

**THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF DERVİŞ VAHDETİ AS REFLECTED
IN VOLKAN NEWSPAPER (1908-1909)**

by
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IN VOLKAN NEWSPAPER (1908-1909)**

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Derviş Vahdeti, Volkan, Pan-Islamism, Ottomanism, Political Islam

The aim of this study is to reveal and explore the political ideas of Derviş Vahdeti (1870-1909) who was an important and controversial actor during the first months of the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918). Starting from 11 December 1908, Vahdeti edited a daily newspaper, named *Volkan* (Volcano), until 20 April 1909. He personally published a number of writings in *Volkan*, and expressed his ideas on multiple subjects ranging from politics to the social life in the Ottoman Empire. His harsh criticism that targeted the policies of the Ottoman Committee of Progress and Union (CUP, *Osmanlı İttihâd ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) made him a serious threat for the authority of the CUP. Vahdeti later established an activist and religion-oriented party, named Muhammadan Union (*İttihâd-ı Muhammedi*). Although he was subject to a number of studies on the Second Constitutional Period due to his alleged role in the 31 March Incident of 1909, his ideas were mostly ignored and/or he was labelled as a religious extremist (*mürteci*). Though this portrayal has been questioned by a limited number of scholars recently, details of Vahdeti's ideological stance still remains unexplored. This study intends to fill this gap by examining Vahdeti's numerous writings that were published in *Volkan*.

ÖZET

VOLKAN GAZETESİ IŞIĞINDA Derviş VAHDETİ’NİN SİYASİ GÖRÜŞLERİ (1908-1909)

TALHA MURAT

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Derviş Vahdeti, Volkan, İttihâd-ı İslam, Osmanlıcılık, Siyasal
İslam

Bu çalışmanın amacı II. Meşrutiyet’in ilk aylarının önemli ve tartışmalı bir aktörü olan Derviş Vahdeti’nin siyasal fikirlerini ortaya çıkarmak ve tetkik etmektir. 11 Aralık 1908 ile 20 Nisan 1909 arasında Volkan isminde bir gazete yayımlayan Vahdeti, bu gazetede Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun siyasal ve sosyal hayatını da konu edinen çeşitli makaleler yazdı. Söz konusu gazetede Osmanlı İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin politikalarını hedef alan sert eleştirileri onun Cemiyet’in otoritesini tehdit eden ciddi bir tehlike olarak algılanmasına yol açtı. Sonraları, Vahdeti İttihâd-ı Muhammedi adında aktivist ve İslami yönelimli bir parti kurdu. 31 Mart Olayı’nda rol aldığına dair iddialardan mütevellit II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi’ni konu alan birçok çalışmaya konu olan Vahdeti’nin fikirleri çoğunlukla görmezden gelindi veya gericilik ile özdeşleştirildi. Bu yerleşmiş tutum yakın zamanda az sayıda araştırmacı tarafından sorgulanmış olmasına rağmen Vahdeti’nin ideolojik duruşu hala keşfedilmemiştir. Bu çalışma Vahdeti’nin Volkan’da yayımlanan yazılarını inceleyerek söz konusu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlar.

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Veliyy-i ni'metim cânım Efendim'in himmeti ile...

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INTRODUCTION

The restoration of the Ottoman Constitution (*Kanun-i Esasi*) in 1908 paved the way not only for dramatic social, political and economic changes but also for a resurgence in the intellectual life of the Empire. The political and intellectual diversity which became a part of Ottoman public life with the emergence of the first organized opposition group, the Young Ottomans, in the 1860s was revived with the Young Turk Revolution. Various ideologies that had been brushed under the carpet due to censorship and the suppression of the Hamidian autocracy, rose to the surface. Expressing their ideas in the mushrooming newspapers and journals of the time, Ottoman Turkish intellectuals started to discuss contemporary problems of the Empire and the policies of the dominant party, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP).

Influenced by this positive atmosphere, Derviş Vahdeti published a newspaper, named *Volkan*, so that he could express his ideas regarding popular subjects in the Ottoman political life. Within a short period of time, Vahdeti became one of the prominent and popular actors of the Ottoman press due to the radical and assertive language that he employed in his writings in *Volkan*. His critical approach to the CUP and populist discourse made him the voice of resentments, particularly of those purged by the CUP following the revolution. Being cognisant of Vahdeti's negative influence on its authority, the CUP attacked Vahdeti by accusing him of being an anti-constitutionalist. The outbreak of the rebellion in İstanbul on 12/13 April, known as the 31 March Incident¹, provided the opportunity and pretext upon which the CUP sought for the elimination of Vahdeti and his newspaper. The CUP intentionally labelled the outbreak as reactionary (*irticai*) and Vahdeti as a reactionist (*mürteci*), labels which served their purpose best for the consolidation of the CUP's power and the elimination of other rivals.² Influences of this labelling were observable in the works of historians, particularly the ones who wrote in the early

¹31 March refers to the beginning date of the uprising in the Rumi/Julian Calendar used in the Empire in that time.

²Erik-Jan Zürcher, "31 Mart: A Fundamentalist Uprising in İstanbul in April 1909?" in *The Young Turk Revolution and the Ottoman Empire: The Aftermath of 1908*, ed. Noemi Levy-Aksu and François Georjeon (London: I.B. Tauris Co. Ltd, 2017), 207.

republican era.

Nearly all studies that focused on the Second Constitutional Era mentioned Derviş Vahdeti and his alleged role on the 31 March Incident one way or another. However, the literature is deprived of studies which particularly focus on the ideas of Derviş Vahdeti. One possible reason is that he and his ideas were overshadowed by the Incident. That is to say, historians of the late Ottoman Empire, usually, did not evaluate him independent of the 31 March Incident. It is true that the Incident represented a critical turning point for both Vahdeti and the CUP, however, the scope of Vahdeti's writings in *Volkan* was broad enough for being subject to the particular study. For instance, he wrote about Ottoman women and education as he evaluated and compared the number of popular ideologies such as decentralization and Westernism. Being conscious of this fact, this thesis aims to evaluate Derviş Vahdeti independent of the 31 March Incident.

Since the ideological and intellectual portrait of the Second Constitutional Period was highly influential on the formation of the ideological climate of the early republican era (1923-1946), the examination of the ideological climate of the Second Constitutional Period is a dire necessity. The political ideas of Vahdeti constitute a minor but important part of this necessity. Thus, one can, alternatively, perceive this study as a contribution to this task.

A Review of Literature

The main primary source that this study consults is *Volkan* newspaper since Vahdeti himself expressed in one of his articles that he published nothing except his writings in *Volkan*.³ Although other contemporary journals and newspapers such as *Sırât-ı Müstakim* and *İttihâd-ı İslam* were utilized in order to make comparisons where relevant, their informative quality is rather limited. Parts of original copies of *Volkan* newspaper can be found in various libraries in Turkey, but a near-complete set of the newspaper exists in the Turkish Historical Association (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*) library in Ankara. This collection includes every issue of the newspaper, with the exception of the thirteenth issue. Other copies also can be found in İSAM library (*Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi*) and İstanbul Metropolitan

³Derviş Vahdeti, "Üçüncü İhtar," *Volkan* 95, 5 April 1909, "Ancak bizim *Volkan*'dan mâada eserimiz olmadığı gibi, *İttihâd-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti'nin* de hiç neşr olunmuş bir risâlecîği bile yoktur...".

Municipality Atatürk Library (*İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Atatürk Kütüphanesi*) in İstanbul. However, the copy in the İSAM database does not include the thirteenth, fourteenth and one hundred fifth issues while a high number of issues are missing in the copy located in the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Atatürk Library. Additionally, the newspaper was transcribed into Latin alphabet by M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ and published as a book in 1992 under the title of *‘İkinci Meşrutiyet’in ilk Ayları ve 31 Mart Olayı İçin Bir Yakın Tarih Belgesi: Volkan Gazetesi (11 Aralık 1908-20 Nisan 1909)’*.⁴ Düzdağ’s transcription is qualified as considerable attention paid in order to preserve the originality of the newspaper.⁵ Thus, Düzdağ’s work was used to the large extent in this study.

Among recent studies that employed revisionist approach on Derviş Vahdeti, Nader Sohrabi’s work, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, appears as a most important and analytical one.⁶ Sohrabi, in his book, devotes a particular section to the evaluation of *Volkan* and the Muhammadan Union (*İttihâd-i Muhammedi*). Although he intends to focus on ideas that were presented in *Volkan* in a comprehensive way, his comments, also, apply Derviş Vahdeti’s ideas since the ideological portrait of *Volkan* and the Muhammadan Union was drawn mostly by Vahdeti. Sohrabi categorizes Vahdeti as a leader of religious opposition against the CUP and argues that Vahdeti did not play part in the organization of the 31 March Rebellion.⁷ Sohrabi also put emphasis on the constitutionalist and parliamentary attitude of Vahdeti while he was criticizing received wisdom of historians.⁸ He argues that Vahdeti represented one of the resentments of the time since he was ignored by the CUP.⁹ Sohrabi’s work also reveals antagonist attitude of Vahdeti against Europe together with Vahdeti’s references to the original culture of Islam.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Sohrabi’s book covers only the limited part of the ideas of Derviş Vahdeti.

Erik-Jan Zürcher, in his article on the 31 March Incident, argues that the Muhammadan Union and *Volkan* played an important role on the organization of the uprising, however, he adds that real instigators of rebellion were liberal opponents of the CUP.¹¹ Nevertheless, he does not comment on ideas of Derviş Vahdeti. Re-

⁴ *İkinci Meşrutiyet’in ilk Ayları ve 31 Mart Olayı İçin Bir Yakın Tarih Belgesi: Volkan Gazetesi (11 Aralık 1908-20 Nisan 1909)*, ed. M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1992).

⁵ During the course of the study, I tried to compare Düzdağ’s transcription with the original copy of the text as much as I can. There was no serious mistake that came to my attention. For the evaluation of Düzdağ’s work see Ali Birinci, “Volkan’ın Yeniden Neşrinin Düşündürdükleri” *Dergah* 29 (İstanbul): 22.

⁶ Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷ Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 164, 225.

⁸ Ibid., 225.

⁹ Ibid., 227.

¹⁰ Ibid., 203-233.

¹¹ Zürcher, “31 Mart,” 206.

evaluation of the Incident constitutes the main concern of his work. However, Zürcher presents Vahdeti as a religious extremist in his seminal work, titled *Turkey: A Modern History*.¹² Zürcher's perception of Vahdeti is congruent with the Kemalist historiography's perception of Vahdeti.

Sina Akşin's work, *31 Mart Olayı*, is outdated but preserves attention regarding the exploration of the 31 March Incident.¹³ In his book, Akşin briefly examines the ideas of Derviş Vahdeti as he focuses mostly on the Incident. It is important to mention that Akşin mentions Vahdeti's positive approach to the Ottomanism, parliamentarism and England-sided foreign policy.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he seems to be prejudiced toward Vahdeti as he accused him of being meddler.¹⁵ Similar attitude can be seen in the work of François Georgeon which particularly focuses on the Hamidian period. Although Georgeon's book is an example of qualified historical work on the Hamidian era, its portrait of Derviş Vahdeti is highly problematic since Georgeon presents Vahdeti as an opponent of constitutional monarchy and abuser of religious sentiments.¹⁶

Erol Baykal's Ph.D. thesis perceives Vahdeti as an influential journalist who, probably, played a part in the 31 March Incident with his newspaper.¹⁷ Baykal gives prominence to the influence of *Volkan* on the Ottoman society in order to discuss to what extent Ottoman press had an impact on the Ottoman society during the Second Constitutional Period. As expected, Baykal's work does not comment on Vahdeti's ideas specifically, however, it points out the ideological stance of his newspaper. Baykal prioritizes *Volkan*'s opposition to the CUP and its feature of being a forum for dissatisfied crowds of the period.¹⁸

Şerif Mardin, similar to other scholars, focuses on *Volkan* and Muhammadan Union.¹⁹ However, his approach is significant as he evaluates *Volkan* and Muhammadan Union from a different perspective. Mardin argues that *Volkan* and Muhammadan Union represented populist Islam and lower-ranked ulema who could not find a place in the higher bureaucracy.²⁰ As argued in following pages of the thesis, Mardin indicates *Volkan*'s (at the same time Vahdeti's) success in communicat-

¹²Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), 96.

