopted does not matter as long as the core principle of that government derives from the *shariah*. He begins with a discussion of the concept of sovereignty, which he almost exclusively attributes to God. Sovereign means one who is capable of doing whatever one wants, and in that sense, there is no sovereign other than God, Suavi states. If, however, this sovereignty is used in the sense that one has not absolute but limited sovereignty in comparison to others, it would be more understandable.⁴⁸⁴

başkalarına verip de kendimiz bir müddet gaflet etmişsek de aklımız başımıza geldiği vakit niçin başkasının malı gibi taklit ederiz?” in “Hamiyet-i Milliyesini Maarif-i Diniyye ile Tezyin Etmiş Olan Ali Suavi Efendi Tarafından Matbaamıza Gönderilen Layihadır,” *Muhbir* 11, in Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 169.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 171. “Yeniden bir şey icad etmiyoruz. Öteden beri şer’an borçlu olduğumuz sadakaları vereceğiz ve yeni usul tutmuyoruz. Bu gösterdiğimiz usul dinimizin yoludur. Mukteda-i izam Hazret-i Resul-i Ekrem sallallahu aleyhi vesellem Efendimiz Hazretlerinden bi’ş-şeref sadır olan akval ve efalın hükmüdür.”

⁴⁸² “Frenklerin müsavat dedikleri ala ve edna her kim olursa kanunda mezkur olan ahkâmın icrasında müsaade olunmak demektir. Mesela bir hamal ile bir büyük memur hukukça nezd-i kanunda müsavi tutulmak hatta muhakeme bile olmak velhasıl. ... Bu müsavat-ı hukuk kaziyesi şeriat-ı İslamiye’de adl ve insafa riayet demektir.” in Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 269.

⁴⁸³ “Serbestlik,” *Muhbir* 28, in Çavdar, *Muhbir: Osmanlı Basınının Sivri Dili*, 260.

⁴⁸⁴ “El Hakimu Hüvallah,” *Ulum Gazetesi* 1 (1869): 18. “Şimdi şöhret bulmuş bir tabir var. Hakimiyet-i halk diyorlar. Bu kaziye Fransızcadan tercümedir. Aslı *souverainete du peuple*. Şimdi biz şu Fransızca kelimenin manasını tahra edelim. *Souverainete* ne demektir? ... dilediğini yapar, hakim, binefsih, amir-i mutlak, fail-i muhtar demektir. Peki kendiliğinden hükmeden ve bilcümle eşya üzerine kudret-i kamilesini vazi’ eden kimdir?

After settling, perhaps for himself, the most critical question, Suavi continues with an analogy. He argues that the human community is divided into two parts: one is the family, and the other is the political community. The family has a leader, that is, the father, but his leadership ends once the children grow up and take matters into their own hands. Father's authority is limited and bound with the divine law. For Suavi, the reason why there is a family is the same as why there is a society: human beings need each other. Another similarity he establishes is that, similar to family, society is also ruled with divine law, and its leader is not unquestionable. The leader is supposed to govern his society with respect to the law.⁴⁸⁵ Furthermore, Suavi points out that this brings us to the third meaning of sovereignty, which is the sovereignty of the government over the people. He lists the duties of the government: making laws, executing the law, and protecting the law against those acting to break the law.⁴⁸⁶ Yet, it is at this point that he complicates things only to make his point seem valid.

Suavi rhetorically asks who makes the law: theoretically, it must be someone superior to the rest of the people, but if everyone has sovereignty over the others, it means that there is equality among the human beings. If it is not a person but a council that is superior, it would still be an institution made up and filled by human beings.⁴⁸⁷ If one assumes that a council, however big it is, can make laws in the name of the people, he is mistaken.⁴⁸⁸ The only real sovereign is, therefore Suavi concludes, no one but God,⁴⁸⁹ as once the famous French historian François Guizot also stated before.⁴⁹⁰ As a result, in Suavi's formulation, an ideal government emerges

Cenab-ı Allah'tan gayri bu sıfatlara ... yoktur. İşte bu manaca insandan hiç ferd yoktur ki *souverainetes*i olsun. Zira kimse ne idrakinde ne iradesinde kendiliğinden değildir. ... Bize derlerse ki şu şer' olunan mana *souverainete* bizzattır, insanın bilnisbet *souverainetes*i vardır, evet öyledir."

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 19-20. "İnsan yalnız yaşayamaz, onun yapısı cemaat iktiza eder. Cemaat-i insaniye ikidir: biri ehl ki familyadır; diğeri cemaat-i siyasiye ki ümmettir. Familya cemaatinin tesisine ne usul lazımsa cemaat-i siyasiyede dahi bu usuldür ve fil hakikat familyayı tesis eden usul ve kavaid başka, cemaat-i siyasiyeyi tesis eden başka olmayıp bunlar bir şeydir. ... Familyanın babası evladını elbette birtakım kanunlarla idare eder ki o kanunların aslı adalet-i mutlaka-i racidir. ... Babanın riyasette hukuk-ı mutlakası yoktur. Babanın reis ve hakim ismi akıbet bir kuru namdan ve perverdigarlıktan ibaret kalır. Yani her çocuk büyür, kendi istiklalini alır."

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.* "Kanun yapmak ne demektir? Emr ve neha etmekten ibaret değil mi? Amir ve nahi olan, memur ve münhadan büyük ve ala olmak zarureti labed değil mi? Pekala, işte ben insanım, insana nisbetle *souverainetem* var, yani müstakil ve muhtarım. Sen de öylesin. Ebna-i cins beyninde fil asıl müsavat var. Bu surette hangi insandır ki senden benden ala imiş de bize emr ve neha edecekmiş? Eğer bir amir ve nahi farz etmedikçe yaşayamayacak isek o amir ve nahi elbette insan değildir. ... Bir meclis midir?"

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 23. "Meclislerden çok kere büyük bir cümle midir? Haydi öyle bir cümle diyelim. O cümle bu bildiğimiz acizadan yani fil asıl her biri muhtar olan insanlardan mürekkebe değil mi? ... İnsan kendisi yine kendisine kanun yapıyor mu diyelim? İşte bu ötekinden ziyade hezeyandır. ... İnsanı bir anda hem amir-i ala hem de memur-ı edna tasavvur etmek hilaf-ı mantıktır. Yani mecnunanedir."

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

as a manifestation of the divine law and justice, exercised by the people in the name of God. People cannot find anywhere else than in God the justice and happiness they seek.

Suavi lists three possible forms of government as options: monarchy, oligarchy, and republic.⁴⁹¹ If these are merely the forms of government that are exercised by the proxy of people, in the name of God, for a limited period and in accord with the divine law, then this government would be the embodiment of divine justice. It should thus be called the *caliphate*, and its leader should be called *zillullah*.⁴⁹² On the other hand, this government should be approved by the people explicitly (*sarih*) or implicitly (*zimni*) to be legitimate, considering the example of the prophet, who sought the approval of people around him before making decisions.⁴⁹³ However, this should not be mistaken for the idea that the source of government is the people itself.⁴⁹⁴ It is safe to assert that for Suavi, democracy, constitutional monarchy, or some form of a parliamentary regime in a secular sense, that is, not deriving from the God but from the people, meant little if anything. As long as the source of government was Islam, any of the listed forms of government is legitimate for him.⁴⁹⁵ He elaborates more on this in the second issue of *Ulum*.

Theoretically, as Suavi sees it, a government is constituted by three powers: *mufti*, *kadi*, and *vali*. One receives the *mufti*'s *fetwa* on a specific case, takes this *fetwa* to the *kadi* for his ruling, and then takes it to the *vali* for its execution. Even the sultan cannot push the boundaries between these realms according to the *shariah*. More precisely, then, Suavi points out to the principle that execution is bound to the ruling, the ruling is restricted to the legal opinion, and the legal opinion derives from the *shariah*, that is to say, the divine justice.⁴⁹⁶ This is not to signal separation of powers, however, as Suavi himself makes it clear. This is more of a

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 26. "Evet, kuvvet-i hükümetten fiilen imamete akli ve tabii bir güzergah vardır. Demek ki terki eden bir cemaat akıl ve ihtiyarıyla tertib-i imamet etmeye mükelleftir. Bu mükellefler kendilerinin zimni veya sarih ihtiyarlarıyla imameti bir zata ya ba'za tevciye ederler, yahut kudret-i imametın cümle üzerinde icra olunması için o cemaatin azası nezaret eyler. Yani, riyaset-i vahid ve riyaset-i ba'zı ve cumhuriyet suretlerinden biriyle idare olunurlar."

⁴⁹² *Ibid.* "Öyleyse imamet dediğimiz hilafettir. Madem ki hükümetin menbağı ezeldir, elbette şu imamet-i hadi, mertebe-i hilafettir. Hilafet olduğu içindir ki asl-ı ezeli kavaidini tatbik olunarak cevaz ve meşruiyet aranır. Öyleyse imam zillullahtır. Evet, adalet-i ezeliyenin teşahhusu gibi bir şeydir. Padişaha zillullah tabiri halkı aldatmak için telkin olunmuş manasız bir lakırdı zannolunmasın. Bunu tabiiyet-i insan, vech-i meşruh üzere bulup lisan kasrıyla öylece zillullah tercüme ve ifade eylemiştir."

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.* "Bizzat peygamber aleyhisselam dahi ara-i cemaati kazanmak ile memurdu. İşbu ara meselesi ise hakimiyet-i halktan yani menbağ-ı hükümet cemaatte olmasından neşet etmeyip ancak hadis-i mevkufta ... ve asarda 'El-senet el-halk, eklam el-halk' ve Latince 'Vox populi vox Dei' ve Fransızca 'La voix du peuple est la voix du Dieu' ve her akl ve lisanda mevcut hükümet-i malumeye mebnadır."

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29. "Suret-i hükümet ister vahid ister ba'zı yahut cumhuriyet olsun. Bunların hepsi meşruiyetçe müsavidir."

⁴⁹⁶ "El Hakim Hüvallah," *Ulum Gazetesi* 2 (1869): 79-80. "Kitab-ı şeriatta 'El ümera hükkem ala el-nas ve el-ulema hükkem ala el-ümera ve el-ilm hakim ala el-ulema' kaidesi mesturdur."

convergence of powers in the principle of *vahdet-i imamet*, as he puts it.⁴⁹⁷ Moreover, the most crucial service that this government has to offer its people is protecting it from internal and external threats and working for the benefit of all. Whether it is a monarchy, oligarchy, or republic, then, a government is legitimate as long as it derives its legitimacy from God and benefits all of its subjects. The despotic government, in this case, is not necessarily a monarchy or oligarchy, Suavi suggests.⁴⁹⁸

Going further in this regard, he argues that some people were labeling all the forms of government that are not constitutional as absolutist. On the contrary, he thinks, any government that is not based on God's divine law, whether it is a monarchy or a republic, is illegitimate; what matters is the morality of government. A constitutional government that is not established on morality does not promise unity for its people; instead, there will likely be a conflict of interest between separate institutions of the government.⁴⁹⁹ Thus, the only problem is whether the government cares about its people's benefit with regards to divine justice. Also, Suavi problematizes the compatibility of forms of government in different contexts. Since every society has its own geographical, historical, and cultural particularities, it is wrong to assume that a specific form of government will work the best for every society.⁵⁰⁰ According to this, the form of government that is the most appropriate for Europe might not be so for the Ottoman Empire, and it might be meaningless to propose the Ottomans to implement that form.

In *Ulum*'s 3rd issue, Suavi continues the series with a historical background where he discusses the idea of democracy in the Islamic thought. His opener is a refusal of the claim that in the East the only known form of government was monarchy; on the contrary, he says, oligarchy and republic were known to the past Muslim intellectuals, but the Westerners want to take the

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80. "İşte vahdet-i imamet kaidesi bu takrir ettiğimiz rabıttan çıkar gelir. Buna göre velev cumhuriyet olsun, yine vahdet-i imamet kaidesine teşebbüs etmedikçe meşru değildir. Yine bu takrirden anlaşılır ki bir devlette müteaddid meclisler tertib ve o meclislerin hukukunun birbirinden tefriki ve birbirlerine müdahaleden menni kazayası vahdet-i imamete menafi değildir."

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 81-82. "Demektir ki zalim hükümet dendikte menfaat-i ammeye nazar etmeyen demektir. Yoksa zalim dediğimiz yedd-i vahid ve ba'za mahsus bir sıfat değildir. ... Bir hükümetin hezematı ya usul-ü kavaid üzerinedir yahud usul-ü kavaiden mücerredir. Eğer mücerred ise ona tesallut ve istibdad derler ki despotizm denilen işte budur."