¹³Sina Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı* (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2015) first published 1970.

¹⁴Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı*, 40.

¹⁵Ibid., 39.

¹⁶François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 574.

¹⁷Erol Baykal, "The Ottoman Press (1908-1923)", (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2013).

¹⁸Ibid., 178.

¹⁹Şerif Mardin, "İslamcılık," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 1985).

²⁰Ibid., 1403.

ing with the religious-minded subject of the Empire by successfully employing the language of the populist Islam.²¹ Additionally, he emphasises the higher ranking ulema's distanced approach to *Volkan* and Muhammadan Union.²²

Sadık Albayrak's *31 Mart Gerici Bir Hareket mi?* focuses on the 31 March Incident by aiming to discuss the 31 March Incident free from the ideological barriers.²³ The main pitfall of Albayrak's work is depicting Vahdeti's ideas by relying on the limited number of writings of Vahdeti. This can be misleading particularly because Vahdeti contradicted himself on several occasions or his ideas changed in conjunction with political conditions. Besides, Albayrak's work is highly descriptive but it is not analytical. His work fails to present a clear argument. Despite its pitfalls, the work can be seen important since Albayrak also discusses how contemporary political actors of the time perceived the 31 March Incident.

The memoir of Celal Bayar, a CUP member, discusses both Derviş Vahdeti and the 31 March Incident.²⁴ By labelling the Incident as a reactionary movement, Bayar's approach exemplifies the CUP's politically instrumental approach to the Incident. However, Bayar's memoir is important as it includes detailed information regarding the escape and trial of Derviş Vahdeti following the outbreak of the 31 March Incident.

Last but not least, Ali Birinci's article on the Incident must be emphasised.²⁵ Birinci's article appears as one of the most qualified works on the 31 March Incident since it approaches the issue from the comprehensive perspective. Birinci, in his article, emphasises the role that ranker soldiers played in the outbreak of the rebellion as he acknowledges the contributions of other actors such as religious students and ordinary people. Furthermore, he discusses the effects of the Incident on the Ottoman political life in both the short and long run. Considering Derviş Vahdeti, Birinci acknowledges Vahdeti's influence on the outbreak of the Incident and draws attention to the importance of the examination of Vahdeti's ideological portrait in order to reveal the details of the Incident. Accordingly, he puts emphasis on the need for studies which reveal the mindset of Derviş Vahdeti in detail.

Considering the other sections of the thesis where the issue of political Islam and political history of the Hamidian era and the first months of the Second Constitu-

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 1404.

²³Sadık Albayrak, *31 Mart Gerici Bir Hareket mi?* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2017) first published 1986.

²⁴Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım: Milli Mücadeleye Gidiş*, vol. II (İstanbul: Sabah Kitapları, 1997) first published 1967-1972.

²⁵Ali Birinci, "31 Mart Vak'asının Bir Yorumu," in *Türkler*, Vol.XIII ed. Hasan Celal Güzel, Kemal Çiçek and Salim Koca (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), 193-211.

tional Period were discussed, this study benefited from the number of primary and secondary sources.

For the survey of Islam in the Empire, articles of Ocak and İnalçık provide a comprehensive framework that helps readers to make sense of Islam's role in the Empire, particularly in the pre-modern period.²⁶ Islam in the hands of the Young Ottomans, Mardin's seminal work, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, maintains its relevance as it discusses ideas of the Young Ottomans in a highly analytical way.²⁷ On this subject, Mümtazer Türköne's *Siyasal İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu*²⁸ is equally important since Türköne discusses the politicization of Islam in the hands of Young Ottomans and argues that Islam transformed into the mass ideology with the contributions of the Young Ottomans. Regarding both the Young Ottoman thought and the role of Islam in politics, Türköne's work remains as an important study. However, recent studies on the Young Ottomans such as Nazan Çiçek's *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* are important for the re-evaluation of the Young Ottomans from different perspectives.²⁹

Georgeon's biographical work on Abdülhamid II and Deringil's *The Well Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909*³⁰ were useful for this study regarding the discussion of the Hamidian era. Considering primary sources that were useful for the discussion on the Hamidian era, memoirs of Tahsin Pasha and Ali Cevat Bey (both served as a Chief Palace Secretary during the different time periods of Hamidian era) give detailed information about both policies and political events of the Hamidian period.³¹ Recently published memoir of İzzet Pasha, Second Secretary of the Palace Chancery, also provides detailed information about the Hamidian era.³² Although it is useful particularly for the diplomatic relations of the period, it also reveals the details of the control mechanisms of the Hamidian era.

²⁶ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire: A Sociological Framework for a New Interpretation," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9(1–2) (2003):183–197; Halil İnalçık, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire," *Cultura Turcica*, 5–7 (1968–1970), 19–23.

²⁷ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Mümtazer Türköne, *Siyasi İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991).

²⁹ Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

³⁰ Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

³¹ Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitaphanesi, 1931); Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı ve Otuz Bir Mart Hadisesi*, ed. Faik Reşit Unat (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014) first published 1960.

³² İzzet Paşa, *Abdülhamid'in Kara Kutusu Arap İzzet Holo Paşa'nın Günlükleri*, ed. Pınar Güven (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019).

For the discussion of the vibrant and complex political atmosphere of the first months of the Second Constitutional Period, Yusuf Hikmet Bayur's work³³ was beneficial to this study as it includes immense information on the period. As the grandson of Kâmil Pasha (1832-1913), Bayur's work includes some private documents of the Pasha. This fact also makes his work particularly important source for the grand vizirate periods of Kâmil Pasha. However, it is important to note that Bayur's approach to events and his comments bring Kemalist history writing to the minds. Sohrabi's book, on the other hand, is qualified as it discusses issues of the period in a highly analytical way. Sohrabi also puts emphasis on situation and influences of political victims of the Hamidian era, an issue which is mostly ignored by historians of the late Ottoman Empire.³⁴

Considering the activities and ideas of Young Turks, this study benefited from Şükrü Hanioglu's major two studies³⁵ to a great degree. These works are quite detailed and rich in terms of sources as Hanioglu made use of the number of primary sources related to Young Turks including their private papers and letters.

Outline of the Study

The first chapter of the thesis deals with the concept of 'political Islam' and its survey in the Ottoman Empire before the Second Constitutional Period. The chapter starts with the evaluation of the role that Islam played in the Empire starting from its foundation. After showing Islam's dynamic and active role in the Empire, it is argued that the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic state. Then, it moves into a discussion of the concept of 'political Islam', and argues that the concept had existed since the fifteenth century within the Ottoman context. Accordingly, the changing nature of the concept, particularly starting from the eighteenth century, is discussed and the role that Young Ottomans played in this process emphasised. Lastly, the CUP's utilization of Islam in politics is discussed.

The second chapter aims to provide political background in order to make sense of political conjuncture that Derviş Vahdeti was born in it. First, the Hamidian autocracy and its mechanism are examined. Second, the chaotic and complex polit-

³³Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, X Vol. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991).

³⁴See Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 189-223.

³⁵M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

ical climate of the Second Constitutional Period is discussed in detail. The power struggle among Kâmil Pasha, the CUP and the Sultan is emphasised in this chapter.

The last chapter serves the main purpose of this study, the political ideas of Derviş Vahdeti. It consists of two main subtitles where religious and political thought of Derviş Vahdeti are examined separately. Besides, the life of Derviş Vahdeti is given briefly and the content of *Volkan* newspaper is discussed with the emphasis on the influential role that the newspaper played among other opponents of the CUP. This chapter also includes brief information about the party that Derviş Vahdeti established, the Muhammadan Union. Considering the religious thought, first, Vahdeti's perception of Islam and the influence of Islam on Vahdeti's mindset are discussed. Second, Vahdeti's perception of Sufism and shari'a are assessed. Third, Vahdeti's approaches to women, education and family are evaluated. Dealing with the subject of political thoughts of Vahdeti, his approaches to the popular and prominent ideologies of the time, namely Pan-Islamism, Ottomanism, ethnic nationalism, decentralization and Westernism, are analysed. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of Vahdeti's perception regarding the political structure and foreign policy.

1. POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BEFORE THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD

It is commonly accepted that Islam is not just a religion that bases on acceptance of the transcendental authority and a certain set of rules. Rather, it is a complex phenomenon that has far-reaching influences on culture, politics, economy and social life. Thus, it is a highly comprehensive concept that requires deeper examination.³⁶ One of the most important reasons for this is that the sophisticated and multi-dimensional legacy that Islam inherited from various civilizations (e.g. ancient Greek, Egypt, Mesopotamia etc.) and religions (e.g. Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism etc.).³⁷ Besides, Islam gradually managed to transform and assimilate these legacies due to its dynamic structure. This dynamism was most apparent in the different interpretations and applications of Islam in various fields in many Islamic states. For example, the role that Islam played in the state apparatus of the Abbasid Caliphate was not the same with that of the Seljukid Empire. As a main source of innumerable concepts and applications including normative principles in society, Islam appeared as an inseparable part of these states.

This was true for the Ottoman Empire wherein Islam played a crucial role in both domestic and foreign affairs of the Empire.³⁸ Although this role constantly changed shape over time, it never lost its importance until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. The Ottoman Empire, from its beginning, had always been a Muslim institution.³⁹ As accepted by a number of historians of Ottoman Empire,⁴⁰ the Islamic concept ‘*gâza*’ (i.e. the holy war in the name of Islam) constituted the main driving force for the foundation of the Empire. It was the *gazis* (holy warriors)

³⁶As an example of such an attempt see Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

³⁷Gerhard Bowering, “Introduction,” in *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*, ed. Gerhard Bowering (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 2.

³⁸Ocak, “Islam in the Ottoman Empire” 184; Karen Barkey, “Political Legitimacy and Islam in the Ottoman Empire: Lessons Learned,” *Philosophy Social Criticism* 40, no. 4-5 (2014): 472.

³⁹Selçuk Aksin Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2003), IXXIX.

⁴⁰Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1938); Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (London: Weidenfeld Nicolson, 1973). For revisionist examination of the issue see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (University of California Press, 1996).

who formulated and shaped the early features of the Empire. Once the Empire expanded and increased its influence, its features also became increasingly interrelated with Islam. In the reign of Mehmed II (1432-1481), this process accelerated and started to take its legal shape, particularly regarding judicial issues.⁴¹ The Ottoman judicial system mainly, but not entirely, was based on the shari'a (Islamic law), and derived its legitimation from it. However, the application of the practice of customary law (*örfi kanun*) which Ottomans inherited from Turkic traditions of Central Asia bestowed Ottoman sultans authority to make laws that were partly independent of shari'a.⁴² Though the practice of customary law had to be in line with the shari'a, it did not have to derive its logic from the shari'a but from the idea of the public good. The practice of customary law was both violation and confirmation of the shari'a.⁴³ Ottoman sultans also justified their authority directly with Islam and presented themselves as chosen authorities by God.⁴⁴ The caliphate⁴⁵, another significant Islamic concept which was first formulated by Abbasids, constituted another important aspect of this legitimation policy. Although Ottoman sultans unofficially assumed the title of caliph starting from the fourteenth century, and presented themselves as a servitor of holy sanctuaries (*hâdimü'l-Haremeyn*), Mecca and Medina, after Selim I's conquest of Egypt in 1517,⁴⁶ it was not until the reign of Abdülhamid II (1842-1918) that the title was used effectively for the political purposes of the Empire.

Considering all of these features, it is a reasonable argument that the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic state which based many of its institutions on the Islam.⁴⁷ After labelling the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic state, one can naturally assume that Islam was also part of the politics and policies of the Ottoman state. However, it is important to note that as an inseparable part of the Empire, Islam was dynamic, thus, its role was subject to change in conjunction with the periods.⁴⁸ For example, the role of Islam in the nineteenth century of the Ottoman Empire highly differed from that of the sixteenth century. These changes were mainly due to the shifting historical conditions of both the world and Ottoman history.

⁴¹İnalcık, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire," 21.

⁴²Barkey, "Political Legitimacy," 473.

⁴³Haim Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 63.

⁴⁴İnalcık, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire," 24.

⁴⁵See D. Sourdel, "Khalifa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. E. Van Donzel, B. Lewis and CH. Pellat (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 937-953.

⁴⁶Wadad Kadi and Aram A. Shahin, "Caliphate," in *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*, ed. Gerhard Bowering (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 38; İnalcık, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire," 23-24.

⁴⁷Ocak, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire," 184,189.

⁴⁸Ibid., 185; Alperen Topal, "From Decline to Progress: Ottoman Concepts of Reform 1600-1876", (PhD diss., İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2017), 8.

As previously mentioned, Islam was highly influential on Ottoman culture, economy, society and politics. However, since its relation with politics has particular importance for this study, the following pages will focus on this aspect. Regarding studies that examined this relationship, the concept of the ‘political Islam’ has been dominantly employed by historians of the late Ottoman Empire. While one scholar classified this concept as an ideology which was born in the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918)⁴⁹, another argued that it was the product of a group of Ottoman intellectuals, known as Young Ottomans, who dominated the intellectual life of the Empire in the 1860s.⁵⁰ These two arguments also distinguish political Islam from Islam itself and base their assumptions that the Islam was politicized within a certain period of Ottoman history. However, these arguments omit the active role that Islam played in both domestic and foreign affairs of the Empire before the nineteenth century. If the political Islam is defined as a role that Islam played in the various political schemes of the Empire,⁵¹ it is possible to argue that political Islam, as an active concept and ideology, had existed since the fifteenth century within the context of Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Islam was already constituting the cement of Ottoman institutions and society.⁵²

The Second Constitutional Period and Young Ottomans of the 1860s represented the cornerstones of political Islam. The concept took shape in these periods mainly due to the introduction of Western originated ideologies to the Ottoman intellectual world, and crises which both the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world experienced. By placing Islam at the centre of their ideas, Young Ottomans created brand new philosophies based on the logical synthesis of Islam and Western ideas.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Islamic world started to experience a new crisis. The Islamic states, began to lose their superior position relative the Western world.⁵³ The invasion of Egypt in 1798 by Napoleon Bonaparte was proving to be a formidable threat to the Islamic world. Ottomans have long been aware of the superiority of the West regarding science and technology, particularly after the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca which was signed in 1774 after a series of disastrous defeats against Russia.⁵⁴ These developments led to the emergence of the assumption that the Islamic states were in the edge of collapse. It was this assumption that constituted the main driving force of revivalist movements in the Islamic world which

⁴⁹İsmail Kara, *İslamcılarının Siyasi Görüşleri* (İz Yayınları, 1994).

⁵⁰Türköne, *Siyasi İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu*, 13.

⁵¹Ocak, “Islam in the Ottoman Empire,” 187.

⁵²Ibid., 189.

⁵³Ahmet Seyhun, *Said Halim Pasha Ottoman Statesman and Islamist Thinker 1865-1921* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), 15.

⁵⁴Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, XCVI.

ascribed prominent problems of Islamic states to the degeneration and stagnation of Islam itself.⁵⁵ One of the most important one of these movements, the Wahhabiyya movement, was based on the purification of Islam and empowerment of shari'a. The Wahhabis aimed to bring 'pure Islam' into centre of Muslim life again. However, effects of the Wahhabiyya movement in Ottoman political thought were not felt effectively until the Second Constitutional Period.⁵⁶ This was particularly because of the antagonist attitude of this movement against the Sufism which was one of the basic principles of Islam in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the fate of Islam regarding its role in the politics in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire was different from other Islamic states, and the Young Ottomans were among the ones who shaped the fate of Islam in the politics.

The Young Ottomans who emerged in the 1860s were representatives of the first well-organized opposition movement in the Ottoman Empire. The organization of the movement began with the establishment of the Patriotic Alliance (*İttifak-ı Hamiyyet*) in 1865 by six young men in İstanbul. Later, the Young Ottoman Society (*Yeni Osmanlılar Cemiyeti*), which was established in 1867 in Paris became the main organizational structure of the movement.⁵⁷ Although the number of intellectuals associated themselves with the movement, the famous active cadre was small in number. The most prominent among the active cadre simply consisted of four men, Namık Kemal (1840-1888), Ziya Bey (1829-1880), Ali Suavi (1839-1878) and Mustafa Fazıl Pasha (1830-1875). Similar to other Young Ottomans,⁵⁸ these famous cadre also had a bureaucratic background. Thus, the Young Ottoman movement was a movement of educated bureaucrats who had positions in the state bureaucracy in a certain point of their life.⁵⁹ However, their common feature was that they lost their positions and influences with the domination of a group of bureaucrat-strongmen, particularly Âli (1815-1871) and Fu'ad (1814-1869) Pashas, on the Sublime Porte (*Bâb-ı Âli*).⁶⁰ It was this group of bureaucrats and their rule that the Young Ottomans harshly criticized by labelling it as tyranny and arbitrary. According to Young Ottomans, these bureaucrats were responsible for the on-going fall of the Ottoman Empire and it was they who led to the emergence of nepotism, financial shortage and favouritism.⁶¹ There were no major differences between the generation that the Young Ottomans came from and the one that dominated the

⁵⁵Seyhun, *Said Halim Pasha*, 16.

⁵⁶Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 10.

⁵⁷For more information on the organization of the movement see Mardin, *The Genesis*, 10-56.

⁵⁸For example, Ali Suavi, Reşad Bey, Halil Şerif Paşa, Nuri Bey, Ahmed Midhat, Ayetullah Bey, Refik Bey, Ağâh Efendi and Ebuzziya Tevfik.

⁵⁹Mardin, *The Genesis*, 122-125.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Topal, "From Decline to Progress," 145-146.

Porte. Yet, the Young Ottomans were not among the advantaged group who enjoyed the authority.⁶² Young Ottomans were well-aware of the superiority of the West over the Empire.⁶³ However, this did not mean that they accepted the superiority of the West in every aspect. The superiority of the West was acceptable to them only in a materialistic manner. With such an understanding, they perceived the materialist superiority of the West in a pragmatic way, and they believed that the import of the material advancements could save the Empire from the collapse. Young Ottomans had no doubts regarding the superiority of the Ottoman culture and Islam over Western culture.⁶⁴

However, it was the idea of the promulgation of the constitution that constituted the cornerstone of idea of the Young Ottomans regarding both salvation of the Empire and their differential mindset. In the nature of this idea of the constitution, Islam played an important role because, it was Islam that constituted the main legitimation source of the constitution. The Young Ottomans argued that Islam, by its nature, does not conflict with the constitutional monarchy (*meşrutiyet*), but perfectly aligns with it. In order to prove this, the Young Ottomans, referred to certain Islamic concepts such as *usul-ı meşveret* (principle of consultation) and *şura* (meeting), and employed these concepts as a base of the constitutional rule.⁶⁵ In their mindset, the shari'a was the main legal phenomenon that the constitution should base on. In other words, it was the shari'a that they perceived as a *sine qua non* of the constitution. This was, in a way, a liberal interpretation of Islamic sources and concepts, and synthesis of Islamic Ottoman tradition with the Western ideas. This method also meant the formation of unique Islamic rhetoric which was formed and used by Young Ottomans in order to convince and manipulate masses for their cause.⁶⁶ This was quite natural and logical when the power of Islam as manipulation tool in the Empire was considered, particularly for lower classes.⁶⁷

The Young Ottomans thought was eclectic and their arguments were not immune from the contradiction.⁶⁸ But, they all agreed on the necessity of the liberal constitution that found its legal base in the shari'a.⁶⁹ It is open to discussion that whether the Islamic constitutional tradition that the Young Ottomans formed was original or not, however, it is certain that their interpretation of Islam and the role

⁶²Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans*, 30.

⁶³Ibid., 35.

⁶⁴Ibid., 36.

⁶⁵Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 40-41. fine

⁶⁶Ibid., 39.

⁶⁷Kemal Karpaz, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10.

⁶⁸Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 40.

⁶⁹Topal, "From Decline to Progress," 146.

that they envisaged for Islam represented a significant turning point for the role of Islam in politics. Their ideas proved that Islam was far from being outside of the Ottoman Turkish political thought.

Although it is impossible to detect to what extent Young Ottomans were religious in their daily life, their public and personal writings reveal that they were not anti-religious. This was not the case for another prominent opposition movement of the nineteenth century, the Young Turk movement. Before going into detail of the relationship between the Young Turk movement and Islam, it should be noted that the Young Turk movement was a highly comprehensive movement which encompassed various opponents of the Hamidian autocracy, thus, one has to deal carefully with Young Turk-Islam relationship. Here, only the Ottoman Committee of Progress and Union (hereafter CUP, *Osmanlı İttihâd ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), the prominent Young Turk organization, and Murad Bey (1854-1917) (known as *Mizancı* Murad due to his newspaper which was named *Mizan*) will be taken into consideration.

From the various point of views, the CUP perceived Islam as a useful device that can be used in order to reach its ultimate goal which was the replacement of the Hamidian autocracy with the constitutional monarchy. This was not surprising given their embracement of the concept of positivism as a nucleus of the movement.⁷⁰ Influenced by the works of positivist thinkers such as Pierre Laffitte and Auguste Comte, members of the CUP, particularly Ahmed Rızâ (1859-1930) and Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), paid great emphasis on positivism and its relationship with religion. By placing positivism at the centre of their ideas, numerous CUP members aimed to replace religion with the science.⁷¹ However, they were also well-aware of the fact that an anti-religious stance could harm their reputation in the eyes of Ottoman subjects, and could jeopardize their communication channels with the masses.⁷² Thus, they intentionally hid their anti-religious stance. In their public writings, they explicitly hailed Islam but, in their private letters, they labelled Islam as an obstacle for the modernization.⁷³ As one scholar put correctly, their anti-religiosity was ‘undeclared’.⁷⁴

To the CUP, Islam, as a device, was particularly practical in two critical points. First, they were cognisant of the power of Islam in the eyes of Ottoman subject and that is why they aimed to present their marginal ideas to the masses within the Islamic suit. Second, they had to legitimize their cause and achieve the support of

⁷⁰Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 203.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 203-205.

⁷²Hanioğlu, *Preparation*, 305-308.

⁷³Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 200.

⁷⁴Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 61.

ulema.⁷⁵ Both of these tasks were impossible without the employment of Islam.⁷⁶ The first one of these two points pushed the CUP to an unusual interpretation of Islam. They interpreted Islam from their positivist point of view and came up with a new type of Islam for the masses. For example, they tried to establish ties between the writings of Sufi thinker Muhyiddin Arabi' and Bacon's.⁷⁷ In other words, the CUP aimed to combine positivism with Islam. It was this type of understanding of Islam that they wanted to present to the masses. Regarding the constitutionalist ideas, they were not very different from the Young Ottomans. They also employed Islamic concepts, particularly after 1902, in order to legitimatise the idea of constitution and repeated arguments of the Young Ottomans.⁷⁸ Regarding the evaluation of Islam, the CUP's similarity to Young Ottomans was limited. However, ideas of one of the prominent Young Turk, Mehmed Murad Bey, were much more similar to the ideas of the Young Ottomans.

Murad Bey was born in Dagestan in 1854. He came to İstanbul when he was nineteen and worked in various state bureaus. Later, he became professor of history at the School of Civil Service (*Mülkiye*). Since he was enthusiastic and good at combining liberalism with the science of history, he quickly became popular among the students of the *Mülkiye*. Starting in 1886, Murad Bey began to publish his famous newspaper, *Mizan* (Balance). In the following years, he established ties with the members of the secret CUP and gained considerable support from a high number of members. Later, Murad Bey, following his escape to Paris, managed to undermine the leadership of Ahmed Rıza who was leading the organization since 1895, and became the head of the organization. However, this leadership did not last long. He was unsuccessful in managing ideological conflicts within the CUP. Murad Bey, with ruptures, continued to publish *Mizan* until 1908. He also published novel, named as *Turfanda mı Yoksa Turfa mı?* in which he expressed his political ideas.⁷⁹

In the political ideas of Murad Bey, the emphasis on the Sultanate constituted a significant place. He perceived the Sultan as a father who made the wrong decisions.⁸⁰ To him, the necessity of a large-scale reform program was obvious. It was this that motivated him to propose a reform program to the Sultan.⁸¹ Nevertheless, this program did not attract the attention of the Palace. This was a complete dis-

⁷⁵For detailed information on *Ulema*-CUP relationship see Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 49-58.