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 89. "Nazariyet-i umumiyeği bırakıp bi't-tahsis mesela Amerika'da yahud İngiltere'de veya memleket-i Osmaniye'de suret-i hükümet nasıl olmak lazım gelir denirse, evet, kaide-i mezkureyi nazar ederek o mevki-i mahsusun coğrafya ve tarihçe hacat ve ahlak ve derece-i temeddünü kamilen bi'l-mütalaa kabl-i icra bir şekl-i hükümetin an asıl tertibine yahud oralarda mevcut ve müretteb olan eşkal-i hükümetin ... hangi tertibleri ne veç ile ıslaha muhtaç olduğuna dair bahs etmek pek de müşkül bir mesele değildir. Ancak mevki-i mahsusun tarih ve coğrafya ve ahlak ve adatını layığıyla bilmeyenlerin yalnız nazariyet-i umumiyeden bi'l-kıyas bahse karışmaları dahi ezhar-ı cehaletten başka bir şeye netice vermez."

pride for these ideas by attributing their origins to themselves.⁵⁰¹ The era of the first four caliphs after the prophet was also an era of equality, where the caliphate was not a necessity but the protector of this equality.⁵⁰² Thus, the Muslims did not have to learn about equality and freedom from the West. To further this argument, Suavi goes on to discuss some books written by Muslims in political theory.

The method of politics that one can derive from the Islamic literature on morality, *fiqh*, and politics, Suavi sums up, can be defined with respect to two conclusions: humans are naturally civilized; civilization needs laws to be bound to the main whole, that is, *shariah*.⁵⁰³ He explains this argument by referring to the idea that the politics of civilization is not only about providing the people with their material needs; it is also a duty upon the government to seek the moral well-being of its people by sustaining the divine justice. Again, building upon his idea of convergence of powers to constitute the unity of government, that is, the *mufti*, the *kadi*, and the *vali* being bound to but not checking on each other, Suavi concludes that the most appropriate form of government is monarchy.⁵⁰⁴ After making his point, he goes to summarize the literature as he promised. He ends the article with a short paragraph to denounce those who claimed that the only known form of government in the East was absolute monarchy.⁵⁰⁵ According to this, one can conclude that Ali Suavi was perhaps seeking to defend the Ottoman, or what was perceived as an Islamic form of government, by demonstrating it as a preference over the alternatives that were already known to Muslims. This was not out of ignorance but an informed decision.

The uniqueness of the Ottoman sultan in Suavi's thought was already present before. In "Müslümanların Padişah Hakkında Zannı," published originally in *Le Mukhbir*'s 27th issue and reprinted in *Hürriyet*'s 42nd issue, Suavi discusses how the Muslims' perception of the Ottoman sultan was different than the Christians' perception of their kings. He claims that the Muslims

⁵⁰¹ "El Hakimu Hüvallah," *Ulum Gazetesi* 3 (1869): 135-136. "Evvela şurasını bilmek lazımdır ki 'suvar-ı hükümetten cumhuriyet ve hükümet-i ba'zı suretlerine dair efkar garba mahsus olup şark mine'l-evvel ale'l-yevm hükümet-i vahid (monarh) fikriyle yaşadı' diye Avrupa'da mevcut olan bahs yanlış bir meseledir. Şarkta min'el-kadim bu efkarı malum eden eski Fars'ta yani Kiyanyan'da hükema-i Fars'ın cumhuriyete ve hükümet-i ba'za dair ... efkar ve mübahasatı vardır. Bu hükemanın uzun uzadıya mübahasatı ve cumhuriyete dair hutbeleri Heredot'ta tamamıyla mukiddir. Ama eski Yunaniler inanmaz imiş. Onlar bu yolda efkar şerefini kendilerine vermek isterler. Şarkta bu efkar mevcut ve mebhuh idi. İbn Sina'nın lisan-ı Pehleviden Farisiye tercüme ettiği Zafername ve eski Farisi kitaplardan yadigar nam gibi asar dahi şahidimizdir."

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 139-140.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 142. "vahdet-i imamet ve mesuliyet için en münasib olan suret-i idare, hükümet-i vahid (monarh) kaidesi üzerine olandır."

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 161. "Biz mütalaa olduklarımızı yazdık. Arayanlar daha bulur. Anlaşıldı ki İslam devletinde şeriat da var imiş kanun da var imiş. Siyaset dahi var imiş. Öyledir. Cehalet üzere bahs-i siyaset etmektense şu kitapların başlıcalarını bi'l-mütalaa-i mü'teneb olmak ve onun üzerine fikir peyda etmek lazım gelir."

see their sultan more than a mere king; he is for them the protector of Islam and the Muslims. This is, Suavi suggests, not limited to the Muslim Ottoman subjects; what distinguishes the sultan from European rulers is that he is respected and followed by the world Muslims. If he calls all the Muslims to war, regardless of which country they live in, all the Muslims would take up arms and join their sultan, Suavi states.⁵⁰⁶ He then continues by criticizing Ali Paşa, who was representing the sultan and therefore the leader of the world Muslims, suggesting that the compromises he gave to the Cretan Christians might cause a deterioration among the world Muslims of the sentiments he summarized; Muslims would feel betrayed by their leader, and the sultan would lose his unmatched position, reducing himself to the position of a mere king, as in Europe.⁵⁰⁷

Returning to his problematization of the most appropriate form of government for the Ottoman Empire, Suavi discusses in “Demokrasi: Hükümet-i Halk, Müsavat,” published in *Ulum*’s 18th issue, why the Ottomans cannot adopt republic as a form of government. The ideal government for Suavi is a democracy, and it was exemplified in the early Islamic period, where the prophet and the first four caliphs were, in a way, first among equals. Yet, he asserts, there was morality, and it was thanks to morality that the early Muslims could exercise democracy. The Ottomans, however, in their current state, were lacking these morals and thus such a system of democracy would not work in the Ottoman context: it would only further the immorality.⁵⁰⁸ Also, considering the complex composition of the Ottoman population and vast lands the empire rules over, Suavi thinks that the best form of government available is a monarchy.⁵⁰⁹

Last but not least, he criticizes the French with immorality and hypocrisy, which, as a source of the ideas of republic and equality that are not deriving from the fear of God, were threatening the well-being of Muslim societies. If the French were honest, they would not speak of equality and freedom at home while attempting to conquer the world like Caesar, he states: the Algerians

⁵⁰⁶ “Müslümanların Padişah Hakkında Zannı,” *Hürriyet* 42 (12 April 1869). Transcribed in Alp Eren Topal, ed., *Sürgünde Muhalefet: Namık Kemal’in Hürriyet Gazetesi (1868-1869) Eksiksiz Tüm Koleksiyon* (İstanbul: Vakıfbank Kültür Yayınları, 2018), vol. 1, 324. “Müslümanlar padişahı bir kral gibi itikad etmezler; kraldan çok büyük itikad ederler. Şöyle ki, ‘peygamber postunda oturuyor, peygamber vekilidir’ derler, halife, imam, emir’ül-müminin, hami-i din tesmiye ederler. Padişah Müslümanların nazarlarında o derecededir ki, Müslümanlığı padişah muhafaza ediyor bilirler. Bu cihetle şimdi bizim padişahımız camilere gelse, minberlere çıksa, Müslümanları muharebeye davet etse ve bu davetini ilan eylese, değil yalnız tebası, bütün dünyada Arabistan ve Türkistan ve Hindistan ve Çin’de, hasılı şarkta ve garbda tahmin olunan iki yüz milyon Müslüman silahlanır, hepsi padişahın başına toplanır.”

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 324-325.

⁵⁰⁸ “Demokrasi: Hükümet-i Halk, Müsavat,” *Ulum Gazetesi* 18 (17 May 1870), translated text by Şükri Hanioglu in Charles Kurzman, ed., *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 138-139.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

would prefer their rulers to be tyrannical rather than to see the French as their rulers. In concluding his article, Suavi proposes the Ottoman government to lead the way for the foundation of a unified Islamic state in Africa, comprising of Tunisia, Egypt, and Tripoli; otherwise, the empire would not be able to do anything but protest when one or another European power occupies these countries one by one, just as the French did in Algeria.⁵¹⁰

In short, Suavi's discussion of an ideal government is relevant for his "Islamic way of civilization" as he attributes the role of establishing justice to the ruler. Demanding justice from the ruler was easier compared to the European struggles to establish just government with movements from below. Had the ruler been capable, accompanied by the *ulema*, and guided by the *shariah*, he would have ruled justly. This type of government, whether it was a republic or a monarchy, would embody God's sovereignty on earth and establish divine justice. Since morality was an important component of civilization in Suavi's thinking, as opposed to what he deemed as the material civilization of Europe, it was crucial for Suavi to have such a discussion of government.

Ali Suavi the Turkist?

An important problem in Ali Suavi's thought was, it was assumed, his separate writings promoting Turkism and Islamism. Yet, one can see that there is no strong proof for the claim that he was a Turkist other than his preference of a simple Turkish to be used in the newspapers and his two articles in *Ulum*, entitled "Türk" and "Lisan ve Hatt-ı Türki." As I demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, his concern for the utilization of a more straightforward language was to reach out to a bigger audience rather than a concern for Turkish nationalistic sentiments. In this section, I will discuss the two articles.

Suavi opens his article "Türk" with a sentence that gives a hint about his purpose in writing it, suggesting that these days there was a popular concept, that is, race, which was being used as a measure for nations' capabilities. European historians and scholars alike had been regarding the Turks with respect to their physical power and fighting skills, disregarding their intellectual achievements, Suavi asserts, and he therefore decided to write this article to demonstrate the Turks' intellectual contributions to the civilization.⁵¹¹ He begins with a historical background

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

⁵¹¹ "Türk," *Ulum Gazetesi* 1 (1869): 1. "Avrupa'da *race* meselesi var, yani bir kavmin kabiliyet ve istidadına hüküm etmek için mensub olduğu şubeyi nazar etmek itikadı vardır. Bu ehl-i nazardan bazı meşahir, Türkleri

of the Turks, starting with an episode in Central Asia, where he discusses the origins of the name Turk. According to this, since the letter *r* is sometimes lost in translation to Chinese, what the Chinese historians called the first Turkish ruler “Tükü” was probably meant to be “Türk.”⁵¹² Originating in Central Asia, he continues, Turks did not stay there but moved to the west and founded such famous dynasties as Ghaznavids, Seljuks, and Ottomans.⁵¹³ After this opening, he continues with the Turks’ intellectual work.

To this second section, he commences with a list of such past intellectuals as Farabi and Ibn Sina as Turks, and such others as Ghazali, Tusi, Zemahseri, Teftazani, Curcani, and Cuzcani as those who lived under Turkish dynasties.⁵¹⁴ Keeping this pre-Ottoman history short, Suavi suggests that once the fighting was over for the Ottomans, they invested their time and energy into intellectual work. Şemseddin Fenari, Kadızade, Ali Kuşçu, Hocazade, and Kınalızade were some of the intellectuals who made significant contributions to diverse sciences. Eastern libraries were filled with textbooks prepared by the Turks and there was no single science left untouched by them.⁵¹⁵ This was supported by a member of the *Société Asiatique* in Paris, who suggested that despite what was thought about the Turks commonly in Europe, the Ottoman intellectuals were well educated in political science and political economy.⁵¹⁶

mesai-i zihniyeden ari, yalnız bir kaba kahraman gibi mütalaa ediyorlar. Bu mütalaanın yanlış olduğunu göstermek isterim.”

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 1-2. “Çin müverrihleri birinci Türk hanını ... yani Tükü namıyla yazarlar. ... (*ra*) harfiyle telaffuz olunan ekser kelimelerden Çin lisanında (*ra*) harfi sakattır ve bazen (*lam*)a kalb olunur. Mesela Türkler pars derler, Çinliler pas. Türkler torun nutk ederler, Çinliler tolun. Buna nazaran Türk ile Tükü bir isim olmak baid değildir.”

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 2. “Türkler muahhiren mevki-i asliyelerinden huruc edip Fars ve Anadolu’ya ve Rumeli’ye ve Mısır’a inmişlerdir. Fethettikleri yerlerde nice hanedan hükümet bıraktılar. Gazneviyan ve Seulçukiyan ve Osmanıyan o hanedanın meşhurlarındandır.”

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-6. “Ebu Nasr Farabi Türklerdendir. ... Türklerden bir İbni Sina yetişti ki Yunaniler Bokrat ve Aristo ile fahr ederler, biri tabib diğeri hekim idi; bizim İbni Sina hem tabib hem de hekim idi. ... Gazali ve Tusi ve Zemahşeri ve Teftazani ve Curcani ve Cuzcaniler ki Türk familyasından olduklarını ispat deşvar ise de ... ekserisi Türk hükümetinin idare ve teşviki altında zuhura geldikleri ispattan varestedir.”

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7. “Osmanlılar kendilerini muharebeye sevk eden sebeplerden istirahat buldular. İlim ve marifet canibine atf-ı himmet eylediler ve neşr-i ulum yolunda bir mesleğe hidayet olundular ki şu güne dek bir kavim böyle onlar gibi muvaffak olamadı. O dahi şudur ki bizde talim ve tedris bad-ı hevadır. ... Hele Şark kütüphaneleri ve medreselerde ibtidadan intehaya dek ders kitapları ekseriyet üzere Türklerin müellifiatıyla memlu ve mürettebdir. Hangi ilimdir ki Türkler ondan kasr kalmıştır?”

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8. “İşte ... David, Sultan Mahmud zamanında yazdığı *El-İlm El-Nafi* kitabının İngilizce mukaddimesinde der ki ‘Osmanlı uleması ahlak ve sanat-ı hükümet ve ekonomi politik ilimlerinde cümleye faik allamelerdir. Bu ulumda olan kemalleri Türkler hakkında Avrupaca mevcut olan efkarımıza karşıdır.’ Badehu bu uluma dair bazı kitapları tefrik eder. Mümaileyh David, Paris’te Cemiyet-i Şarkiye azasından idi.”

Moreover, according to Suavi, Ottomans were particularly good at mathematics,⁵¹⁷ philosophy,⁵¹⁸ and literature.⁵¹⁹ Even many of the Ottoman sultans themselves were poets.⁵²⁰ And when the Ottomans did not produce their work, they translated from other languages. During the reigns of Mehmed II, Suleyman I, Mustafa III, and especially Mahmud II, many foreign language works were translated to Turkish. There was also an effort to translate Turkish works to European languages.⁵²¹

What follows is a glorification of the Ottoman political mind and just government: Ottomans established their capital in Istanbul, which was the most beautiful and important point of the world, and they overshadowed the Byzantium, Roman Empire, and Bulgaria by giving their land the name Turkey. Founded 587 years ago, their dynasty was the oldest in the world. Perhaps more important for Suavi is that the Ottomans ruled with the principle of good morals: *shariah* and law were above everything else in the Ottoman government, Suavi states.⁵²²

In short, he concludes the article, as he demonstrated, the Turks have the capacity to deal with intellectual work. One reason for mistaking the Turks for lacking intellectual capacity was European historians' misled attribution of scientific works written in Arabic to the Arabs; most of these works were written in Arabic by Turks and Eastern peoples, not by Arabs.⁵²³ In closing, he proposes two mistakes as an explanation to the decline of Ottoman involvement in sciences: first is that, when the printing press was first introduced in Istanbul, it was somehow, due to the Ottoman calligraphers' opposition, banned from printing religious books; the second mistake

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8. "İlm-i hesap ise Osmanlılarda ... öyle sade kaidelere rabt olunmuştur ki Avrupalıların saatlerce uğraştıkları ve nice tabaka kağıtlar karaladıkları hesapları Osmanlılar bir iki dakikada, yarım sahife kağıt üzerinde yapıverdiğini yine Avrupa ulemasından Toderini(?) edebiyat-ı Türk'e dair yazdığı kitabında beyan eder ve Arap ve Türk kitaplarından kavaid-i hesap tercüme olunmasını Avrupalılara nasihat eyler."

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, "Felsefeden bahs olununca bu babda Türklere muhazi olacak kim vardır? Şimdi Avrupa'yı sarsan Schelling ve Hegel felsefeleri nedir? Türkler bunları beş altı karn akdem ... ve bu yolda nice asar ve mübahasat yazmış ve bi't-tedkik red ve hadm eylemiştir."

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9. "Türklerin edebiyatına gelince işte bu babda onlarla aşık atışmaya hiçbir milletin mecali yoktur. İngiltere nice kurunda bir Shakespeare yetiştirir; Türklerde ise bir asırda nice Shakespeareler bulunur."

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 11-14.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 15. "Türkler, Fransız şuarasından Lamartine dediği gibi politikadan bihaber fakat insan ve şarkın büyük bir milleti gibi mütalaa olunmasın; zira, Türkler büyük millet oldukları gibi hem de ehl-i siyasettirler. İşte Osmanlılar öyle siyaset erbabıdır ki payitaht-ı hükümeti dünyanın en güzel ve en mühim noktasında tesis ettiler ve Bizantya ve Rumanya ve Bulgarya'yı unutturup Türkiye ismini verdiler ve bütün Avrupa'ya bu namı tasdik ettirdiler. Türkler hanedan hükümetlerini 587 seneden beri muhafaza eylediler ki bundan daha kadim bir hanedan yoktur. Osmanlı hükümeti hüsn ahlak kavaidi üzere tesis olunmuştur. ... Osmanlı hükümetinde şer' ve kanun cümleden aladır. Hanedan-ı Osmani'den bir padişah gelmedi ki cabbar olsun. Cabbar ona derler ki kendini kanundan ala tutar."

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 16. "Anlaşıldı ki Türklerin kuvve-i idrakiyeleri mesai-i ilmiyeye açıktır. ... Şu günlerde İstanbul'da filanda bazı çoluk çocuğun Türkleri cehalet içre farz ederek büyük büyük lakırdılarla ihtiyarvari nasihatlere kalkışmaları gülünç ve maskaralıktan ibarettir. ... Avrupalı bazı müverrihlerin Arab'a isnad edegeldikleri ulum ve fünün Arab'ın olmayıp ekseriyet üzere Türklerin ve bilcümle ehl-i şarkındır."

was the Ottoman government's decision to send students to Europe instead of establishing a viable educational system in its realm and bringing in the tools and teachers it needed from other countries to serve.⁵²⁴ Past is past, Suavi states, and whatever knowledge Europe possesses now, will pass into the hands of the East in the future and grow there.⁵²⁵

This article is by no means a piece of writing promoting an idea of Turkish national superiority; it is more of a defense of what Suavi saw as a Turkish contribution to civilization as part of a broader Islamic framework. At certain points, he seems to favor Turkish over Arab contributions, but it was not at the expense of the Arab intellectual legacy: he claims to correct a mistake as he states that not all works in Arabic were written by Arabs, but there was, in the past, a period when Muslim intellectuals' common language was Arabic, and therefore non-Arabs also contributed to sciences and literature in Arabic.

“Lisan ve Hatt-ı Türki” follows a similar line of argumentation. In *Ulum*'s second issue, Suavi provides his audience with a historical background to the Turkish language, beginning with the earliest known Turkish speakers in Central Asia and ending before the Ottoman period. As early as in 1200, as Suavi reports, Chinese historian Ma Toan Lin wrote in his book that early Uyghur princes were not merely literate but also qualified poets and historians.⁵²⁶ Yet another example is Ghenghis Khan, appointing the imprisoned Uyghur head clerk Tata Tongu as his head clerk and teacher to the sons of Mongol khans to teach them Uyghur language and law.⁵²⁷ These examples, Suavi asserts, demonstrate that the Uyghurs were well established in letters and falsifies the claim that they borrowed certain letters from the Assyrians in the sixth century.⁵²⁸ He spares the remaining part to important works written in Uyghur language, with a section devoted to a short presentation with a translated part of *Kutadgu Bilig*.⁵²⁹ In closing, Suavi lists

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17. “Birinci galet şudur ki 984 senesinde idi ki İstanbul'a matbaa edevatı getirildi. Olvakit hattatların filanların hatırı için her nasılsa kitab-ı İslamiye tabbı men olundu. Şu men yüz elli sene sürdü. İşbu yüz elli sene zarfında matbaa tahsilatına malik olan Avrupalıların ... bizi geçmeleri emr-i tabiidir. İkinci galet hükümetin Avrupa'ya tahsil için şakirdan göndermesidir. Lazımdı ki Osmanlı mektebi, memleket-i Osmaniye'de olsun ve lazım olan alat ve edevat ve adem nerede ise oradan celb olunsun.”

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.* “Şimdi Avrupa'da olan marifetler elbette ehl-i şarkın eline geçecek ve onların elinde büyüyecektir.”

⁵²⁶ “Lisan ve Hatt-ı Türki,” *Ulum Gazetesi* 2 (1869): 71. “Çin müverrihlerinden Ma Toan Lin 1200 sene-i miladi sularında yani altıncı karn hicrette yazmış olduğu kitabında der ki ‘Çi Han ve Lonyo ve Yao Han, Uygur'dan şair ve müverrihlerdir. Bunlar Uygur rüesasının evladı olup asilzadelerdir. Medreselerinde tahsil-i maarif etmişlerdir. Bunlara yalnız okumak biliyor demiyoruz; bunlar ebyat ve eş'ar dahi inşad ederler.’ “

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72. “1646 sene-i miladi Pekin şehrinde neşr olunmuş Yuan tarihinde yazdı ki Uygur hanının serkatibi Tata Tongu'yu Cengiz esir ettiği kendine serkatib yaptı ve Moğol hanzadelerine hoca ve hat ve lisan ve kanun-ı Uygur için muallim nisb eyledi.”

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 71. “Bu halde Uygur altıncı karn miladide Süryani'den ahz-ı huruf eyledi demek nasıl sahih olur?”

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

Turkish speaking ethnic groups and spares Chagatai Turkish as the closest one to Ottoman Turkish.⁵³⁰

Suavi continues with the Ottoman Turkish language in *Ulum*'s third issue. Citing an American finance assistant named McCulloch to support his argument, Suavi suggests that the Turkish language is beautiful and Turkish words are pronounced poetically, with each word capable of signifying more than one thing, thanks to vowel points (*hareke*) and prepositions (*edat*).⁵³¹ Moreover, another foreigner named David also wrote in his book that Turkish speakers were able to express themselves with fewer words, giving as an example the Turkish word *seviştirmemek*, which would be translated to English as “to cause that we do not love one another mutually,” which makes ten words.⁵³² Of course this is an oversimplification of how languages function and similar examples can be produced in the reverse direction as well, but for Suavi, a single example suffices to make his point in entering the matter.

He continues with a grammatical comparison between Turkish and other languages. In French and Arabic, making plurals out of singular words is a lot more difficult compared to Turkish, as in Turkish, the simple rule is that the suffix (*-ler*) makes a word plural, whereas, in Arabic and French, many exceptions are hard to follow. What is more, in the two languages, words are divided into two groups as masculine and feminine, which effects their adjectives as well.⁵³³ Furthermore, the Ottoman language indeed borrowed many words from other languages, but it is also the case with Arabic, English, and French: while Arabic borrowed from Persian, English, and French borrowed from Latin.⁵³⁴ Language is not threatened with borrowing of foreign words because these words are subject to that language's grammatical rules. The word *meşhur* is not originally Turkish, for instance, but its plural is used as *meşhurlar*, with the suffix (*-ler*).⁵³⁵

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.* “Türk lisanı dediğimiz ... Uygur, Çağatay, Kıpçak, Kırgız, Nogay, ..., Türkmen, Çuvaç, cenub-ı Sibir taifelerinin söyledikleri lisandır. ... Lisan-ı Çağatay ... lisan-ı Osmani'ye en yakındır.”

⁵³¹ “Lisan ve Hatt-ı Türki,” *Ulum Gazetesi* 3 (1869): 117. “Amerika maliye muavini McCulloch(?) 1866 yazmış olduğu coğrafya mu'cemü'l-beledinde dedi ki ‘Türkçe lisanı pek manadar, pek tatlı, edası pek ahenkli, ve tahsil-i tekellemi pek kolaydır.’ ... Kısa lafz ve bazı hareke ve edat ile çok manalar ifade olunur.”

⁵³² *Ibid.* “İngiliz L... David kitabında, Türkçeye, elsine-i saireye bi't-tatbik der ki ‘seviştirmemek Türkçede sekiz harfli bir kelimedir. Bunun ifade ettiği mana mesela İngilizce söylense on kelime ile to cause that we do not love one another mutually söylemeye muhtaçtır.’” If to this Turkish word was added a single letter to make it *seviştirememek*, it would be translated to English as “to cause that it be impossible for us to love another mutually on iki kelimeye muhtaçtır ki elli bir harf ile yazılır.”

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 118. “Fransızcada ve Arapçada alamet-i cemlerin kesreti ve kaidesizliği bu lisanda yoktur. Hep isimler (*-ler*) lahikasıyla cem olunur, biter. İnsan, insanlar gibi. Tesniye galebeliği, müzekker ve müennes dağdağası yoktur. Master fil asil bir alametle malum olup okumak, yazmak gibi (*-mak*) lahikasıyla nutk olunur. ... İsim, fiil ve ism-i mef'ul ve sıfat-ı müşebbehe hep kaide üzeredir. Fransız lisanındaki *acektif* karışıklığı bizde yoktur.”

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

Suavi's main concern is not specifically the Turkish language and its place among the world languages. He asserts that Arabic is not an Arab language.⁵³⁶ Both Turkish and Arabic are languages of Islam, and in the Islamic world, there was no such idea of nationalism or separate receptions of Turkish and Arabic; these ideas were planted by those who wanted to divide the Muslim world along the lines of nations.⁵³⁷ In addition, Suavi concludes that it would have been better for the world Muslims to unite around a single language, perhaps meaning the language of Islam, not particularly Arabic, than their current state as divided into smaller pieces along the lines of nationalism.⁵³⁸ Thus, Suavi wants to make it clear with his conclusion that his primary concern in writing this article was not to uphold the Turkish language over other languages but to demonstrate the Turkish scientific and literary contribution as part of a larger Islamic civilization, the Turkish language being one of the languages spoken in the Islamic world.⁵³⁹

Suavi continues his article in the fourth issue with a discussion on a possible alphabet change. Principally he opposes a change as he regards the current Ottoman alphabet as better than European alphabets.⁵⁴⁰ Yet, he does not side with the opponents of the change either: criticizing them by underlining that the change of alphabet is a mundane and not a religious matter, Suavi states that if it was required to shift to a new alphabet, there was no religious obstacle for it, and it would not be *bid'at* to switch the alphabet.⁵⁴¹ After this entry into the matter, he continues with a more elaborate discussion.