⁷⁶M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük* (1889-1902) (İstanbul: İletişim, 1985), 622.

⁷⁷Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 202-203.

⁷⁸Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 59-61.

⁷⁹Birol Emil, *Mizançı Murad Bey: Hayati ve Eserleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1979), 21-225.

⁸⁰Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasal Fikirleri 1895-1908* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1964), 87.

⁸¹Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst Company, 1998), 307.

appointment for Murad Bey and one of the main reasons that caused him to flee to Europe.⁸² Even before his journey to Europe, Murad Bey publicly criticized Sultan Abdülhamid II, yet the intensity of his criticisms significantly increased when he was in Europe.

Murad Bey's use of Islam in politics, resembled to a large extent the use of Islam in Young Ottoman thought. Murad Bey defended the position of Islam in the politics of the Empire and believed that Islam was not an obstacle for the progress.⁸³ He argued that Islam was a rational religion in line with the modernism. In order to find logical proof to this assumption, Murad Bey tried to establish links between the writings of Arabi' and rationalism.⁸⁴ This was an unsuccessful effort since ideas of Arabi' were far from rational. Murad was also eager to emphasize the universality and significance of the Caliphate for the sake of the Empire.⁸⁵ To him, the cultural ideology of the Ottoman Empire should be the Islamic Union (*İttihâd-ı İslam*). However, it was the Ottomanism, which was based on complete equality of every single Ottoman subject, that Murad Bey proposed as a political ideology of the Empire.⁸⁶

As Mardin points out, Murad Bey did not employ Islam as a belief in his political ideas, but as a pragmatic device.⁸⁷ Such employment of Islam was among rare points which ideas of Murad Bey resembled to the CUP thought. Thus, Murad Bey's ideas relationship with Islam should be examined as a distinct phenomenon, but not as part of the CUP thought.

The survey of Islam within the context of Ottoman politics was highly dynamic. Until the collapse of the Empire, the perception of Islam constantly changed shape, and it was interpreted by different social groups from different aspects. This was a multi-dimensional process which was affected by a number of different factors such as crises of the Empire and introduction of Western ideas into the Ottoman intelligentsia. Once Islam became more visible in the Ottoman political thought, its interpretations also varied. The Young Ottomans thought was one of the most important turning points in this variation. Their use of Islam pumped fresh blood into the political interpretation of Islam. This task later was assumed by the members of the CUP. They were aware of the power of Islam, thus, they deliberately used Islam in order to reach their goals. Thanks to members of the CUP, Islam was

⁸²Mardin, *Jön Türkler*, 92.

⁸³Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 308.

⁸⁴Mardin, *Jön Türkler*, 122.

⁸⁵Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 307.

⁸⁶Emil, *Mizançı Murad Bey*, 704; Mardin, *Jön Türkler*, 104.

⁸⁷Mardin, *Jön Türkler*, 122-124.

combined with the positivism first time in its history. There were other intellectuals such as Mizancı Murad Bey who distinguished themselves from the CUP by combining Islam with their political ideas in a more modest way. The dynamic survey of Islam continued after the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution (*Kanun-i Esasi*) in 1908 as it is continuing even today.



2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND: HAMIDIAN AUTOCRACY

AND THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL ERA

2.1 Hamidian Autocracy (31 August 1876-24 July 1908)

When Abdülhamid II succeeded the throne on 31 August 1876, the Ottoman Empire was experiencing dire crisis both internally and externally. Series of rebellions were taking place in the Balkans, and Russian danger on the borders of the Empire was preserving its severity. The bankruptcy of 1875, triggered by aridity, the global financial crisis of 1872-1876 and unbearable expenses of the Tanzimat era, were concrete proofs of a suffering Ottoman economy, and the income rate of the Ottoman treasury was not promising hope for the near future.⁸⁸ The Empire was giving the impression of the ‘sick man of Europe’ as Tsar Nicholas I of Russia described in the middle of the nineteenth century.⁸⁹ In addition to these problems, Abdülhamid was far from exercising his power without constraint due to the domination of the Sublime Porte in state affairs. Starting with the Tanzimat era (1839-1871), the power shifted from the palace to the Sublime Porte. In the 1850s, powerful bureaucrats led by Âli and Fu‘ad Pashas were exercising their authority without major constraints.⁹⁰ The Sultan of their time, Abdülaziz (1830-1876), was truly under the control of these bureaucrats.⁹¹ However, the death of Fu‘ad and Âli paved the way for the rise of Mahmud Nedim Pasha (1818-1883) who was appointed as a grand vizier (*Sadrâzam*,

⁸⁸Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 163.

⁸⁹Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 3.

⁹⁰Florian Riedler, “Opposition to the Tanzimat State Conspiracy and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire, 1859-1878” (PhD diss., SOAS University of London, 2003), 96. For a detailed information on Âli and Fu‘ad Pasha’s influence on Sublime Porte see Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Âli ve Fu‘ad Paşaların Bab-ı Âli’deki Nüfuzlarının Kökleri (1855- 1871),” in *Tanzimat Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Mehmet Seyitdanhoğlu (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2006).

⁹¹Mardin, *The Genesis*, 108.

later *reis-i vükela*) in September 1871 by Abdülaziz. Although Nedim worked many years in Porte under the domination of Âli and Fu'ad Pashas, his ideas were quite different from the modernist perspectives of Âli and Fu'ad Pashas. Nedim perceived Tanzimat reforms and excessive power of the Porte as a danger for the Empire.⁹² He also believed that the Sultan must be actively involved in state affairs and his authority must be absolute.⁹³ Thus, Nedim Pasha encouraged Abdülaziz to take the control back from the hands of the Porte and exercise his absolute power.⁹⁴ In this regard, many bureaucrats of the Porte who shared the modernist ideas of Âli and Fu'ad were purged.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the Sultan and his grand vizier were unsuccessful in managing the Empire's crises such as growing discontent within the Sublime Porte, the bankruptcy of 1875 and secessionist rebellions of Bulgaria and Bosnia Herzegovina.⁹⁶ These failures resulted in a successful coup organized against him by a group of bureaucrats under the leadership of Midhat Pasha (1822-1884), Rüšdi Pasha, *Serasker* (Minister of War) Hüseyin Avni Pasha and *Şeyhülislam* Hayrullah Efendi on 30 May 1876.⁹⁷ While Midhat and Rüšdi Pashas represented the bureaucracy, Hüseyin Avni and Hayrullah Efendi represented the military and *ulema* respectively. On the same day, the oldest nephew of Abdülaziz, Murad V (1840-1904), was recognized as 33rd Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. In the early days of his Sultanate, Murad was shocked by the suicide of his uncle, the deposed Abdülaziz.⁹⁸ This incident was just the beginning of a series of tragedies for Murad. On 15 June, a Circassian military officer named Hasan assassinated Foreign Minister Raşit Pasha and *Serasker* Hüseyin Avni Pasha by breaking into a cabinet meeting at Midhat Pasha's mansion.⁹⁹ The mental state of Murad, already damaged due to his alcoholism, was worsened further with the effects of these incidents.¹⁰⁰ The ultimate purpose of Midhat Pasha and his followers was the promulgation of a constitution which they perceived as an ultimate solution to critical problems of the Empire.¹⁰¹ When they realized that Sultan Murad was incapable of fulfilling such a task, they

⁹²Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Sultan and the Bureaucracy: The Anti-Tanzimat Concepts of Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Paşa," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 3 (1990):262.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 261-262.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 265.

⁹⁵Riedler, "Opposition to the Tanzimat State," 98.

⁹⁶For detailed information on crises see Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 301-310.

⁹⁷Riedler, "Opposition to the Tanzimat State," 111-114.

⁹⁸The suicide was confirmed by doctors and group of bureaucrats of the time yet, later rumours that Abdülaziz killed by Midhat Pasha started to spread. The incident maintains to preserve its mystery.

⁹⁹Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of The Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol.2: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 164.

¹⁰⁰İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Beşinci Sultan Murad'ın Tedavisine ve Ölümüne Ait Raporlar ve Metkuplar," *Belleken* 10, no. 38 (April 1946): 318.

¹⁰¹Gökhan Çetinkaya and Tufan Buzpınar, "Midhat Paşa," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Ansiklopedisi*, vol 30 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2005).

decided to negotiate with the most possible candidate of the throne, Abdülhamid. This successful negotiation process played a crucial role in Abdülhamid's accession to the throne; Abdülhamid agreed to promulgate a constitution and work with a parliament during the course of his rule. Yet in following years his rule proved that the new Sultan had different plans.¹⁰²

The reign of Abdülhamid II represents a change in the balance of power of Ottoman domestic policy. It was in his reign that the Porte started to lose its power dramatically which it had enjoyed since 1839, and the palace – the Sultan and his 'loyal' bureaucrats – gradually became the sole holder of power.¹⁰³ This power shift also intertwined with the shift from the rational perspective of the Tanzimat era to neopatrimonialism in which the Sultan aimed to keep every mechanism of the Empire under his strict control.¹⁰⁴ However, this centralization of power did not mean that the 'Hamidian' rule ignored the necessity of rational bureaucratic mechanism. On the contrary, rationalization of bureaucracy had been promoted by the Sultan himself, and schools such as the School of Civil Service were promoted in order to raise rational bureaucrats.¹⁰⁵ Abdülhamid's neopatrimonialism aimed, simply, to keep rational bureaucratic cadres under its strict control and utilizing as much as possible.¹⁰⁶ The Hamidian era was not an interruption for the Empire's ongoing integration to the Europe and modernization process.¹⁰⁷ While School of Law (*Mekteb-i Hukuk*) was established for rising modern jurists,¹⁰⁸ the curriculum of War College (*Harbiye*) was upgraded.¹⁰⁹ The popular press and public service maintained to thrive, and education opportunities for both boys and girls developed.¹¹⁰ However, it must be noted that the modernization process of the era was different in its nature, particularly compared to the modernization process of the Tanzimat era. As agreed by a number of historians of the late Ottoman Empire,¹¹¹ it was an alternative vision of modernity which found its essence in the combina-

¹⁰²Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 62-69.

¹⁰³Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 33.

¹⁰⁴Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 45.

¹⁰⁵M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 125.

¹⁰⁶Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 24; Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 234.

¹⁰⁷Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 36.

¹⁰⁸Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 336.

¹⁰⁹Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 171.

¹¹⁰Benjamin C. Fortna, "The reign of Abdülhamid II," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Vol.4: Turkey in the Modern World, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 40.

¹¹¹Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of the Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*; Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*.

tion/synthesis of old and new and/or tradition and modern.¹¹² The success of the implementation of such type of modernity is open to discussion,¹¹³ yet it is certain that this vision of modernity played a crucial role in the formation of Abdülhamid's autocratic rule. The formation of the 'Hamidian autocracy' was a consequence of a gradual process which started to take its shape in the 1880s¹¹⁴ and reached its peak in the early 1890s.¹¹⁵

On 23 December 1876, Sultan Abdülhamid, as he promised to Midhat Pasha, promulgated the first Ottoman Constitution. However, drafting the constitution was not an easy task. The first draft of the constitution was drawn by a commission consisting of twenty-eight members from different professions under the leadership of Midhat Pasha. The Sultan refused to approve this draft and demanded its review by claiming that the text violated his royal rights. When the commission presented a new version in early December, the Sultan agreed to approve it on the condition of adding an article which provided the Sultan absolute authority to exile anyone who posed an existential threat to the Empire.¹¹⁶ By giving consent to Sultan's demand, Midhat Pasha prepared the legitimate ground for his very own purge, yet, by no means was he aware of this fact. The promulgation of the constitution was followed by the convening of the first parliament in March 1877.¹¹⁷ However, the Sultan rapidly realized that the parliament had the potential of providing effective ground for opposition to his rule, and did not hesitate to eliminate the 'danger'.¹¹⁸ On 13 February 1878, it was declared that the parliament was suspended due to a state of emergency precipitated by the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78. When the parliament was suspended, Midhat Pasha, the most serious obstacle for the formation of Hamidian autocracy, was already far from the capital and the Sultan was commanding the Ottoman-Russo War by himself.¹¹⁹ In the first two years of Abdülhamid's reign, the position of grand vizierate, at that time called "prime ministry" (*baş vekâlet*) was represented by eight different Pashas as a result of Sultan's unwillingness to share his power with the Sublime Porte.¹²⁰ Sultan's policy of eliminating the independent and influential grand viziers was part of his centralization policy. With the rise of the Hamidian autocracy, the political power of the Porte became

¹¹²Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 234.