To those proposing to change the Ottoman alphabet, Suavi asks whether they thought about an alternative. Some put forward the European alphabet as an example, he continues, because supposedly, it was easier to read within a shorter amount of time. Yet, he states, they were

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 124. "İslam lisanı yani İslam'da ulum lisanı dedikleri Arabi değil mi idi? Kitaplardaki Arabi lisan dediğimizi mücerred Araplar yazmış mı zannedersiniz? Bizim Arabi lisan dediğimiz fil asıl ... ve Kuran-ı Kerim lisanıdır."

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 126. "Yine tekrar ederim ki şu lisan Arap lisanı olmayıp İslam lisanıdır. Şu ulum Arap ulumu olmayıp İslam ulumudur, beraberdir. Şu Arapçadır, bu Türkçedir, bu da Osmanlıcadır gibi şeyleri, İslam'ı kavmiyet ve cinsiyet davasına düşürmek isteyenler çıkardı. Biz de politika imiş zannıyla terviç ettik. Yoksa bizim eski babalarımız dedelerimiz Arapçaya bir ecnebi lisan gibi bakmadılar."

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 130-131. "İki yüz elli milyon nüfus-u İslamiyenin bir sanat-ı lisanıye camiasıyla edeb ve mazmun ve hayal ve fikir ve akide ve ihtilatlarını bir ... alarak birleşmeleri şu kavmiyet ve cinsiyet davasıyla şöyle küçük küçük parçalara müteferrik ve perişan olanların usulünden daha ala değil mi idi?"

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 131. "Artık bizden edeb ve inşa ve ilim sual edenlere bizim İslam ve ilim lisanında olan asarımızı ibraz ederiz. Zira bunları biz yazdık. Ama bizi Arap zannederlermiş. Müslüman zannetseler hata etmemiş olurlar."

⁵⁴⁰ "Lisan ve Hatt-ı Türki," *Ulum Gazetesi* 4 (30 August 1869): 217-218.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 219. "Böyle meselelerde bid'at tabiri karıştırılmaması iyi olur çünkü bid'at ıstılah-ı şer'ide dinde olmayan bir şeyi peyda etmek demektir. Böyle hat gibi meseleler ise emr-i diniyeden olmayıp emr-i dünyeviyemizdendir."

mistaken.⁵⁴² The following part comes in a question and answer form where Suavi discusses with an advocate of the European alphabet. He asks the other person whether the latter has been trained in English. Upon learning that the latter took three years of training in English, Suavi asks him to pronounce a few English words such as fate, fat, fall, and arise, in which the letter *a* is pronounced differently, and there are no vowel marks on the words to signify how they should be pronounced.⁵⁴³ French was a lot more difficult: whereas the letter *h* is supposed to be silent in the word *homme*, it has to be pronounced in the word *haine*; the letter *i* in the verb *boire* sounds like the letter *a* in Turkish; many letters in French words remain silent in pronunciation, and there are too many exceptions that even the French are desperate to learn how to pronounce their words correctly.⁵⁴⁴ Suavi concludes that those advocating the borrowing of the European alphabet are wrong in their argument but equally are those who oppose even a single change in the alphabet.⁵⁴⁵

These articles seem to have two purposes: one is concerned with the grammatical qualities of the Turkish language compared to other languages, including French and English as well as Arabic, and Turkish intellectual contribution to civilization as compared to the Arab contribution. Yet, this should not create a misunderstanding as if Ali Suavi was promoting Turkish over Arabic or the Turks over the Arabs, as his second purpose was to situate the Turks and their language into a broader Islamic intellectual framework. An alphabet change was theoretically not impossible in his thinking, but after his emphasis of the need for a common Islamic language to unite 250 million Muslims, it seems baseless to claim that he would agree with the alphabet change that the Turkish republic experienced as opposed to the depictions of Suavi as a revolutionary Turkist in the early republican era accounts.

Critique of the West, Ottoman Westernization, and Western Perception of the Islamic World

As discussed until here, Ali Suavi's notion of the right path to civilization was accompanied by morality, and that was dependent on the government's reliance on the divine law. Reforming the government and education was possible and, at times, necessary, but reforms must have

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 220. "Hattımızı bozalım diyenler acaba yerine koyacakları şeyleri düşündüler mi? Evet, bazı düşünenleri gördük. Bunların hülâsa-i efkârı hep Avrupa hattının az vakitte okunmaya kabil olduğu mütalaa-i fasidesinden ileri gelmiş bir netice-i rahidir."

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 225-226. "Zavallı Fransızlar bunları bellemek ve doğru telaffuz etmek için ne zahmetler çekiyorlar."

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 227-228.

been carried out with respect to Islamic principles. In Suavi's thinking, if something new in the West had its equivalent in the past Islamic civilization and literary sources, Muslims should not follow the Western practice. His opposition to the West stems, for the most part, from his perception of the West as immoral and dependent upon a temporary material civilization. He is also critical of the Western perception of Islam as incompatible with the necessities of modernity. In this section, I reflect on Suavi's writings on Europe and particularly France.

In "Avrupa İtirazı," Suavi starts with reference to what he supposed a general European perception of the Muslims, shortly put as that the latter do not understand such concepts as election, liberty, national will, liberty of work, or universal suffrage no matter how long they are lectured. According to this, when Muslims hear someone speaking of such concepts, they do not get excited.⁵⁴⁶ This general European perception of Muslims, Suavi asserts, is mistaken. For Suavi, if Muslims do not get excited about such concepts, it is because they are not spoken in the language of Islam. How come could they make sense of such concepts when they were spoken to within a European discourse? He then asks whether they had tried to tell Muslims about these concepts with the language of Islam.⁵⁴⁷ As an example, instead of explaining to Muslims the idea that "the sultan reigns and does not govern" as part of European discourse, they should have tried to base their message on an Islamic discourse: the prophet and the caliphs were always bound to the *shariah* and judgment comes from the *shariah*, not from the sultan.⁵⁴⁸ If what needs to be addressed is the same, Suavi argues, then there is no problem in utilizing an Islamic discourse instead of a European one.⁵⁴⁹

The problem was, therefore, not with the Muslims' intellectual capacity but with the Ottoman intellectuals who had been to Europe for higher education and returned to the Ottoman realm as alienated to their origins. Suavi attacks on this generalized image of such intellectuals in the following part of the article, without providing specific names. According to this, the Ottoman Empire sent students to Europe to learn about European sciences, the same as Egypt did under

⁵⁴⁶ "Avrupa İtirazı," *Ulum Gazetesi* 19 (1870): 1185. "Avrupalılar diyorlar ki İslam söz anlamıyor. Hatta *le roi régné et ne gouverne pas* (Sultan padişahlık eder, hükümet etmez.) kaidesi ve *suffrage universel, volonté du peuple, liberté de travail*, intihab, biat ve ihtiyar-ı ümmet ve hürriyet resmi kaziyeleri İslam'a ne kadar söylense, tarif edilse, Avrupalılar gibi tüyleri tüyleri ürpermiyor, harekete gelmiyorlar. Fransa'dan tahsil eden bunca çelebiler yetiştiler, söylüyorlar, yazıyorlar, İslam'ın gönüllerine tesir etmiyor."

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1185-1186. "Evet, bu kaziyeler her ne kadar Voltaire'ler Montesquieuler ile te'yid dahi olursa İslam müteessir olmuyor. ... İslam'ın mesai-i zihniyede kusurundan mı? Ben derim ki başka bir sebeptendir. Şu ki İslam'ın Frenklerden başkaca bir lisanı ve başkaca adatı ve başkaca bir imanda yüreği var. O lisan ile, o yürek ile söylense acaba anlamazlar mı? Müteessir olmazlar mı?"

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1186. "Mesela dediğimiz tedbir ve siyaset kaidelerini ifade için 'Peygamber ve hulefa hep şeriatın hükmüne tabi ve mükellef idiler.' 'Hüküm padişahın değildir, ancak şeriatındır.' denilse anlıyorlar ya."

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1187.

Muhammad Ali. Even though Egypt sent a lesser number of students for education, their students returned with more knowledge and better skills compared to the Ottoman students. Many of Egyptian students returned as engineers and intellectuals with knowledge on European sciences, technology, and literature, capable of translating European books into their languages.⁵⁵⁰ One example he singles out is Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi. Reading his work, Ali Suavi asserts, one can easily see that Tahtawi was not alienated to his language and culture after being exposed to Europe. He returned back to his country with useful knowledge and experiences, wrote about them to inform his people, in their language.⁵⁵¹ The lesson to take from this, then, is that it is not that important to learn French; what matters more is not to forget one's language and to be able to transmit new knowledge to one's people at home through their language. If these young men did not read anything about their local culture, language, and knowledge, then what benefit there is in their visit to France and learning of the French language, Suavi asks.⁵⁵²

In closing his article, Suavi problematizes the government's strategy in education. Raising a single well-educated *şeyhülislam*, he suggests, would be more beneficial for the Ottomans as such a wise man could do more benefit for the empire than a thousand men like Montesquieu could have done.⁵⁵³ An example for this argument that he provides is what allegedly happened before the declaration of the Tanzimat Rescript. According to this, people were not happy with the reform plan, but then-Şeyhülislam Arif Hikmet Bey explained to them through the language of Islam that there was no harm to Islam in the reform plan, after which, people were calmed down.⁵⁵⁴

Why was the European discourse not meaningful in the Ottoman, or more generally, in an Islamic context for Suavi? The answer to this question is that, as I discussed earlier, Ali Suavi saw a necessity for almost everything to have to originate in Islam. If it was about governmental reforms, it should have been based on *shariah*. If it was about regulating education, it should

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1187-1188.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1188. "Mesela Rifa'a Bey (asarından anlaşıldığı üzere) memleketinin, milletinin lisanını bilmez değil. İslam'da olan ulum-ı şeriyeyi ve ulum-ı Arabiye'yi bilmez değil. İşte bunları bildiği için söylediği ve yazdığı şeyleri hemşehrileri ve milleti anlar."

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 1190. "Zaten kendi memleketinin lisan ve maarifine dair bir şey okumamış adamlar Fransızca öğrenmekle memleketine ne faide yapabilmiş, beyan olunsun, yanlışımız varsa tashihine teşekkür ederiz."

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1190-1191. "Benim itikadımca mesela İstanbul binlerce yetiştirmek yerine eğer bir alim şeyhülislam yetiştirse idi ... devlet de işte o vakit yedd-i ulum ile ... olarak meslek-i terakkide ileri giderdi. Bir alim şeyhülislamın İstanbul'a yapabileceği hizmeti bin Montesquieu yapamaz derim."

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1191. "Acaba Tanzimat'ı kim kabul ettirdi? Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu mu? Hele nazar-ı tedkik ile bakalım. Reşid Paşa mı yoksa Şeyhülislam Arif Hikmet Bey mi? ... [Arif Hikmet Bey] fevaid-i Tanzimat'ı İslam lisanıyla tefhim etmedi mi?"

have been based on Islamic tradition. Speaking from within a European perspective, however, would be misleading as the solutions proposed would not fit into the necessities of Islam and the Muslims. As an example, I propose to carefully read Ali Suavi's critique of those who regarded the Ottoman Caliphate as a spiritual leadership like Papacy.

In "Kudret-i Siyasiye Der Düvel-i İslamiye," Suavi summarizes the European perception of the Islamic government as having two different approaches: one regards the Islamic government as despotic; for the other, it is no different than the institution of the papacy as known in Europe.⁵⁵⁵ Then he goes on to discuss the latter in detail. According to Montesquieu, who was in favor of this second view, the Ottoman sultan was the caliph of the prophet, and therefore, he did not only represent the embodiment of political authority, but he was also a spiritual leader. Suavi suggests that as a devout Muslim, he had never thought of the Ottoman sultan as having spiritual powers.⁵⁵⁶ After that, he explains his reasoning concerning early Islamic history: Muhammad did not choose a caliph in his lifetime, and Abu Bakr was selected as caliph after the prophet's death. Thus, it is not possible to speak of the caliphs as political leaders also sharing the spiritual powers of the prophet. In fact, in the early Islamic period, he asserts, Abu Bakr was called the caliph of the prophet as he substituted the prophet upon the latter's request in some mundane services. What is more, Umar was called by his contemporaries as the caliph of the prophet's caliph, as he succeeded Abu Bakr.⁵⁵⁷ In this sense, the institution of caliphate could not be understood as having a spiritual meaning.

The rest of the article is about how misleading were the Ottoman intellectuals aspiring to Western political ideas. Labeling them as *Frenk mahsulleri* and *Frenk mütercimleri*, Suavi presents their main concern as preparing for the Islamic state a constitution that is compatible with the sacred caliphate, which, according to him, derives from the mistaken assumption that the institution of caliphate resembles an Islamic version of the papacy. He then warns his audience about such intellectuals as they could have planted wrong ideas into the Muslim mind

⁵⁵⁵ "Kudret-i Siyasiye Der Düvel-i İslamiye," *Ulum Gazetesi* 16 (18 April 1870): 982-983.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 983. "Diğerinin zehabınca kudret-i siyasiye-i İslamiye, Avrupa'da malum kudret-i ruhbaniyeden ibarettir. Sultan, halife-i resulullah'tır. Peygamber postunda oturup hükümet-i cismaniye ve ruhaniyeyi haizdir. ... Filvaki ben Müslüman olduğum halde Müslümanlardan dahi padişaha halife dendiğini işiterek büyüdüm. Lakin bu lakabdan ecnebiler gibi bir mana takdis ve hükümet-i ruhaniye anlamadım."

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 984. "Ebubekir (radiyallahu anh), ihtiyar-ı ashab ile tayin kılındı. ... Olvakit ashab ona halife-i resulullah dediler. Lakin takdis için mi yoksa İslam imamlarına bir unvan ihtira' için mi? Zannetmem. Çünkü bu lakab hazretin bade'l-tayin almış olduğu bir unvan olmayıp zaman-ı hayat-ı nebide dahi hamil idi. Yani vakt-i saadette birkaç hizmette peygamber onu kendi yerine vekil bıraktığı için olvakit halife-i resulullah denmişti... o hizmetler ise kütüb-i hadiste mufassıl olduğu vechle cismani hizmetlerdendi. ... Ömer makam-ı imamete geçtiğinde ona 'halife-i halife-i resulullah' dediler."

with the mistaken assumption that they were helping out.⁵⁵⁸ Moreover, the idea that the caliph occupies the post of the prophet has no basis in the *shariah*, nor in the early Islamic history: even the Rashidun caliphs did not attempt to establish themselves as spiritual inheritors to the prophet, let alone the later caliphs, Suavi asserts. For example, when Abu Bakr became the caliph, he took one step lower on the *minbar* than the prophet had used to take; when Umar became the next caliph, he took one step lower, going lower than Abu Bakr's step. Uthman would rise one step higher to the place of Abu Bakr back again. None of them would dare to take the step that the prophet had used to take.⁵⁵⁹ Even symbolically, they were signaling that they had no intention to take such a role of the caliphate as a spiritual leader.

Furthermore, there is not much in Suavi's writings that reveals his critique of Western modernity collectively. In "Avrupa'nın On Dokuzuncu Asrı: Kanlı Asır," for instance, he targets Europe collectively, listing the wars between various European states from 1800 until 1870. They call this century as civilized, he says, but it was in this century that most of the wars in world history took place.⁵⁶⁰ Or, in "Mesele-i Şarkıyye," he explicitly states that what the Eastern Question is called and how it is defined does not change the fact that the question at stake has always been pushing the Islamic state out of Europe.⁵⁶¹ In "İspanyol ve Portugal Lisanlarında Bulunan Kelimat-ı Arabiye," he problematizes the Andalusian effect over European languages, particularly Spanish and Portuguese, and criticizes those who translate foreign words from second hand, meaning European languages, while those words were originally Arabic.⁵⁶²

Reading between the lines, it is apparent that Suavi sees the European civilization as a more or less homogenous entity, defined by the common identity of non-Islamic, and positioned across

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 987. "Bakınız hayırhahımız olan Frenk mahsullerine: 'İslam devletini mevcut olan hilafet-i mukaddese itikadını bozmayarak konstitüsyona sokmak ne keyfiyetle olabileceğine' dair gece gündüz sarf-ı efkar ediyorlar. ... Aman şu Frenk mütercimleri ve mahsulleri o yolda sarf-ı efkar ede ede ve hayırhahlık zannıyla yaza yaza sakın İslam'a hilafet-i mukaddese fikri sokmasınlar."

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 989-990. Suavi uses a harsh language: "'Padişah peygamber postunda oturuyor.' mekulu cahil sözüdür, bir asl-ı şerıyyeye müstened değildir. Riyasete geçtiğinde peygambere vekalet manası Hülefa-i Raşidin'in bile hatırlarına gelmedi (nerede kaldı ki sonradan gelen sümüklülere). Hatta Ebubekir imam olduğunda minber-i nebiye suud eyledikte zat-ı risaletpenahinin basmış olduğu kademedden bir derece aşağıda durdu. Hazreti Ömer bir ayak daha aşağı indi. Hazreti Osman bir kadem yukarı çıktı. Hani bizde peygambere hilafet derecesi?"

⁵⁶⁰ "Avrupa'nın On Dokuzuncu Asrı: Kanlı Asır," *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 3 (16 October 1870): 48. "Şu on dokuzuncu asır ki güya sivilize imiş, ne kanlı asırdır. 1800 sal-i miladi ibtidasından bugüne dek yetmiş yıl zarfında ne çok muharebe oldu, her asırdan ziyade insan kurban edildi. En vahşi asırlardan ziyade memleketler yıkıldı, yıkıldı."

⁵⁶¹ "Mesele-i Şarkıyye," *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 2 (6 October 1870): 29. "Mesele-i Şarkıyye ne tabirat ile tarif olunursa olunsun ve ne kisvelerle iksa olunursa olunsun, bunun hakikati İslam'ı Avrupa'da çekememek yani İslam'ı Rumeli cihetinden çıkarıp Asya'ya yani Üsküdar tarafına atmaktır. İslam'dan murad işhas olmayıp İslam hükümeti demektir."

⁵⁶² "İspanyol ve Portugal Lisanlarında Bulunan Kelimat-ı Arabiye," *Ulum Gazetesi* 14 (1870): 844-845.

the Islamic civilization. If what is needed to be learned was already present in Islamic tradition, literature, history, then there was no necessity to borrow it from Europe as the latter had borrowed from the former and turned it into something compatible with its values. If the Muslims take it back, it will not be consistent with their values. His critique of Europe can be seen in his writings on contemporary developments in France as well. It is at this point that the seemingly homogenous image of Europe dissolves as France is distinguished from the rest for its particular ungodliness and immorality.

In “Fransa’da Cumhuriyetin Sabit Olamayacağı,” Suavi starts his argument with a definition of republic, according to which, where there is respect for the people’s votes, there is a true republic. Then he discusses the contemporary situation in France: it was voted on May 8, 1870, that Napoleon had the right to have his post and his son would be his successor, but now, some people were suggesting that Napoleon had intervened in the election process to have this result, and therefore, the election was not legitimate.⁵⁶³ If the latter was the case, Suavi asks, then why these people abolished the parliament? Had the members of the parliament not been elected by the people’s votes? Had Napoleon intervened in the election on their behalf as well? Even if that was true, Suavi suggests, the outcome was to the harm of the people. There was now no police or government to sustain public safety. These rebels could not even do the things they wanted while they were on their own, Suavi asserts. Four days after they elected a new parliament, they abolished it as well: was it also Napoleon’s fault?⁵⁶⁴ He then calls on to civilized Europe to interrupt this and set up a new state in France. In this case, even the ongoing war between France and Prussia could come to an end.⁵⁶⁵

In the background of this article, there was a war with Prussia and a transition from the Second French Empire to the French Third Republic. Suavi does not seem content with the new politics in France and deems the contemporary developments as a sign of the end of French

⁵⁶³ “Fransa’da Cumhuriyetin Sabit Olamayacağı,” *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 2 (6 October 1870): 24. “Bir yerde ara-i ammeye riayet olunur, işte orada sahih cumhuriyet vardır. Böyle bir cumhurun başında bulunan ne unvan ile olursa olsun reis-i cumhur demektir. Fi 8 Mayıs 1870, Napolyon’un makamı ve oğlunun veraseti Fransa’da ara-i amme ile tasdik olundu. Lakin fi 4 Eylül Frengi Paris’te birkaç zorba bu ara-i ammeyi ... ettiler. Demek ki cumhurun esas nizamını yıktılar.”

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 24. “Ya şimdi başınızda ne hükümet var, ne polis var. Siz size olduğunuz halde memlekete memleket meclislerini intihab etmişken dört gün sonra içinizden dört zorba meclis basıp azanın azillerini ilan ediyor, bu ne demek? Bu intihabınızda da mı Napolyon karıştı? ... Azleden kim? Amele güruhundan birkaç kimse.”

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 25. “Koca Lyon eyaleti ahalisinin bi’l-intihab nisb ettikleri meclisi Lyon şehri amelesinden birkaç kimsenin dağıtması zorbalık değil de nedir? ... Avrupa medeniyeti iktiza eder ki devletler ittifak edip hemen Fransa’da bir devlet teşkil ettirmeliler. Evla bir devlet teşkil bulunduğu halde saniyen muharebe dahi sulhpezir olur.”

“republic.”⁵⁶⁶ After this critique of the “failure of the republic” in France, Suavi continues with the ongoing war and French politics. In narrating an exchange between the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Jules Favre and the Prussian Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck, he questions Favre’s liability. He tells his audience that, after communicating with Bismarck, Favre returned to the country and called the nation to keep fighting Prussia instead of giving them what Bismarck asked for, namely, a number of castles at a close distance to Paris. Suavi then lists his questions: Was there a written document given by Bismarck? How could people be certain about what Bismarck demanded from France? Could, for example, Ali Paşa do something similar and cost a war with another state?⁵⁶⁷ He concludes that, in France, where they say the form of government is a republic, it is one man who appointed himself as the Minister of Foreign Affairs that decides whether to make war.

Suavi does not only blame it on French politics and political institutions; he targets the French collectively as well. Before the war with Prussia began, he suggests, the French were willing to go into a war. French newspapers had been inciting the people and the government for a war against Prussia during the last three years, but now, after the war broke out, they pretend as if they did not promote the idea of war, Suavi writes.⁵⁶⁸ In addition to the newspapers, ordinary people were also happy with starting a war with Prussia, according to him.⁵⁶⁹ Thus, pointing out to what he deemed as the immorality of the French, Suavi wanted to demonstrate to his audience back home that there was nothing to make an example of in France.⁵⁷⁰ This becomes

⁵⁶⁶ Suavi’s use of the term republic might be confusing as he uses it in a somewhat broader sense. A better understanding of what he means by republic requires reading his article “El Hakimu Hüvallah,” which was discussed earlier in this chapter.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-26. “Fransa’da Hariciye Nazırı Jules Favre, Prusyalının ordu merkezine gidip Bismarck ile görüşmüş. Döndü, Paris’e geldi ve ‘Prusyalı Fransa’dan ... kalelerini dahi istiyor. Yani hemen Paris etrafına kadar memaliki talep ediyor. Vermeyelim, muharebe edelim.’ diye ilan eyledi. Fransızlar da kabul ettiler. Acayip. Jules Favre nam avukatı kim Hariciye Nazırı yapmış? Kendi kendine. Jules Favre’ı Bismarck’a kim gönderdi? Kendi kendine gitti. Bismarck ile ettiği mükâlemeyi kendisine kim talim etti? Kendi. Bismarck o yerleri istediğini neden bilmeli, bunu Fransa’ya kim haber verdi? Jules Favre kendi. İşte Fransa’da bir adam başlı başına politika işlerine karışıyor ve ben filanla mükâleme ettim, ben şöyle buldum, ben böyle münasip gördüm deyip devam-ı muharebeye sebep oluyor. Bu usulün adı Fransa’da cumhuriyet takılıyor. Fesuphanallah.”

⁵⁶⁸ “Fransız Kaypaklığı,” *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 2 (6 October 1870): 26. “Fransız gazeteleri üç senedir Prusya aleyhine söylemedik lakırdı bırakmadılar. Prusya aleyhine ilan-ı harbe davetten geri durmadılar. Bunların nazarında Napolyon’un en büyük kabahati Prusya’ya sükut eylesiydi. Nihayet bu kere ilan-ı harb oldu ki o gün Millet Meclisi’nde ‘Muharebe! Muharebe!’ diye bağırırmaktan müzakereye vakit yoktu.”

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.* “Paris’te ahali sokaklarda bayraklar açıp ‘Berlin’e gidelim! Prusya’yı yıkalım!’ diye bar bar bağırışıklarını gördüm.”

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 27. “Bu nüshada ve gerek birinci nüshada Fransızların ahlakı ve bu defa müşahede olunan hareketi aleyhine yazdığım meseleler gayet halisane olarak hemşehrilerime nasihat içindir. Şöyle ki, şimdi Fransız evrak-ı havadisi, cumhuriyet ve iştirak ve ibahat namlarıyla ahlak-ı ammeyi ifsada çalıştıklarından bizim memleketlerde mücerred Fransızca okuyup da bu mezahib ve aranın hakikatini bilmeyenler aldanırlar diye korkarım.”

clearer in another article, where he compares French patriotism with the Islamic concept of jihad.

In “İslam Askerliđi ve Fransız Askerliđi,” he argues that if their country comes under a foreign threat, it is a religious obligation upon the Muslims to defend their country. If the enemy forces enter into their lands, all the Muslims capable of holding up arms have to fight against the enemy. Then he explains that there is no such understanding among the French. Instead, they have a secular concept that is *amour de la Patrie*, or love of the homeland. It was often written in books that if the French were called to defend their homeland, they would take up arms and defend it. Yet, when this war started, he states, every French capable of running away left their homes.⁵⁷¹ He then concludes by wishing good for the faith of Islam⁵⁷² as it stands still, unlike the secular basis for the defense of the homeland.