¹¹³For example, Somel argues that the implementation of such type of modernity resulted in failure. See Somel, *The Modernization of the Public Education*, 4-5, 168.

¹¹⁴Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 154-158.

¹¹⁵Somel, *The Modernization of the Public Education*, 167.

¹¹⁶Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 80-83.

¹¹⁷For a detailed information on Ottoman parliaments see Hasan Kayali, "Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1919," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 265-86.

¹¹⁸Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 29-30.

¹¹⁹Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 232.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 232-233.

gradually replaced by Yıldız Palace which was expanded by the Sultan on the hills of Bosphorus.¹²¹ Now, the Council of Ministers (*Heyet-i Vükela*) was convening often at Yıldız and ambassadors were addressing Yıldız rather than the Sublime Porte.¹²²

One of the influential factors which shaped the Hamidian autocracy was Abdülhamid's obsessive worries (*vehm*) and his constant state of distrust.¹²³ Since the Sultan had always been afraid of any possible assassination attempt, he always carried his revolver with himself in order to be prepared for any incident.¹²⁴ As Chief Palace Secretary Tahsin Paşa stated, one of the possible sources of Sultan's fears was a series of tragic incidents which he witnessed both in his time of princehood and sultanate.¹²⁵ The suspicious death of his uncle Abdülaziz, the assassination of *Serasker* Hüseyin Avni Paşa and the failed coup attempts against his rule¹²⁶ were some of these incidents.¹²⁷ Sultan's persona endowed with obsessive worry and distrust motivated him to stay in a state of alarm constantly and contributed to the intensification of his autocratic rule. In order to forestall any possible attack on his regime, the Sultan created an enormous and efficiently functioning spy network.¹²⁸ Such a network provided the Sultan enormous flux of information regarding various issues within the borders of the Empire. A high number of spying reports (*jurnal*) in various subjects ranging from travels of bureaucrats to assassination warnings reached the palace. Abdülhamid intentionally encouraged espionage activities by awarding anyone who informed him of important matters while refraining from penalizing false information.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, this triggered the corruption within the administration and the military, and contributed to the emergence of social unrest¹³⁰ which meant that no one was safe in the Hamidian regime. There were even sons who reported their fathers, and brothers who reported each other's' behaviour.¹³¹ Within the administration and military ranks, *journals* revealed as an effective tool of rivalry in which rivals were used against each other. The Sultan was completely aware of the importance of *journals*, and he used to devote nights to examine these reports.¹³² In Hamidian regime, having a long and successful bureaucratic career

¹²¹Georgon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 173-185.

¹²²Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 219-221.

¹²³Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit Yıldız ve Hatıraları*, 13.

¹²⁴*İzzet Holo Paşa'nın Günlükleri*, 117.

¹²⁵Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit Yıldız ve Hatıraları*, 13.

¹²⁶For details of coup see Florian Riedler, "Opposition to the Tanzimat State Conspiracy and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire, 1859-1878" (PhD diss., SOAS University of London, 2003), 96-117. Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 75.

¹²⁷Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 75.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 39.

¹²⁹Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 221.

¹³⁰Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 49

¹³¹Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 30.

¹³²*İzzet Holo Paşa'nın Günlükleri*, 46.

did not have significance, thus, being subject to exile was always possible.¹³³ As İzzet Pasha wrote in his memoirs, even one single spy report was well-enough for the elimination of a respectful bureaucrat (*bir hafiye jurnali vükela-yn devletin en muhteremini nehye kafi oluyor*).¹³⁴ Meetings, particularly among high-ranking bureaucrats, were also targeted by the Sultan as he perceived such gatherings as a threat to his rule.¹³⁵ The popularity of *journals* and the atmosphere of intrigue posed as constant source of fear to the Ottoman administrative and military ranks. It was a such a state of fear that everyone avoided greeting *Şeyhülislam*, since *Şeyhülislam* was the only authority who could provide religious legitimization to the dethronement of the Sultan.¹³⁶

The media of the period was not immune from the implementations of the Hamidian autocracy. Journals and newspapers were subject to controls in order to forestall any dangerous attempt against the regime. Such censorship pushed journalists and intellectuals of the time to write about non-political issues, as criticizing the regime constituted a great danger for themselves.¹³⁷ Besides the Ottoman press, Abdülhamid was also very much interested in following and controlling the foreign press.¹³⁸ Thus, he ordered the foundation of a special bureau, known as *Nişan Efendi Dâiresi*, where an Armenian with the name Nişan Efendi translated international articles about the Empire into Turkish.¹³⁹ The significance of the Sultan's interest in foreign media lay in the fact that he deliberately wanted to repair the damaged Ottoman image in the minds of Europeans. To this end, one of the orders given to Ottoman ambassadors in Europe was to prevent anti-Ottoman attitudes within the European media.¹⁴⁰ Providing aid to the United States after a catastrophic forest fire, sending photograph albums to Britain, and paying major emphasis on world fairs, were serving to the same purpose; restoration of the Ottoman image around the world.¹⁴¹

During the Hamidian regime, the title Caliph appeared as a distinct phenomenon for the Empire which was used as a functional and valuable tool for the consolidation of the Hamidian autocracy. Although the title itself had already existed and had

¹³³Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 235.

¹³⁴İzzet Holo Paşa'nın *Günlükleri*, 157.

¹³⁵Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 67; Sir Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdulhamid* (London: Constable and Company, 1917), 200; Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 220.

¹³⁶Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 39-40.

¹³⁷Hanioğlu, *A Brief History*, 126.

¹³⁸Pears, *Life of Abdulhamid*, 194.

¹³⁹Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 22-23.

¹⁴⁰Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 137

¹⁴¹Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 135-136, 154-164; Muhammad Isa Waley, "Images of the Ottoman Empire: The Photograph Albums Presented by Sultan Abdülhamid II." *The British Library Journal* 17, no. 2 (1991): 111-27.

been used long before the reign of Abdülhamid, the 1870s gave new momentum to the title as it became more visible among Muslims both inside and outside of the borders of the Empire.¹⁴² In search of cement for his authority, the Sultan discovered the potential of the title and utilized it in order to strengthen the basis of his authority. Increasing reference given to Islam and the Sultan's statue of being caliph was a product of this pragmatic concern.¹⁴³ Now, as a 'Shadow of God on Earth' (*zillullah fil'arz*) and 'The Shelter of the Caliphate' (*hilafetpenah*), he was to be obeyed without question. The educational policy of the era also coincided with these concerns. The quantity of courses on religion dramatically increased,¹⁴⁴ and textbooks encouraged students to obey their God, Prophet and Caliph.¹⁴⁵ Reforms, which were done on curriculums, showed how the Hamidian regime promoted the notion of legitimation of obedience to the Sultan with Islamic sentiment. Since Qur'anic verses ordered unconditional obedience to rulers, the title caliph also helped the Sultan legitimate his position as ruler.¹⁴⁶ The historical conditions were quite in favour of the Sultan. An increase in the number of Muslim populations within the borders of Empire due to loss of non-Muslim populated lands and growing Anglo-Russo danger in the Middle East made exploitation of the title easier for the Sultan.¹⁴⁷ However, Abdülhamid was also quite successful in canalizing these circumstances.

Enormous reference given to title caliph and Islam helped Abdülhamid achieve his political plan; keeping Muslim subjects of the Empire together with the sense of loyalty and solidarity.¹⁴⁸ However, the Sultan was aware that keeping a standardized type of Muslim subjects under control was much easier than controlling a diverse one. Thus, the standardization policy of the Empire accelerated under the Hamidian regime. Since the ideological base of the Hamidian autocracy intertwined with the Sunni Islam, unorthodox understandings of Islam (i.e., non-Sunni Muslims such as Shiism and/or *Alevism*), were perceived obstacles which must be overcome. The 'Book of Beliefs' (*Kitab'ul Akaid*), which dealt with unorthodox elements of Islam, was written with the encouragement of the regime to 'correct' such belief's danger-

¹⁴²Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 274-77.

¹⁴³Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam* 156.

¹⁴⁴Somel, *The Modernization of the Public Education*, 183.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁴⁶Most popular one of these verses as follows: O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the last day: That is best and most suitable for final determination. The Qur'an 4:59. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Quran* (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 2001) first published 1953, 203

¹⁴⁷For detailed information on the migrations see Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

¹⁴⁸Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 174

ous to the regime.¹⁴⁹ What the regime aimed was to distribute this book in order to spread its influence in the far lands of the Empire. ‘Book of Beliefs’ was also a simple handbook of the ‘approved’ and highly Sunni-oriented belief of the Hamidian regime. In addition to reaching Muslims with the simple books, the Sultan also benefited from Sufi Sheiks by using them as a channel to communicate with Muslims of the Empire.¹⁵⁰ Various sheikhs from different parts of the Empire were given instructions to show Muslims the true path and were sent to their homelands to propagate the Caliphate of Abdülhamid. They established zawiyas there and disseminated the ideology of the Hamidian regime.¹⁵¹

During the Hamidian rule, the subject of loyalty dramatically changed. The idea of being loyal to the state, which finds its essence in the rational spirit of the Tanzimat era, was replaced with loyalty (*sadakat*) to the Sultan’s persona. Since Abdülhamid aimed to be sole patron of Ottoman bureaucracy, this shift perfectly aligned with the Hamidian autocracy. The Sultan wanted constant certainty that his bureaucrats knew they were indebted to their ‘generous’ Sultan for their titles.¹⁵² The bureaucrats were, in a way, ‘slaves’ of the Sultan who were chosen and evaluated by only Abdülhamid himself. Their degree of slavery was the main measurement tool for their loyalty.¹⁵³

In order to maintain and flourish such system of loyalty, the Sultan did not hesitate to utilize his imperial power. He bought loyalty frequently by generously bestowing medals, promotions and money.¹⁵⁴ By using this technique, the Sultan was able to convince even some of his zealous opponents such as Namık Kemal and Murad Bey.¹⁵⁵ He also invented new types of rewards, such as Compassion (*Şefkat*) medal particularly for women who ‘deserve’ to be praised.¹⁵⁶ In schools, the importance of loyalty to the Sultan was emphasized in order to change students’ perceptions of state-society relations.¹⁵⁷ While loyalty to the Sultan was enough to be rewarded, conversely, being against him was enough to receive punishment. This was relevant for the army as it was relevant for the Ottoman bureaucracy. It is known that a

¹⁴⁹Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 49; Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 377.

¹⁵⁰Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 63-66; George on, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 273-74.

¹⁵¹For a detailed examination of highly influential Sheik see Butrus Abu-Manneh, ‘Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al-Sayyadi.’ *Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 2 (1979): 131-53

¹⁵²Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 6.

¹⁵³Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1996), 125.

¹⁵⁴Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 48-49; Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 42.

¹⁵⁵Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 188.

¹⁵⁶Hanioğlu, *A Brief History*, 126.

¹⁵⁷Somel, *The Modernization of the Public Education*, 182-183; Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166.

high number of students were purged from the War College and many were sent to exile.¹⁵⁸ Degeneration of hierarchical order, injustice and nepotism within both Ottoman military and officialdom led to the emergence of unrest within these institutions. Officials and soldiers with modern education (*mektebli*) but not promoted naturally alienated themselves from the Hamidian regime. This alienation, together with the deterioration of hierarchical order and restraints on freedom, constituted one of the driving forces of opposition to the Hamidian regime.