As these articles reveal, Suavi was opposed to making an example out of the West and particularly France. He was also critical of the Ottoman Muslims for their emulation of Europe. When he wanted to give a good example to follow, his preference was either contemporary Egypt as a successful case of Muslim modernization or past Islamic societies and thinkers. If finding a good example for a specific discussion from these two sources was impossible, as was the case with Suavi’s discussion of journalism, then he would give his good examples from the West.

Even though not directly part of this larger discussion, in the next section, I will reflect on Suavi’s hatred of Ali Pařa as it was linked to Suavi’s concern for the Ottoman Empire and its sultan as the political representative of the world Muslims. Suavi labeled Ali Pařa as a weak bureaucrat compromising the dignity of Islam to the demands of the European powers and Ottoman non-Muslims.

⁵⁷¹ “İslam Askerliđi ve Fransız Askerliđi,” *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müřterilerine* 2 (6 October 1870): 28. “Okurduk ki Fransızlarca böyle farz falan olmayıp ‘*amour de la patrie*’ var imiř, yani *hubb-ü vatan*. řöyle ki, *patrie* (vatan) diye bir nida olunsa bütün Fransızlar ayaklanıp vatan-ı azizi hıfz ederlermiř. ... Lakin bu kez Fransa’ya Prusya askeri girdi. ... Gerek memurin ve gerek gazeteler *hubb-ü vatan* diye iki aydır bađrıřtılar ve halkı vatan namına davet ettiler. Hani Fransız ayaklanmadı? Paris Muhasarası’ndan beri ben Fransa’da iki yüz elli fersah mesafe dolařtım. Gözüm ile gördüm ki seyahate muktedir olan her Fransız kaçıyor. Yakinen bilmiř olunuz ki Fransa’dan çıkıp da yaşamaya serveti kafi olan bir Frenk kalmadı.”

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 29. “Aman İslam itikadı zeval bulmasın.”

Ali Suavi's Hatred of Ali Paşa

Ali Suavi's enmity with Ali Paşa first started with the former's accusation of the latter with a weakness towards the non-Muslim rebels in Belgrade and the loss of the castles there, as mentioned earlier. On another occasion, again, discussed earlier in this chapter, Suavi accused Ali Paşa of degrading the status of the Ottoman sultan in the eyes of the world Muslims by compromising the non-Muslims' demands in Crete. There are also partial references to Ali Paşa in several other articles, pointing out to his alleged incompetence. The peak of this enmity was perhaps at the time Ali Suavi wrote an article justifying the murder of Ali Paşa with reference to Islamic jurisprudence.⁵⁷³

In addition to his administrative inadequacies, Suavi also portrayed Ali Paşa as a despotic bureaucrat looking down on the Ottoman public opinion, in "Rusya'da Dahi Efkâr-ı Umumiye Var, Bizde Yok." According to this, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Gorchakov, had sent a diplomatic note regarding the Russian demand for a change in the Treaty of Paris of 1856, and all the Russians had heard about this development while the Ottomans had not. In about two weeks, the deputy of the Russian Ambassador had sent the note to the Sublime Porte; again, not a single newspaper in Istanbul had an information about the note.⁵⁷⁴

After that, Suavi mocks Ali Paşa: in the last meeting at the Paşa's place, Suavi suggests, after they finished their conversation on irrelevant topics, the attendants finally discussed Russia's proposal and decided to ratify it. Yet, even at this stage, the people in Istanbul had no knowledge of what was happening at all,⁵⁷⁵ because, whereas in Russia, the government provided the newspapers in its country with copies of the note that it sent to the Ottoman government, this was not the case in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁷⁶ According to Suavi, Gorchakov takes the public opinion in Russia into account and states that it is the public that wants such and such things to

⁵⁷³ "Suavi Efendi Tarafından Gelen Mektup Sureti," transcribed in Topal, *Namık Kemal'in Hürriyet Gazetesi*, vol 2, 174. "İşte İslam'ın fıkıh kitaplarından *Mücteba* ve *Nehr-i Faiki* ve *Timurtaş* zalimin ve zalime mu'in ve zalime sa'i olanların katline ve katlinin me'curu müsab olacağına fetva verdiler. Vallahu'l-kerim katli farz olan kafir-i leim işte bu zalim-i zemim Ali Paşa'dır."

⁵⁷⁴ "Rusya'da Dahi Efkâr-ı Umumiye Var, Bizde Yok," *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 8 (15 December 1870): 139-140.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 140. "Ali Paşa konağında tecemmü eden Salı meclisinde evvela kokulu tütün, saniyen havalının bozukluğu, salisen Fazıl Paşa'nın arabacısı meseleleri müzakere edildikten sonra rabien Rusya'nın teklifine muvafakat olunmak üzere karar verildi. Yine milletin haberi yok. ... İstanbul'daki Türkçe ve Rumca ve Ermenice ve Bulgarca gazeteler ise Bab-ı Ali'ye böyle bir nota verildiğini ta Londra'dan ve Fransa'dan gelmiş bir haber olmak üzere Frenk gazetelerinde görüp tercüme edebilirlerse öğrenecekler."

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.* "Lakin dünyada mevcut devletlerin en mütekebbir, en hodbin-i azlemi olan Rusya devleti, Bab-ı Ali'ye ve sair devletlere gönderdiği notaların birer suretlerini gazetelerine verdi."

happen in such ways. Ali Paşa, on the other hand, cares about only his own opinion. The two different approaches, Suavi asserts, signals who will win and who will lose at the end.⁵⁷⁷

This hatred did not end even after Ali Paşa died. Suavi wrote a pamphlet entitled “Defter-i Amal-i Ali Paşa (Ali Paşa’s Book of Deeds),” where he discussed at length the problems Ali Paşa caused to the Ottoman government and Muslims with his incompetence and bad governance of finances.⁵⁷⁸ According to Suavi, the established order in the Ottoman Empire required the viziers to take responsibility and be a shield for the sultan against critics; decisions were used to be made upon a council meeting with everyone’s opinion taken into consideration; and when foreigners complained about Ottoman government decisions, Ottoman viziers were used to pointing out to the fact that the decision was made after a council meeting and a vote in accordance with the *shariah*.⁵⁷⁹ Ali Paşa, on the other hand, did not show respect to any of those principles, Suavi states.

Furthermore, he blames Ali Paşa with being a mere translator serving the interests of the European powers who dictated the terms.⁵⁸⁰ It was also Ali Paşa’s fault that the European powers had a new habit of calling for a conference whenever a problem occurs in the Ottoman Empire, even if that was a feud among the subjects of the empire.⁵⁸¹ Whereas most of these conferences would result at the expense of the Ottoman interests, there were exceptional cases as well. Yet, in those exceptional ones too, it was thanks to Ali Paşa that the empire could not benefit. One example Suavi repeatedly refers to is the loss of the castles in Belgrade to the Serbians.⁵⁸² Another is that, as discussed before, the Crimean War of 1853-56 had resulted in a treaty by which the European powers had reiterated their recognition of the Ottoman Empire as

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 141. “Şimdi Gorçakof devletlere diyor ki ‘Ne yapalım? Elimizden ne gelir? Millet böyle istiyor. Rusya’da efkar-ı umumiye böyle diliyor.’ Bizde ise güya Ali Paşa diyor ki ‘Ne yapsınlar? Milletin elinden ne gelir? Ben böyle istiyorum, benim efkar-ı mahsusam böyle diliyor.’ Ey akıllı erenler! İşte şu iki meslek-i idareyi iyice tefekkür ediniz de hangi taraf kazanacak anlayınız.”

⁵⁷⁸ Ali Suavi, *Ali Paşa’nın Siyaseti* (İstanbul, 1325). The version I had access to is entitled *Ali Paşa’s Politics*, with the exact same content.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-7. “Umur-ı dahiliyemize dair nizamı dahi, mesela 1272 imtiyazat fermanı ve 1280 hatt-ı hümayunu ve iradesini ve 1284 tasarruf-ı emlak müsaadesini ve keza mehakim-i muhtılata nizamnamesini ve diğerleri hep süfera-i ecnebiye kaleme aldılar. Kapıcızade [Ali Paşa] fakat Türkçe tercüme ile huzur-ı padişahıya bi’l-takdim irade-i seniye istihasal eyledi. Düvel-i ecnebiye süferası, kendileri her ne kaleme alırlarsa onun üzerine irade-i sudurundan dolayı müteşekkir kaldılar.”

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7-8. “Kapıcızade’ye kadar biz konferans monferans nedir bilir miydik? Devletin başına bir konferans gürültüsü çıkardı. Memleketimizin ne tarafında bir çıt olsa İngiliz’dan, Fransız’dan, Moskof’tan, Alman’dan, filandan birer murahhas gelip meclis olmalı, o işe bir karar verilmeli. Mesela, Suriye’de, teba-i Osmaniye beyninde bir kavga olur, bu iş ecanible muhtılata konferans muhakemesiyle karar bulur.”

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 8. “Ma hazaa, hangi konferansın kararı muhafaza olundu? Hani fi 8 Eylül 1279, ecanib murahhaslarından mürekkep konferansın kararıyla devlet, Belgrad’da ve diğer kala-i sülüste muhafız asker oturtmak hakkını ibka eylemişti. Lakin, Kapıcızade bu kaleleri muhafazadan boşaltıp, ıslahasıyla, mühimmatıyla Sırp’ya ihsan eyledi. Yani ecanib konferansının bile münasip görmediği ihsanları yaptı.”

a sovereign power and blocked the possibility of Russia fortifying its presence in the Black Sea. Yet, Suavi asserts, Ali Paşa destroyed the Ottoman gains by allowing the Europeans to intervene in Ottoman politics while also ignoring the Russian ambitions in the Black Sea.⁵⁸³

Suavi also regards the edict of 1856 as a document giving unprecedented privileges to the non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire, written by European ambassadors and translated to Turkish by Ali Paşa. For Suavi, the Turkish translation of the text did not give the true sense that was sealed in its original French version.⁵⁸⁴ The regulation of 1868, which came after the Land Code of 1858, is presented similarly, providing the foreign citizens with the right to own land in any part of the empire, but in the Turkish version, there was an exception that is Hijaz. This exception was not provided in the French version, Suavi suggests.⁵⁸⁵

Ali Paşa's incompetence against the foreign powers was not his only sin, according to Suavi: in the following pages, he continues with a critique of the empire's finances and Ali Paşa's role in the increasing foreign debts.⁵⁸⁶ Despite such treasons, Suavi suggests in finishing his attack, Ali Paşa did not suffer enough in this world and he would thus continue suffering in the afterlife.⁵⁸⁷

Concluding Remarks

Ali Suavi wrote on diverse topics from explorations in Americas to the Ottoman economy, but in this chapter, I focused on his articles in *Ulum* relevant for the general discussion in this thesis, that is, his notion of civilization. For Suavi, civilization was not associated with the idea of

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 18-21.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 23. "İslahat Fermanı dedikleri Hristiyan tebaaya (imtiyazat fermanı)dır. Bu fermanın asıl tesvidi İngiliz ve Fransız ve Avusturyan süferasının kalemiyledir. Kapıcızade tercümeden başka bir şey yapmadı. ... Asıl olan Fransızca layiha ile bir kere tatbik olunsun da görülsün. Siz bu fermanın kuvvetini desturda olan Türkçesinden anlayamazsınız. Düvel-i ecnebiyeye tebliğ olunan Fransızcasını görünüz de ne imtiyazattır anlarsınız!"

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 30-31. "Ecanibin tasarruf-ı emlak edeceklerine dair Ali Paşa nizamnamesinin Türkçe (ve gazetelerde neşr olunan) birinci bendinde tebaa-i ecnebiye, memalik-i Osmaniye'nin her tarafında tasarruf-ı emlak hukukuna maliktirler. 'Yalnız arz-ı Hicaz müstesna' kaydıyla bir istisna var. Halbuki Fransa sefirine, yani Fransa devletine tebliğ olunan Fransızca nizamnamede şu 'arz-ı Hicaz müstesna' kaydı mezkur olmayıp yalnız *dans toute l'entendue de l'Empire* ibaresiyle 'memalik-i Osmaniye'nin her tarafında' diye itlak üzere tahrir olunmuştur."

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9-10. Suavi cites a report prepared upon Ali Paşa's request, where it was stated that the Ottoman government did not have any foreign debts until 1856 and its incomes and expenditures were standing in balance: "'1856 tarihine dek Türkiye'nin varidat ve mesarifatı daima müsavat ve muvazenede idi. Ondan sonra açık başladı.' Demek ki Kapıcızade'ye kadar bizim maliyenin varidat ve mesarifi muvazenede imiş. Herif senevi muvazenede bir milyon kise açık bıraktı, gitti."