Even though Abdülhamid created an autocratic system with functioning control and oppression mechanisms, he could not manage to prevent the birth of the opposition movement which would precipitate the collapse of his autocratic regime in 1908. This movement was the ‘Young Turk’ movement which started to mushroom in one of the colleges of the Empire, Royal Medicine Academy (*Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şâhâne*). In 1889, a group of students (İbrahim Temo, İshak Sükuti, Mehmed Reşit, Abdullah Cevdet, Hikmet Emin) founded the first organization of the Young Turk movement, the Ottoman Union Society (*İttihâd-i Osmani Cemiyeti*)¹⁵⁹ which would later be renamed to the Ottoman Committee of Progress and Union in 1894.¹⁶⁰ It was the CUP that initiated one of the most remarkable incidents in the history of late Ottoman Empire, known as Young Turk Revolution, by obligating Abdülhamid II to restore Ottoman Constitution and reinstitute the parliament on 23 July 1908.¹⁶¹

The Young Turk movement appeared as an umbrella opposition movement which encompassed almost every opponent of the Hamidian regime with little exception. The main purpose of the movement, simply, was to replace Hamidian regime with a constitutional monarchy that was based on merit. Many opponents attached themselves to the movement as it spread within and outside the Empire’s borders. However, their ideas were quite sharp and obvious, publicized through the printing press such as *Meşveret* and *Şura-yn Ümmet*.¹⁶² The ideas of Young Turks and the modernization of the Ottoman intelligentsia were highly interrelated to each other.¹⁶³ The idea of the superiority of West regarding science, technology, culture, lifestyle, and perceiving this superiority as one of the most effective reasons for the ‘failure’ of the Empire against the West, was already circulating among Ottoman intellectuals¹⁶⁴ due to their exposure to the West by either receiving an education there or reading

¹⁵⁸Enver Paşa, *Enver Paşa’nın Anıları* (1881–1908), ed. Halil Erdoğan Cengiz (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019), 9–10.

¹⁵⁹Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 71.

¹⁶⁰Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 54; Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 74

¹⁶¹Fortna, “The reign of Abdülhamid II,”60; Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 127.

¹⁶²Hanioğlu, *A Brief History*, 145.

¹⁶³Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 17.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 13–16.

western literature.¹⁶⁵ Being an active participant of these discussions, Young Turks internalized such understanding, and they ascribed Western superiority to the concept of science and its significance. In this regard, they praised the science and conceptualized it as dire necessity for the development of the empire.

The CUP, as an organization, was the most prominent outgrowth of the Young Turk movement, yet it was not the only one. For instance, a group of Young Turks who were in favour of the use of violence and invitation of Great Powers for the overthrow of Sultan, established distinct organization, known as Society for Private Initiative and Decentralization (*Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti*), under the leadership of Prince Sabahaddin.¹⁶⁶ Although these two groups came together in Paris in 1902 to find a solution to their disagreements, they could not compromise.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the CUP managed to overshadow the Society for Private Initiative and Decentralization together with many other opposition organizations that the Young Turk movement gave rise.¹⁶⁸

From its establishment to 1902, the CUP and its main leader Ahmed Rıza preserved its anti-violent revolutionary attitude and maintained its intellectual/elite-driven and education-based revolution plan. However, starting from 1902, the CUP went under remarkable transformation in its ideological stance. These years witnessed the transformation of the movement from intellectual- and elite-based, to an activist and militaristic one.¹⁶⁹ Many members of the CUP started to politicize their ideals by deliberately exploiting the popular ideologies, such as positivism, that they employed from the beginning.¹⁷⁰ The years between 1902 and 1905 also witnessed introduction of Turkist ideas into the ideological portrait of the CUP.¹⁷¹ The increasing popularity of Turkist ideas among intellectuals promoted this development and Turkism became one of the harsh discussion subjects for Young Turks. For example, one of the Young Turk intellectuals, Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935), discussed which ideology the empire should follow by analysing all three possible alternatives for the Empire; Pan-Islamism, Pan-Ottomanism and Pan-Turkism.¹⁷² Gradually,

¹⁶⁵Hanioglu, *Jön Türklük*, 10.

¹⁶⁶Fortna, "The reign of Abdülhamid II," 59-60. For a detailed examination of ideology of the Society for Private Initiative and Decentralization see Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-I (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991), 272-296; Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 82-130. For revisionist examination also see Aykut Kansu, "Prens Sabahaddin'in Düşünsel Kaynakları ve Aşırı-Muhafazakar Düşüncenin İthali," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, ed. Mehmet Ö. Alkan (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 156-165.

¹⁶⁷For a detailed information on the congress see Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 188-199.

¹⁶⁸Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 59.

¹⁶⁹Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 292.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 293.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 295.

¹⁷²Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1976).

the CUP internalized the nationalist idea between 1902 and 1906.¹⁷³ The ideological transformation of the CUP was very much influenced by the global revolutionary wave.¹⁷⁴ Due to the Iranian constitutional revolution that took place in 1905, the CUP realized that rhetoric of religion can be functional in convincing clerics to support their cause.¹⁷⁵ By drawing lessons from the Russian revolution of 1905, they came to the conclusion that the organizational structure is vital.¹⁷⁶ They were also very impressed with Japan's victory over Russia and sincerely ascribed Japan's success to the constitutional regime.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the most crucial development that played a remarkable role in the transformation of the CUP was its merge with Ottoman Freedom Society (*Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti*) on September 27, 1907.¹⁷⁸ The Ottoman Freedom Society was an organization which was established in Salonica on September 1906 by group of activist opponents of Hamidian regime.¹⁷⁹ Core founding cadre of the Ottoman Freedom Society mostly composed of army officers¹⁸⁰ who were already fighting against ethnicity-religion motivated secessionist bands in Macedonia. When this merge came to existence, the CUP was already in the transformation process, however, with the participation of army officers endowed with activism, this process accelerated and qualified. Ottoman Freedom Society also led CUP to expand its influence to the Balkans and gain new members. In addition to these achievements, the CUP now had the opportunity of expansion within the Ottoman army. Just approximately one year before the revolution, the CUP managed to transform itself from an intellectually driven, peaceful opposition organization, to a politically activist organization that could successfully form combative bands and assassinate people in public.¹⁸¹

Two developments that took place on July 1908 that alarmed top cadre of the CUP. First, there was an increasing number of spy reports that flowed to the Palace from Macedonia. Since these reports were informing Yıldız about activities of the CUP in the Balkans, they were endangering CUP's plans regarding revolution. The second development was the Reval meeting that took place between Russia and Britain. In this meeting, King Edward VII and Tsar Nicholas II discussed the situation in the Balkans and attempted to find solution to their disagreements.¹⁸² However, echoes

¹⁷³Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 211.

¹⁷⁴Nader Sohrabi, "Global Waves, Local Actors: What the Young Turks Knew about Other Revolutions and Why It Mattered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 1 (2002): 45-46.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 60-61.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 53-54.

¹⁷⁸Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 215.

¹⁷⁹Kâzım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti 1896-1909* (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1995), 131.

¹⁸⁰For the whole list see Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 212.

¹⁸¹Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 292.

¹⁸²Fortna, "The reign of Abdülhamid II," 60.

of the Reval meeting were more than expected for the CUP. Immediately after the meeting, rumours about partition plans of the Balkans by Russia and Britain started to spread.¹⁸³ These developments pushed CUP members to take action earlier than they initially planned. Findings of Hanioglu also confirms that the CUP had already an action plan, yet this plan was put into action early due to circumstances.¹⁸⁴ On 3 July, one of the prominent members of the CUP in Macedonia, Adjutant Major (*kolağası*) Ahmed Niyazi took the mountains together with his men composed of *fedais* (self-sacrificing volunteers).¹⁸⁵ Niyazi's unit took the mountains, yet it was not the last unit to do so. Following Niyazi, many other members of the CUP such as Enver Bey and Eyüp Sabri started to take mountains by recruiting men from villages.¹⁸⁶ Such action led the opening of a new phase in the actions of the CUP. The organization began to organize villagers in Macedonia in order to convince them to support their case.¹⁸⁷ The CUP was on its way for the revolution.

While the flame of the rebellion in Macedonia roused, Abdülhamid relied on intelligence reports flowing from the region to understand the severity of the situation. On June 11, a *fedai*, named Mustafa Necib, attempted to assassinate Colonel Ömer Nazım who had been informing the palace about the activities of the CUP.¹⁸⁸ The attempt on Ömer Nazım's life helped the Sultan grasp the emergency of the situation in Macedonia. Alarmed by this incident, then Sultan dispatched Anatolian troops to Salonica under the command of Şemsi Pasha, one of the loyal servants of the Hamidian regime. On July 7, Şemsi Pasha arrived in Salonica and was shot to death by *fedai*, Atıf [Kamçıl], on the same day.¹⁸⁹ Shaken by the death of Şemsi Pasha, the Sultan immediately appointed Tatar Osman Fevzi Pasha as a commander of Anatolian troops that was due to arrive Salonica. On 14 July, Anatolian troops arrived in Salonica but they were not eager to fight against rebels. Their hesitation was enhanced by the death of their commander and efforts of the CUP.¹⁹⁰ Thus, they refused to fight and fled.¹⁹¹

Starting from May 1908, the Palace received telegrams from the CUP that recommended to the Sultan to restore the Ottoman Constitution. A telegraph received by the Palace on 23 July 1908, was the most important one as Tahsin Pasha stated

¹⁸³Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 266.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 262. Hanioglu also underlines that the exact execution date of the plan remains unknown.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.; Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 548.

¹⁸⁶Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 548.

¹⁸⁷For a detailed information on the organization of villagers see Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 108-114.

¹⁸⁸Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 266.

¹⁸⁹Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 267-268.

¹⁹⁰Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-I, 468-469.

¹⁹¹Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 268-269.

in his memoirs.¹⁹² In this telegram, the CUP issued an ultimatum demanding restoration of the constitution and threatened the Sultan with sending the army to İstanbul.¹⁹³ In the meantime, the CUP did not wait for a response from the Palace and declared the freedom (*hürriyet*) which meant the end of Hamidian autocracy and restoration of the constitution.¹⁹⁴ However, the Council of Ministers, still contemplating numerous telegrams that demanded restoration of the constitution, were far from making their decision.¹⁹⁵ It is also known that Grand Vizier Mehmed Said Pasha (1838-1914), at that point, continued to resist restoration of the constitution.¹⁹⁶ Later that night, the Sultan took the initiative and ordered İzzet Pasha, Second Secretary of the Palace Chancery, to issue an imperial decree that declared the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution to be published on 24 July, 1908.¹⁹⁷ The Sultan concluded that there was nothing to do to prevent activities of the CUP and postpone the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution. He was aware that the CUP had already taken control of the army in Macedonia and had enough power to force regime change.

As should be evident by now, the modernization process of the Empire was embedded in the Hamidian autocracy. However, the idea of modernization that members of the Young Turk movement internalized was not the same as in Abdülhamid's mind. Although Abdülhamid was aware of the importance of science, he highly emphasized the religion (i.e. Islam) and tradition. In the mind of Young Turks, however, the modernization was highly interrelated with science and progress but not with tradition and religion. Since they believed that their mode of modernization is only way for the salvation of the Empire, they dedicated themselves to regime change so that they could implement their own type of modernization.

2.2 First Months of the Second Constitutional Era (23/24 July 1908 –

27 April 1909)

On the morning of 24 July, the people of İstanbul read in the newspapers and celebrated the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution that found its essence in the

¹⁹²Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 263.

¹⁹³For the full text of the telegram see Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 263-264.

¹⁹⁴Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 274; Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 116.

¹⁹⁵Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 266.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 256, 265.

¹⁹⁷Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, Vol. I-I, 478-479; Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları*, 266.

concepts of liberty(*hürriyet*), equality(*müsavat*) and fraternity(*uhuvvet*). Although news reached İstanbul on the morning of 24 July, there were many provinces that received the news a while later because some governors hesitated to announce the news, still under the influence of long-lasting Hamidian autocracy.¹⁹⁸ However, celebrations with the participation of large crowds took place in nearly all other provinces, with the little exception of some Arab provinces, as soon as news arrived.¹⁹⁹ The expectations of the revolution were enormous. In theory, the revolution would bring liberty which could solve all the problems of the Empire. Yet, the following days proved that the revolution itself was far from fulfilling these expectations.

The collapse of the Hamidian autocracy also meant the collapse of its mechanism. In the early days of the Second Constitutional Period, the functioning spy network of the Sultan was abolished.²⁰⁰ Purges or re-organization policy (*tensikat*) in both Sublime Porte and the Palace that targeted loyal servants of Abdülhamid were put into action, and strict censorship imposed on the Ottoman press was removed. Also, amnesty for the political victims of Hamidian autocracy was granted.²⁰¹ All of these reforms were carried out by newly appointed Grand Vizier Mehmed Said Pasha and his successor Kâmil Pasha. Yet, it was the CUP that imposed these reforms behind the scene.²⁰² These early reforms, particularly the staff purges and amnesty, had far-reaching influences in the Ottoman domestic policy. The ballooning press which was encouraged by the removal of censorship constituted a suitable habitat for the opposition which grew gradually in the following days of the period, and amnesty caused security concerns and led to the emergence of a group of discontented exiles who returned to the capital with big hopes.