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 39. "Bunca ihanetler eden Ali Paşa acaba ne ceza gördü? Evet, vefatına kadar onun ihanetlerini beyan babında 47760 satır gazete ve resail tahrir ve neşr olundu. Evet, üç ay kadar karnı kah iner, kah şişer hastalık çekerek öldü. ... Kapıcızade amalane mukabil olacak derecede ceza görmedi. Herif elbette daha cezasını görecek."

endless and linear progress, nor was it all about material progress. Relying on leading thinkers of the early Islamic thought, such as Ibn Khaldun and al-Ghazali, Suavi utilized the concept of civilization as attached to achieving happiness. This was only possible with the guidance of a government, or in the terminology he used, imamate, that respected the divine law, namely, the *sharia*. This is perhaps one of the reasons why he was concerned so much with the discussion on the ideal form of government.

On the other hand, as I discussed in his thoughts on spreading knowledge as a prerequisite for civilization, Suavi did not want to leave everything to the state's responsibility. He presented non-Muslim community schools to his co-religionists as an example to follow rather than to wait for the Ottoman government to build and financially support the Muslim schools empire-wide. Suavi's discussion of journalism in Istanbul and comparison with examples from Europe can also be considered as part of this effort.

Moreover, in Suavi's thinking, the West could not be a good example for the Ottomans and Muslims to achieve civilization, which in its true form, was detached from the mere sense of material progress. His writings in France during the war with Prussia directly targeted the French with immorality and portrayed post-revolution France as an example of temporary and short-lasting material progress. Suavi did not write much on Europe in a generalizing tone, but when he did, he blamed the Europeans for misunderstanding Islam and the Muslims. He also made a distinction between Europe and Ottoman Empire, suggesting that the European form of the republic could function well in Europe, but outside Europe, for example, in the Ottoman realm, certain peculiarities would necessitate different forms of government and laws. For the Ottoman Empire in particular and the world Muslims in general to achieve civilization, therefore, finding an alternative and "native" way was necessary.

Suavi does not seem to fit well into the Young Ottoman society when one considers both his relationships with the other members, which I discussed in the third chapter and his writings, which are discussed in this chapter. In his history of the Young Ottomans, perhaps he attempts to distinguish himself from the others with a background story. Different from Namik Kemal and most of the other Young Ottomans, he was not raised in the Translation Bureau; Suavi was coming from a humble social background. His mother was an Istanbulite, but his father was from outside Istanbul and moved to the city with their marriage. Suavi introduces his father as a man who himself was not an intellectual but one who respected those who study sciences. His father had learned to read from his mother. Suavi's emphasis is on how intolerable his father

was in the face of injustice.⁵⁸⁸ Borrowing this attitude from his father and strengthening it with his study of *ahadith* that make examples of the prophet with his stance against injustice, Suavi narrates, he became a man ready to sacrifice himself in facing the injustice.⁵⁸⁹

Whereas Namık Kemal and Ziya were open about how they were influenced by such European intellectuals as Rousseau and Montesquieu as well as Muslim intellectuals in political thought and attempted to form a compatible mixture of both,⁵⁹⁰ Suavi presents his audience the Islamic thought and *ahadith* as the sources of his thought: he does not cite any Western source as an inspiration for his thinking processes even if he shared certain similar ideas. When Montesquieu labeled the Ottoman Empire as a despotic government where the sultan was only checked and limited by religion and mores, not by a constitution,⁵⁹¹ for example, Suavi preferred to turn the argument on its head and suggested that ulema and *sharia* were above the sultan and therefore the Ottoman government was not a despotism.⁵⁹² It was the same with Montesquieu⁵⁹³ and Voltaire's⁵⁹⁴ reception of the Janissaries as a check on the sultan: Suavi argues that Mahmud II did good by the abolition of the Janissary Corps,⁵⁹⁵ but they had been constituting a check on the government.⁵⁹⁶ He does not cite these sources; on the contrary, he emphasizes his Islamic sources.

When he read and analyzed the history of the Ottoman Empire, Suavi states, he understood that the old principle that held the empire together was the morals that regulated everyday life, thanks to which, everyone knew their rights and duties; observing his own time, he saw no trace of those morals.⁵⁹⁷ Without this principle, he continues, there was no point in preparing laws and regulations. Did he have as strict an understanding of social order as Nasireddin Tusi,⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁸⁸ "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," *Ulum Gazetesi* 15 (3 April 1870): 893.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 896-897. "Bu hadisler beni mezalim aleyhine öyle besledi ki her tüyümü zalime karşı bir kahraman bulurdum. Şöyle ki bir damla vücudum ile zalime hücum etmeye ve mağlup olduğum halde tarafından katl olunmaya razı olurudum."

⁵⁹⁰ Banu Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 61-68.

⁵⁹¹ Noel Malcolm, *Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought 1450-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 385.

⁵⁹² "Kudret-i Siyasiye der Düvel-i İslamiye," *Ulum Gazetesi* 16 (18 April 1870).

⁵⁹³ Malcolm, *Useful Enemies*, 381-382.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 397.

⁵⁹⁵ "Tarih-i Mahmudi ve Azizi ve Mecidi," *Ulum Gazetesi* 9 (): 498.

⁵⁹⁶ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse University Press, 2000), 133.

⁵⁹⁷ "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," 907. "Devlet-i İslamiye'nin ve hususan Osmaniyeye'nin bir kere tarihini yukarıdan aşağı süzerdim, göürdüm ki esas, herkes kendi hak ve vazifesini tanıyacak surette adab ve ahlaktan ibaret imiş. Döner bir de zamaneye bakardım. Müşahede ederdim ki ne o ahlak kalmış, ne o adab. Bu halde maddi nizamlar, maddi kanunlar, esas üzerine bina olunmadıkça devletimiz için beka tasavvur edemezdim."

⁵⁹⁸ Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Phoenix, 1980), 39.

whose name passes in Ali Suavi's "Lisan ve Hatt-ı Türki"? Or was it from later Ottoman scholars? As Suavi does not detail his argument or cite any sources, it is not possible to follow the origins or details of his vision. The only thing one can be sure of is that Suavi had a golden age in his mind, and he was disappointed with his own.

Suavi continues with his move to Paris, where he met Fazıl Paşa and the Young Ottomans. According to his account, Suavi had been approached by Mustafa Fazıl Paşa with the intermediacy of Filip Efendi while he was in Istanbul, but he was not interested.⁵⁹⁹ As he was in exile in Kastamonu, he was approached once again by an intermediary to Fazıl, who carried a message and some amount of money for Suavi to travel through Istanbul and Marseille to Paris. Suavi suggests that he was unwilling for such a move, but he felt an urgent need for action for his ideals; he was also excited for Fazıl's open letter to the sultan, where, the sultan was warned about the mismanagement of the empire by his viziers and given a proposal to enhance the empire's situation.⁶⁰⁰ His travel was, however, as Suavi asserts, completely independent from those of Namık Kemal and Ziya: Suavi suggests that they were all invited by Fazıl, but they had no information about this until gathering together.⁶⁰¹ From the beginning until the end, Suavi's article serves the purpose of separating him from the other Young Ottomans, perhaps as he intended.

A few weeks later, Suavi wrote an article entitled "Faziliyye," in *Ulum*'s 18th issue, where he began by defining this new term: what they translate into French as *Fazilizm*, or as the Ottomans know it, *Faziliyye*, means abandoning a cause after acquiring a post. This definition came into use after Fazıl's example, but there had always been the likes of Fazıl since the beginning of the time, Suavi continues.⁶⁰² Then he provides long quotations from Fazıl's letter to Abdulaziz, interrupted by his short comments such as "What loyalty!", "What an open mind!" or "What patriotism!", only to mock his target. As if he was not the man who wrote this letter to the sultan, when Fazıl heard the news that he was appointed as the Minister of Finance, he immediately returned to the capital, which indicates that he was, despite his suggestion in the letter that he was not expecting any appointment to an official post, in fact waiting for such benefits.⁶⁰³ As he acquired what he wanted, Fazıl cut his ties with his old friends when he

⁵⁹⁹ "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," 910.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 916-918.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 930-931.

⁶⁰² "Faziliyye," *Ulum Gazetesi* 18 (17 May 1870): 1119-1120.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1126-1127. Suavi gives a detailed description of the moment that Fazıl Paşa received the news of his appointment: "Kumar masasından fırladı. Kalktı ve iki tarafına atf-ı nıgah eyledikte, sağına mı soluna mı, hele

returned to Istanbul, Suavi states.⁶⁰⁴ As discussed in the third chapter, Ali Suavi's cooperation with Fazıl was not unconditional, and their visions for the empire, or the future more generally, were not on the same track. Once this conditional cooperation was over, Suavi was free to express himself openly.

Furthermore, Ali Suavi's goals might need a whole new discussion. Namık Kemal and Ziya were concerned with saving the empire, and they were ready to borrow from outside sources whenever necessary, with the one condition that the borrowed must be compatible with the essence of the empire. Ziya, for example, could freely discuss republic as an ideal form of government where sovereignty belongs to the people, where people are united around common sentiments of patriotism; and where, the law is above the ruler and the judiciary is completely independent of the execution. Republican form of government would not be immoral because it would reflect the morality of the people.⁶⁰⁵ On the other hand, as I discussed in this chapter, in his article "El Hakim Hüvallah," Suavi explicitly rejected the idea that sovereignty belongs to the people: it must have derived from a divine source to the people so that the divine justice would be sustained on earth through the intermediacy of the people. A republic with separation of powers was not Suavi's concern; on the contrary, separation could have resulted in a conflict of interests among different organs of government. In the Islamic government, however, as I tried to demonstrate in discussing his article "El Hakim Hüvallah," Suavi idealizes imamate as the most appropriate form where there was a unity of powers. As long as this imamate was based on the divine law, that is *shariah*, it would not matter in what form it operated; it could be a republic or a monarchy.

Suavi's primary concern does not seem to be saving the empire per se but constituting a government that would operate following what he perceived the true principles of Islam. Ottoman Empire is attributed a significant role in defense of the world Muslims against the West, the most emblematic example of it being Suavi's proposal for the Ottoman government to help the establishment of a unified Muslim state in North Africa in the face of the possibility that the separate Muslim countries in the region fall one by one to France or the other European powers. Another clear example is his portrayal of the Ottoman sultan as possessing a transnational power stemming from the institution of caliphate. By contrast, Namık Kemal was concerned more with saving the state than giving it such a role of leadership of the Muslim

bir gözüne bir gazete muhabiri ilişti. Derhal 'Monsieur le redacteur, sana izin verdim yaz. Ben Meclis-i Has azasından oldum.' dedi ve koltuklarını adetten fazla kabartıp salınarak kumar salonundan dışarı çıktı gitti."

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1128.

⁶⁰⁵ Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism*, 65-66.

world. He did not agree with the Khaldunian understanding of the life span of state, for example: the Ottoman Empire did not necessarily have to fall after experiencing all the stages before fall that Ibn Khaldun had indicated; it could recover if the right steps were taken.⁶⁰⁶

Informed by the Islamic political thought, Ali Suavi trusts the ruler to respect the law and does not need to formulate checks and balances because, in the classical Islamic political literature, *ulema* were always placed above the rulers, he explains. This gives him the sense that a good ruler would suffice to the well-being of the state and the people. He also criticized what he deemed the European view of absolute government and the European association of Islamic government with despotism, suggesting that an Islamic government, whether it is a monarchy or not, can never be absolutist because the ruler has to comply with the law, as I discussed with reference to his article “Avrupa İtirazı.” Namık Kemal, on the other hand, saw the necessity to hold the ruler accountable by constituting some form of separation of powers and defined the absolutist government as the worst option where the judiciary and the execution are collected in the hands of a single person.⁶⁰⁷ In “El Hakim Hüvallah,” Suavi had formulated something akin to the unity of powers to prevent a conflict between different parties, as mentioned above.

Their audiences were not the same, either. Whereas Namık Kemal is known for his contribution to the concept of fatherland in the Ottoman intellectual context, one cannot see such emphasis on the same concept in Ali Suavi’s writings. On the contrary, as I pointed out in discussing his article “İslam Askerliği ve Fransız Askerliği,” Suavi was cynical about the French notion of *amour de la Patrie*, which, in Suavi’s eyes, did not help France during the Prussian invasion as the French did not run to the defense of their country. The Islamic concept of jihad was more powerful to keep the people together against potential enemies in Suavi’s understanding. Several times in different articles, Suavi mentions the presence of hundreds of millions of Muslims, a figure which clearly exceeds the Ottoman Muslim population and points out that Suavi was calling upon world Muslims, not merely the Ottoman subjects. Another proof is that in “Müslümanların Padişah Hakkında Zannı,” he underlines his reception of the image of the Ottoman sultan as the leader of the world Muslims, an image that he fears the sultan would lose if Ali Paşa and the likes would continue to compromise to non-Muslims and foreign powers.