Although the CUP was quite popular in its power base, Macedonia, it was relatively unknown in other provinces including İstanbul. People celebrating the constitution attributed the restoration of the constitution to the Sultan and hailed him by shouting 'long live the Sultan' in the streets. This irritated the CUP, since the revolution was the result of its efforts. Perceiving the Sultan as a hero of the revolution was simply a contradiction in the eyes of the CUP. Also, there were other factors that worried the CUP. For example, not every single corps of the Ottoman army was under the control of the CUP as much as the Third Army Corps. The incident that took place in Edirne on 28 July proved that the CUP's concerns were relevant. When a CUP committee consisting of six members arrived Edirne, soldiers

¹⁹⁸ Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi, *Son Vak'anüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi*, ed. Bayram Kodaman and Mehmet Ali Ünal (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996), 12.

¹⁹⁹ Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 554.

²⁰⁰ Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 68.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 68.

²⁰² Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 136.

welcomed them with the poster that hailed the Sultan for the restoration of the constitution. Angered by the poster, one of the members of the Committee warned soldiers and told them that the constitution was not restored by the Sultan, but the CUP. Although soldiers took an oath of loyalty to the constitution in the following day, they declared mutiny after four days.²⁰³ The mutiny was suppressed easily, yet this incident reminded the CUP that the authority of the Sultan was a serious danger for the authority of the CUP. It was obvious that the CUP was not powerful enough to take control of the Empire. In addition to its limited control of the Ottoman army, its organization was not effective enough to achieve its goals, with the exception of Macedonia. The headquarters of the CUP was still in Salonica and there were only a few members who were operating in İstanbul in order to communicate with the Porte.²⁰⁴ In the first months following the revolution, the CUP preferred to stay in the shadows and convey its demands to the Porte by using various channels such as *Şeyhülislam*.²⁰⁵ This also meant that the CUP operated by relying on bureaucrats of the old regime rather than putting its own members in charge.²⁰⁶ However, one of the well-experienced bureaucrats of the old regime, Kâmil Pasha, perceived this technique as an opportunity for returning the golden days of the Sublime Porte. Thus, the first months of the Second Constitutional Period witnessed a power struggle among three main actors: the CUP, the Sultan and the Sublime Porte.

The first signals of this power struggle came to surface with the declaration of the imperial decree on 1 August 1908.²⁰⁷ In the decree, Sultan simply stated that the constitution would be protected and parliament would be summoned in time. Yet, the decree also pointed out amendments of particular articles of the constitution. Although some of these amendments were compatible with the spirit of the revolution, some were definitely not in the eyes of the CUP, particularly the amendment that bestowed the right of appointing ministers of war and navy to the Sultan. According to the Ottoman Constitution, the Sultan as a commander of the Ottoman army and navy could only appoint the grand vizier and the *Şeyhülislam*, and approve or reject the appointment of other ministers who were chosen by Grand Vizier. The CUP perceived this move as an attack on the constitutional regime. The prominent CUP organ, *Tanin* newspaper, harshly criticized the Sultan in the following days

²⁰³Victor Reuben Swenson, "The Young Turk Revolution: A Study of the First Phase of the Second Turkish Constitutional Regime from June 1908 to May 1909" (PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1968), 91-92.

²⁰⁴Ahmed Rıza, *Anılar* (Cumhuriyet, 1950) first published 1950, 33; İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrazamlar*, Vol. 2 (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1982), 1074.

²⁰⁵Shaw, *History of The Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol.2, 274.

²⁰⁶Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler Vol. III: İttihat ve Terakki: Bir Çağın, Bir Kuşağın, Bir Partinin Tarihi* (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), 35-36.

²⁰⁷For the full text of the decree see *Düstur*, II-I (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1329 [1913]), 11-14.

by claiming that the Sultan had no right to appoint ministers of the navy and the army.²⁰⁸ The imperial decree led to the rise of discontent with the Grand Vizier Said Pasha and his cabinet which was announced on 2 August.²⁰⁹ Besides ministers of army and navy who were chosen by the Sultan, other members of the cabinet were also far from satisfying the CUP. They represented the old regime and none of them were close to the CUP. With the growing discontent and the pressure of the CUP, some of the members of the cabinet resigned on 3 August.²¹⁰ Said Pasha quickly realized that the crisis was hard to solve and resigned after two days, becoming the first victim of the power struggle. Although his elimination was an easy task for the CUP, elimination of his successor, Kâmil Pasha, was not.

Kâmil Pasha also represented the old regime. He was an experienced bureaucrat who assumed the title of grand vizier two times during the Hamidian regime. However, this time the political conjuncture was quite different. A group of opponents that he confronted years ago was now one of the most important actors of the Empire and growing chaos gradually replaced the positive revolutionary weather. The CUP was also determined to consolidate its power on the executive and had no intention of sharing its authority with the Porte or the Palace. The newly appointed Grand Vizier understood that he had to tread carefully in order to address these numerous problems. By insisting on his own candidate for the ministry of war, he was quick to show that he would not be submissive. Although the Sultan wanted to appoint Marshall (*Müşir*) Şakir Pasha by relying on the controversial imperial decree of 1 August, Kâmil Pasha refused the Sultan's will and appointed Recep Pasha as minister of war.²¹¹ Despite the fact that Kâmil Pasha's appointment to the grand vizierate was a surprise for the CUP, it was welcomed at the first place.²¹² Nevertheless, the relationship between the Pasha and the CUP started to deteriorate with the increasing interventionist attitude of the CUP. By sending various telegrams from Macedonia to the Porte, the CUP demanded the replacement of some members of the cabinet with others who had close ties with the organization.²¹³ Additionally, the reform program of the Kâmil Pasha government did not satisfy the Committee. In its criticisms, the CUP accused the government of being timid and not pushing hard for the abolishment of the capitulations.²¹⁴

Despite the criticisms of the CUP, Kâmil Pasha's reform program was bold and

²⁰⁸Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 138.

²⁰⁹İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrazamlar*, Vol. 2, 1068, 1071.

²¹⁰Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 75.

²¹¹Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 12-13.

²¹²İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrazamlar*, Vol. 3, 1405.

²¹³Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 83-86.

²¹⁴Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 141.

effective in removing the traces of the Hamidian regime and fulfilling the CUP's demands. With the reform program that was announced on 16 August, large-scale political and administrative purges targeting both military and administration was put into action. Within the new system, there was no room for the loyal servants of Abdülhamid. Officers who had any affiliations to any mechanism of the old autocratic regime were the main target. While the government asked some of these officers to resign, some were fired directly, followed by terminations of officers who had no adequate educational background. Many bureaucratic institutions also underwent transformation or were abolished. For example, the State Council was reorganized and divided into four main categories. The number of members of some councils were reduced and salaries of officers were regulated (i.e. reduced or cut down). Governors were not immune to the changes. Nearly all of the governors in various provinces of the Empire were either changed or forced to retire.²¹⁵ Similarly, a large number of high commanders and ranker soldiers (*alaylı*) within the military were dismissed so that they could be replaced with modern educated ones (*mektebli*).²¹⁶ All of these changes were deprived of legal base and the government had no intention of providing compensation or a new job for those who were dismissed without explanation. Such a policy resulted in large numbers of unemployed and dissatisfied crowds. The crowd strengthened its position with the participation of disappointed exiles who returned to İstanbul through amnesty. It was this crowd that took part in the rebellion, known as 31 March Incident,²¹⁷ that started on 12/13 April 1909. The reform program of Kâmil Pasha also included fiscal and conscription regulations that aimed to solve immediate problems of the Empire.²¹⁸ However, the program was doomed to failure due to economic shortages and strikes that spread all around the Empire in a short time period.²¹⁹

Although Kâmil Pasha was irritated by interventions of the CUP,²²⁰ he refrained from engaging in direct conflict with the Committee. Instead, he feigned fervour for the ideas of the CUP so that he could share the responsibility of his decisions with the CUP.²²¹ The power vacuum caused by the revolution was an opportunity for

²¹⁵For detailed information see the table in Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 204-205.

²¹⁶For detailed examination of the purges and the exiles see Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 189-223 and Özgür Türesay, "The Political Victims of the Old Regime under the Young Turks Regime (1908-1911)," in *The Young Turk Revolution and the Ottoman Empire: The Aftermath of 1908*, ed. Noemi Levy-Aksu and François Georgeon (London: I.B.Tauris Co. Ltd, 2017).

²¹⁷31 March refers to beginning date of the uprising in the Rumi Calender used in the Empire in that time.

²¹⁸Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 562-563.

²¹⁹Swenson, "The Young Turk Revolution," 168. For detailed information on strikes see Vangelis Kechriotis, "Social Unrest on the Aftermath of the 1908 Revolution: The Strike of the Aydın Railway in İzmir and its Repercussion," in *The Young Turk Revolution and the Ottoman Empire: The Aftermath of 1908*, ed. Noemi Levy-Aksu and François Georgeon (London: I.B.Tauris Co. Ltd, 2017).

²²⁰Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 87.

²²¹İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrazamlar*, Vol. 3, 1405.

Kâmil Pasha and he sincerely believed that the Porte could return to its prime in the Tanzimat period.²²² When Abdülhamid emphasized Kâmil Pasha's aspiration to be a dictator,²²³ he was actually referring to Pasha's desire for the heyday of the Porte. Such purpose was, of course, unacceptable to the CUP. Thus, the organization started to increase the intensity of its interventions. For instance, CUP messengers were sent to Palace to urge the Sultan to postpone the announcement of Kâmil Pasha's second cabinet in November.²²⁴ The ultimate purpose of the CUP was to transform Kâmil Pasha's cabinet by dictating participation of their members. Yet, Kâmil Pasha was dedicated to resist. He announced his new cabinet, ignoring the demands of the CUP.²²⁵ However, the CUP was both a powerful and dangerous rival. As one of the liberal witnesses of the time, İsmail Kemal, wrote in his memoirs, the CUP had already great power and influence.²²⁶ Also, organization's tendency to authoritarianism increased with each passing day. Activist members such as Talat Bey were, now, taking the CUP under their control and dominating the moderate members.²²⁷ The participation of new members to the Committee was more than expected and new faces were replacing the old ones.²²⁸ Bloody tactics of pre-revolutionary days, such as assassinating the opponents of the Committee, were still utilized. For instance, it was the CUP that assassinated İsmail Mahir Pasha, one of the old loyal spies of Abdülhamid, on 2 December 1908.²²⁹

While the relationship between the CUP and Kâmil Pasha deteriorated, preparations for the elections was underway. By then, the CUP had only one rival, the Liberal Party (*Fırka-ı Ahrar*), founded by followers of liberal Young Turk Prince Sabahaddin on 14 September 1908. Although Prince Sabahaddin himself refused to be the leader of the party, his liberal ideas, particularly the idea of decentralization (*adem-i merkeziyet*) and equality, constituted the ideological basis of the party.²³⁰ Since the elections were held on November, the party did not have enough time to launch an effective campaign. Therefore, the CUP managed to achieve all of the seats in the Chamber with the one single exception. Nevertheless, the small number of deputies later affiliated themselves with the Liberal Party. This made the party the meeting point for the opposition against the CUP. Additionally, the *İkdam* newspaper was

²²²Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 140.

²²³Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 44.

²²⁴Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 155.

²²⁵Ibid., 155.

²²⁶İsmail Kemal, *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*, ed. Sommerville Story (London: Constable and Company, 1920), 321.

²²⁷Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 80; Ahmed Rıza, *Anılar*, 32.

²²⁸Ahmed Rıza, *Anılar*, 33.

²²⁹Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 25-26; Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 129.

²³⁰For detailed information on Liberal Party see Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler Vol. I: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi* (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1988), 142-171.

an effective opposition tool in which the activities of the CUP were criticized.