This discussion does not necessarily have to be limited to the Young Ottoman society. For example, such earlier intellectuals as Sadık Rıfat Paşa or Şinasi also seem to be predecessors

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

more for the other Young Ottomans than for Ali Suavi. As Mardin explains, when Sadık Rıfat referred to the Islamic concept of the circle of justice, it was to convince his audience to the idea that civilization required the well-being of the state and the subjects, which was only possible if the people were assured that the future would not bring uncertainties. Since it was an arbitrary rule that used to bring about uncertainties, a new form where the law was placed above the ruler was necessary, and it would be possible thanks to this that the circle of justice would function as it ought to.⁶⁰⁸ Şinasi was not different in that, he tried to justify his promotion of the European idea of reason with religious references to make it compatible with his audience.⁶⁰⁹ Suavi, by contrast, does somewhat opposite and cites European sources to justify his inspiration from Islamic sources. There was also a continuity from Sadık Rıfat to Şinasi and Namık Kemal in the idea that prosperity is directly linked to the people's sense of safety about the future,⁶¹⁰ which is taken for granted in Suavi's writings that once the government functions in accordance with Islamic principles, prosperity will come naturally.

In discussing the concept of sovereignty in "El Hakim Hüvallah," Suavi rejects the idea that sovereignty belongs to the people. To support his argument, he cites the Whig slogan "*Vox populi vox dei*," for which he also provides a French translation as "*La voix du Peuple est la voix du Dieu*." According to Suavi, these sayings suggest that the right to sovereignty is given to the people by God, and the French example of republic relying on the secular sense of the concept is immoral. Since he had, at the least, some reading skills in French, one cannot merely underestimate Suavi's understanding of the notion with reference to his inadequate knowledge of the language. It is more possible to speculate that he either could not make sense of the concept in its secular sense, or he deliberately distorted the meaning of it to fit it into his argumentation. Either way, his point came from an Islamic understanding of government.

It is more than likely that limiting Ali Suavi to a reading of the Young Ottoman thought will result in confusion and blaming Suavi for intellectual incapacity. He had such common concerns with the Young Ottomans as opposition to the Ottoman government and bureaucratic despotism of Ali Paşa or defense of Islam against the Western critics. Yet, he differed from them in his priorities: for Suavi, having an empire as the political representative and protector of world Muslims, for instance, was more important than the purpose of saving the Ottoman Empire in itself. Also, even though he was perhaps well aware of the literature of political

⁶⁰⁸ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse University Press, 2000), 180-184.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 267-268.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 322-323.

thought in Europe, or at the very least, became familiar with the well-known European political theorists' work during his stay in England and France, he deliberately presents *ahadith*, Sunni *fiqh*, and Islamic political thought as his sources of thought. However, it is not easy to trace the origins of his ideas. His definition of imamate as an institution substituting the prophecy and led by an imam whose sovereignty relied on the consensus of the community, for example, resembles al-Mawardi's (991-1031) problematization;⁶¹¹ but it could also be al-Ghazali⁶¹² or Ibn Taymiyya.⁶¹³ Since the articles discussed in this thesis were written for a newspaper, it would perhaps be optimistic to expect Suavi to cite his sources by specific names.

In his writings, as shown in the fourth chapter, Suavi rejects the idea that the caliphate is a sacred institution with spiritual power, representing God's presence on earth. He gave the example of Abu Bakr, who was called the caliph of the prophet, not God. This argument has its origins in early Islamic political theorists as well.⁶¹⁴ Suavi's understanding of civilization was also possibly shaped by early Muslim intellectuals. For Ibn Khaldun, civilization was a natural result of human nature as human beings were, by nature, in need of living together to meet their needs and reach happiness.⁶¹⁵ Farabi saw human beings as civilized by nature as well, because they were incapable of meeting their needs without cooperation with others.⁶¹⁶ Suavi utilized a similar discourse in the very first issue of *Muhbir* and presented happiness as the end goal, which could be achieved through civilization. In this sense, his notion of civilization was not based on material progress.

Suavi diverges from the classical Islamic political thought in certain aspects. For example, early Islamic political thought was concerned with duality, that is, between political authority and caliphate. In contrast, in Suavi's time, the two were embodied in the person of the Ottoman sultan, who was not carrying Ibn Qutayba's conditions for being a legitimate caliph: Ottoman sultan was not from Quraysh.⁶¹⁷ Suavi did not discuss the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan as caliph; on the contrary, he did never accuse the sultan with any mistake or shortcoming but carefully blamed his viziers. Going further in this, he portrayed the sultan as the leader of not

⁶¹¹ Erwin. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 28-29.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, 41. Suavi read Ghazali's *Ihya al-Ulum*, as his pamphlet *Hukuku's-Şevari* demonstrates.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, 52-56. Similar to Taymiyya, Suavi discusses in his article "El Hakimu Hüvallah" that sovereignty essentially belongs to God and is only delegated by the community to the leader, who is, with the guidance of the ulema, is supposed to abide by the divine law, so that the government can be legitimate.

⁶¹⁴ Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 224.

⁶¹⁵ Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, 103.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁶¹⁷ Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 224.

only Ottoman subjects but also world Muslims, as exemplified in an anecdote in “Müslümanların Padişah Hakkında Zannı,” where an Indian Muslim was seen crying out of happiness as he saw Abdulaziz in London.

Situated into the broader non-Western intellectual context of the nineteenth century, which was discussed in the second chapter, it is possible to trace certain commonalities between Ali Suavi and other intellectuals, including non-Muslims. For example, Francis Marrash (1836-1874), who lived in the same period as Ali Suavi (1839-1878), had similar concerns: Marrash saw the West as almost a homogenous entity positioned across the East as another one; he described the East as the birthplace of civilization; he defined civilization as an abstract notion detached from the West, and he optimistically suggested that civilization would return one day to the East.⁶¹⁸ Suavi put morality before material progress, explained the current state of the Ottoman Empire and Islamic societies with immorality, and proposed Islam as the right path to civilization. He particularly attacked Ali Paşa and Ottoman bureaucracy for the current state of the empire. Marrash, on the other hand, would suggest that it was due to the ignorance, the departure from reason, and struggles between religious communities that the East had lost its civilization.⁶¹⁹ It is important to bear in mind that Suavi was writing as a member of the dominant class of the empire, who regarded it as the protector of world Muslims and was witnessing its decline. Marrash, by contrast, was a Christian Arab who had witnessed the inter-communal conflict and massacres at the Mount Lebanon in 1860. Both intellectuals were part of a broader common intellectual context, but their ideas were shaped differently at the local level as well.

⁶¹⁸ Wael Abu-’Uksa, “Fransis al-Marrash on Religion and Cultural Revival,” *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, April 30, 2020, 4-6.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I attempted to present a new reading of Ali Suavi's thought. As discussed in the third chapter, Suavi has been portrayed as an early Turkist in the early republican era, mostly thanks to his attempt to overthrow Abdulhamid II in 1878. Later scholars, beginning with Şerif Mardin and continuing further with Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Kemal Karpat, Hüseyin Çelik, Aaron Johnson, and Madeleine Elfenbein revealed that Ali Suavi was not, in fact, a Turkist or a secularist. Whereas Mardin sees Suavi in line with later Muslim modernists like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, Tanpınar points out that Suavi must be read first within the Young Ottoman thought and then as part of the broader Islamic thought. Elfenbein, by contrast, does not agree with the portrayal of Ali Suavi as a "lone wolf" and proposes that one should read him as part of the Young Ottomans with respect to their common goal of democratization of the Ottoman Empire.

Putting the current literature on Ali Suavi to the background, I discussed first in Chapter 1 why there is a need for a broader context in the study of Ottoman intellectual history. According to the conventional narrative of the nineteenth-century Ottoman modernization, Young Ottomans were the intellectuals born into a world that was shaped to a great extent by the Ottoman modernization process and the tensions it created. More specifically, it has been presented in this literature as an encounter between the West and the Ottoman Empire, where the latter recognizes that it fell behind the former and follows the West's lead. As discussed in this chapter, the Young Ottoman society was labeled as a response to the bureaucratic authoritarianism that started under Mahmud II's centralizing reforms as well as the westernization policy that continued through the Tanzimat period. It had emerged from within the Translation Bureau that was founded by Mahmud II.

In addition to Ottoman modernization, the emergence of the modern Middle East has been narrated as an encounter between two sides, where the Middle Eastern agency was reduced to some form of response to the Western impact, if not desperate reaction to the Western hegemony. According to this, Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 planted the seeds of new Western ideas into the Middle Eastern soil, and what followed was Muhammad Ali's reforms in Egypt and the Nahda intellectual movement. Arguing that in addition to the West-East axis, there was also an intellectual network among the non-Western intellectuals, I tried to demonstrate how certain Ottoman and Arab Nahda intellectuals were concerned about common problems and what common solutions they proposed. The common context that they were

speaking from within was shaped by the nineteenth-century European claims of civilizational superiority, accompanied by philological and religious studies, as well as the military, economic, and social impacts of European imperialism.

In the second chapter, I focused on the Ottoman and Middle Eastern intellectual contexts and tried to elaborate on the common issues they were concerned about. I started with shortly laying down the transformation of Ottoman political thought and discussed how the state as an independent concept emerged, how reforms were debated with reference to Islamic thought, and how the concept of civilization entered into the Ottoman intellectual context. After this, a reading of such Ottoman intellectuals as Mustafa Sami and Ahmet Cevdet provided the background for how the notion of civilization was detached from the image of the West and redefined with an Ottoman and Muslim twist, where, the past “Islamic civilization” was presented as a proof for that civilization was not essential to a specific religion or culture; Muslims had it before, and they could have it back again. Furthermore, I continued in the same chapter with the early Arab Nahda intellectuals such as Rifa’a Rafi’ al-Tahtawi, Butrus al-Bustani, and Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, All three were in line with the idea that civilization was born in the East and acquired later by Europe, with Bustani standing in a relatively exceptional position: he did point out to the “golden age” as more of an Arab achievement than a Muslim one. As a Christian Arab, Bustani’s priority was also a more inclusive form of government in the Ottoman realm for non-Muslims, guaranteed with a constitution.

It was within this broader context that I proposed to read Ali Suavi’s thought. In Chapter 3, after a literature review, I discussed Suavi’s relationships with the Young Ottomans and his contacts in England and France. Whereas his initially close relationship with the Young Ottomans and Mustafa Fazıl Paşa was possible thanks to their common opposition to the Ottoman government, the goals they sought, in the long run, were not the same. Suavi’s relationships with David Urquhart, Charles Wells, and Frederic Le Play, on the other hand, were possible as Suavi felt closer to what they thought about the ideal Ottoman Empire as the one preserving its essence. It was also not a coincidence that these Western intellectuals were opposed to any radical social change, as was Ali Suavi.

To further elaborate on Suavi’s thought and present a snapshot, I focused almost exclusively on his writings in Chapter 4. The discussion in this chapter reveals that, as part of the broader Middle Eastern intellectual context, Suavi was also concerned with bringing civilization back to the place where it was born. His concern for imperial education and Istanbul-based journalism can be explained with his reception of civilization as a universal and abstract notion.

It was born in the East; with the right steps taken, it could return. Yet, the right steps had to be compatible with what Suavi deemed as the true principles of Islamic tradition and *shariah*. His sources of thought seem more in line with the early Islamic thought and Sunni *fiqh* than the Young Ottomans or the French thinkers of the previous century. This becomes apparent in his discussion of the right form of government for the Ottoman Empire: his understanding of imamate; the exceptional role he attributed to the Ottoman sultan in the eyes of the world Muslims; his references to Ghazali, Tusi, Ibn Sina, Farabi; the references he did not give, for example to Montesquieu or Rousseau; his accusation of the French form of government with immorality; or his “misunderstanding” of the Latin phrase “*Vox populi vox Dei*” were all in line with his ideological distance to the Young Ottomans. His articles on the Turkish intellectual contribution to civilization and Turkish language were not to glorify the Turkish identity at all; they should be read as part of his response to the European claims of civilizational superiority.

This thesis could shed light on our understanding of Suavi’s thought in a better way if it was possible to trace Suavi’s sources: he gives hints about who he could have possibly read by listing certain names, but one cannot make sure whether Suavi read those scholars of early Islamic thought. Nor is it possible to speculate how much he read or what he understood. One reason is perhaps the fact that these are newspaper articles, and one cannot expect detailed citations for the opinions expressed. Another could be that perhaps Suavi himself mixed what he took from diverse sources and added to that his views as an intellectual, not of the thirteenth-century, but late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

Another possible way could be through access to *Le Mukhbir*, which was published in London. However, reading the secondary literature on Suavi and relying on the observations of his writings in *Le Mukhbir*, I can suggest that it would not make a big difference to what has been the outcome of a reading of *Ulum*. On the other hand, Suavi himself indicates that he wrote some 127 pamphlets and books, but most of them are lost; these pamphlets could have helped to elaborate better on his thought.

This study was limited to situating Ali Suavi into a broader non-Western intellectual context. Therefore, how he was influenced by the nineteenth-century European conservative thought, was not discussed at length. Yet, his close relationships with leading conservative figures during his stay in England and France, his negative ideas about the nineteenth-century Western modernity, and his critique of the Ottoman westernization suggest that a future study might attempt to investigate the parallels between Ali Suavi and European conservative thought.

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APPENDIX



Le Monde Illustré (8 June 1878): 373.



UNE REVOLUTION A CONSTANTINOPLE. — Massacre des Insurgés dans le Palais de Teherajan, habité par l'ex-sultan Mourad. — (Dessiné de M. Day, d'après le croquis de M. I. Fragar, notre correspondant dans les pays d'Orient.)

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