On 17 December 1908, bicameral Ottoman Parliament was opened after a long break. The Sultan personally attended the opening ceremony and his speech was read by newly appointed Chief Palace Secretary Ali Cevat Bey. Although the speech was applauded by deputies, it was not enough to reassure the CUP regarding the Sultan's loyalty to the constitution. Ali Cevat Bey anticipated such a reaction, and advised the Sultan to revise the text and add a paragraph where he took an oath to remain loyal to the constitution. The Sultan, however, did not share Ali Cevat Bey's concerns and refused his advice by stating that he already took an oath in the presence of *Şeyhülislam*.²³¹ Increasing criticisms that targeted the Sultan in the following days, proved that Ali Cevat Bey was right. Being aware of the situation, Abdülhamid, finally taking Ali Cevat Bey's advice, invited all deputies together with Grand Vizier Kâmil Pasha to the Palace for dinner so that he could reverse his anti-constitutionalist image.²³² In a way, the dinner served its purpose. During the night, the Sultan paid special attention to the Ahmed Rıza, the head of the Chamber and personally met with some of the deputies.²³³ In his enthusiastic speech that night, the Sultan guaranteed the protection of the constitution. The speech was welcomed and some deputies expressed their pleasant exility by shouting as 'long live Sultan Hamid'.²³⁴ Although the Sultan managed to repair his image to some extent, this was not the case for Kâmil Pasha. Pro-CUP deputies, particularly Hüseyin Cahit [Yalçın] Bey (1875-1957), harshly criticised the Kâmil Pasha regarding foreign issues.²³⁵ The main issues were annexation of Bosnia Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary and the declaration of independence by Bulgaria on 5 October and Crete on 6 October. The criticisms of Hüseyin Cahit Bey were representative of the antagonist attitude of the CUP against Kâmil Pasha and his cabinet. The desire of the CUP was simply a new grand vizier who would be easier to work with. With the proposition of Hüseyin Cahit, the Chamber opened the interpellation of Kâmil Pasha to the discussion regarding the Crete issue. Later, the general disorder and security concerns within the borders of the Empire became the subject matter for the interpellation. Although some liberal deputies defended Kâmil Pasha by referring to the limits of his responsibilities, the proposition of Hüseyin Cahit was approved. On 13 January 1909, Kâmil Pasha appeared in the Chamber and delivered his speech. After informing deputies on foreign affairs, Kâmil Pasha implicitly criticised the CUP by addressing the mushroomed false CUP societies and their in-

²³¹ Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 31-36.

²³² Ibid., 39-42.

²³³ Ahmed Rıza, *Anılar*, 36-37.

²³⁴ Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 40-41.

²³⁵ Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 145; Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 36.

appropriate activities. According to Pasha, the public's misinterpretation of liberty was also a factor for the deteriorating economy of the empire, since the freedom was understood as freedom from paying taxes.²³⁶ These indirect criticisms suggested that Kâmil Pasha continued to refrain from direct conflict with the CUP. However, both the CUP and Pasha were aware of the fact that this ongoing disagreement could not reach an end until the elimination of one of the actors.

Kâmil Pasha's criticisms made a considerable impact on both Chamber and press. Although Hüseyin Cahit remained silent when he was given an opportunity to ask questions directly to Kâmil Pasha in the Chamber, he continued to accuse Kâmil Pasha and defend the CUP in his writings in *Tanin*.²³⁷ The CUP attacks on Kâmil Pasha and his cabinet continued in similar ways until 10 February, when Kâmil Pasha took the unprecedented step of forcing two ministers, Minister of War Ali Rıza Pasha and Minister of Navy Arif Hikmet Pasha, to resign.²³⁸ When CUP-sided positions of the ministers were considered, the move, no doubt, was bold. However, this move also provided the pretext that the CUP needed for the dismissal of Kâmil Pasha. Galvanized by Hüseyin Cahit, the Chamber asked Kâmil Pasha to appear in the Chamber immediately on 13 February. Kâmil Pasha agreed to appear in Chamber within a few days. Yet, the Chamber refused postponement and voted for his dismissal.²³⁹ While 198 deputies voted for dismissal, only 8 deputies disagreed. One of the reasons for such a high number of dismissal votes was threats from the CUP targeting deputies who intended to vote for the sake of Kâmil Pasha. Also, it is known that the Ottoman warships targeted the Ottoman Assembly, probably with the order of the CUP.²⁴⁰

That same night, Ahmed Rıza and Talat Pasha went to the Palace to inform the Sultan, and then ask him to appoint a new and 'appropriate' grand vizier.²⁴¹ On 14 February 1909, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, the former Inspector-General of Macedonia, was appointed as new grand vizier. Compared to Kâmil Pasha, he was not an experienced statesman and he was aware of this and did not show any willingness to assume the title of grand vizierate in such a chaotic situation.²⁴² However, he appeared as a suitable candidate, since he was perceived as trustworthy person by both the Palace and the CUP.²⁴³ As well, his unassertive and submissive charac-

²³⁶Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 148-149.

²³⁷Ibid., 150-152.

²³⁸Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 152.

²³⁹Ali Fuad Türkgeldi, *Görüp İştiklerim* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2010) first published 1949, 20.

²⁴⁰Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, 167; Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi İkinci Meşrutiyet ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı 1908-1918* vol. IX (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011), 71-72.

²⁴¹Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 44.

²⁴²Türkgeldi, *Görüp İştiklerim*, 23.

²⁴³Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler* Vol. III, 56.

ter made him a more appropriate candidate.²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the appointment of Hilmi Pasha to grand vizierate did not quell the growing political discontent in Ottoman domestic politics. On the contrary, the situation worsened and disagreements deepened.²⁴⁵

Kâmil Pasha was the voice of opponents of the CUP. In other words, Kâmil Pasha was commonly embraced symbol against the CUP.²⁴⁶ Thus, his elimination alarmed and pushed existing liberal and religious opposition to take a more radical attitude against the CUP. Also, both liberal and religious-minded opponents quickly realized that they had to form an alliance in order to deal with the CUP effectively. Although the influence of liberals was weak on the Chamber, they were quite active in *İkdam*. In various writings that were published in the newspaper, liberals, particularly Sinop deputy Rıza Nur from the *Ahrar* Party, questioned the existence of the CUP and accused the CUP of intervening in government business. This, liberals argued, was an obvious violation of the Ottoman Constitution.²⁴⁷

Harsh criticisms of liberals were supported and unsparingly perpetuated by religious-minded opponents who expressed their ideas in their own newspaper, *Volkan*. *Volkan* was first edited on December 1908 by Derviş Vahdeti who was sent to exile under Hamidian autocracy and returned to the capital after the revolution by utilizing the amnesty.²⁴⁸ Vahdeti later established a party, named Muhammadan Union (*İttihâd-i Muhammedi*), and played an important role in the 31 March Incident. Although the writers of the *Volkan* shared ideas of liberals regarding the policies of the CUP, they differentiated themselves from the liberals by refusing the idea of decentralization. Besides, the rhetoric of the *Volkan* was more obviously activism-oriented compared to the rhetoric of the *İkdam*.

On April 1908, the Muhammadan Union organized an opening ceremony in Hagia Sophia. The timing was perfect since the day was the same with the celebration day of the birth of the Prophet. Thousands of religious-minded people attended to the organization and listened to the enthusiastic speech given by Vahdeti.²⁴⁹ Compared to similar incidents that took place in previous months, such as demonstrations on the ground of prohibition or restriction of the theatre and photography, this was big and effective regarding both the number of participants and the enthusiasm. The

²⁴⁴Ibid., 58.

²⁴⁵Swenson, "The Young Turk Revolution," 316, 321-322

²⁴⁶Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 172; Shaw, *History of The Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol.2, 279.

²⁴⁷Ibid., 164.

²⁴⁸Derviş Vahdeti, "İzâ erâd'allâhu şey'en hey'ye'e lehu esbâbehu, [Allah bir şeyi isteyince onun sebeplerini de hazırlar]" *Volkan* 75, 16 March 1909.

²⁴⁹Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 236.

organization demonstrated how the opponents of the CUP were active and ready to take action in case of any uprising. The assassination of zealous CUP opponent and editor of *Serbesti* newspaper, Hasan Fehmi, on 6 April provided the grounds for such an uprising. Opponents were quite sure that the assassination was carried out by the CUP *fedai(s)*.²⁵⁰ Considering the anonymous threats that targeted Vahdeti and CUP's way of dealing with the opposition both in the past and the present days, the accusation of opponents were reasonable. Thus, the funeral of Hasan Fehmi gave the impression of a demonstration against the CUP instead of an ordinary funeral. The capital was ready to witness an uprising.

When light infantry battalions of the Third Army Corps (*avcı taburları*) that were located at Taşkışla revolted on the night of 12/13 April, they were joined by a high number of people particularly consisting of religious students (*softas*) and low-ranking clerics (*imams*).²⁵¹ Within hours, rebels dramatically grew in number and managed to take control of the capital without facing any resistance, and invaded the Chamber.²⁵² They also conveyed their demands to the government; resignation of grand vizier and particular ministers, replacement of the head of the Chamber and some pro-CUP bureaucrats, restoration of the shari'a and amnesty for themselves.²⁵³ Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha resigned immediately.²⁵⁴ Rebels were informed that their other demands were approved.²⁵⁵ However, these were not enough to send soldiers to back their barracks and people to their homes. On the contrary, rebels celebrated their victory by firing guns into the air and continued their activities in the following days. The order of İstanbul deteriorated. Directly in front of the parliament building, rebels attacked two ministers, Minister of War Ali Rıza Pasha and Minister of Navy Nazım Pasha. While Rıza Pasha wounded, Nazım Pasha died immediately.²⁵⁶ Most of the CUP members in İstanbul either fled or hid. After receiving the news from İstanbul, the CUP sent telegrams to the Palace and the Porte. In the telegrams, the Committee accused the Porte of being anti-constitutionalist and threatened the Sultan by sending an army to the capital.²⁵⁷ In the eyes of the CUP, the uprising was obviously targeting the constitutional regime, and the Sultan was responsible for this.²⁵⁸ Although the CUP tended to perceive

²⁵⁰ Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 6.

²⁵¹ Zürcher, "31 Mart," 201.

²⁵² Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 67.

²⁵³ David Farhi, "The Şariat as a Political Slogan - or the 'Incident of the 31st Mart'," *Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no. 3 (1971): 276.

²⁵⁴ Türkgeldi, *Görüp İştiklerim*, 25.

²⁵⁵ Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 69.

²⁵⁶ Türkgeldi, *Görüp İştiklerim*, 26.

²⁵⁷ Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 245.

²⁵⁸ Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 85-87.

Abdülhamid as one of the instigators of the uprising, the Sultan distanced himself from the uprising from the beginning, calculating early on that such a movement could cost him his throne. Thus, he tried to put an end to the rebellion and sent Ali Cevat Bey to convince rebels to return to their homes.²⁵⁹

The Palace and the Porte responded to the CUP's telegrams by stating that the constitution was not in danger. On the morning of 14 April, Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was replaced with Ahmed Tevfik Pasha (1845-1936) who was known as an apolitical career bureaucrat. However, these telegrams and appointment of new Grand Vizier were not enough to convince the Committee. Beginning on 15 April, the CUP centre in Macedonia formed a special army under the command of Mahmud Şevket Pasha by recruiting soldiers from Third and Second Army units.²⁶⁰ This special army was named Action Army (*Hareket Ordusu*) and sent to İstanbul by train. Despite the Palace's efforts for preventing its entrance to İstanbul, the Action Army entered into the capital on the morning of 24 April.²⁶¹ The Army did not confront any serious resistance except an ineffective one at Taşkısla. Besides, the Sultan ordered Special Units of the Palace (*İkinci Fırka-i Hümayun*) to not to resist.²⁶² After taking the city under his control, Mahmut Şevket Pasha declared martial law. The CUP was, now, determined to eliminate every individual who posed danger to itself including Sultan Abdülhamid. On 27 April, the Sultan was disposed and sent to Salonica. On the same day, his brother Mehmed was recognized as a new Sultan.

Although the CUP perceived the Incident as a religion-oriented and reactionary (*irticai*) uprising that targeted to the abolishment of the constitutional regime, this was probably not the case. First, rebels did not demand the abolishment of the constitution. Second, religion was just the language of the uprising, but not the essence of it.²⁶³ In other words, the religion was just a channel through which rebels expressed their discontent. The main driving force of the Incident was a general sense of aggrievement created in the aftermath of the revolution. Such sense of aggrievement was mostly felt by servants of the Hamidian regime who lost their jobs, lower-ranking *ulema*, particularly religious students and teachers, who felt threatened by particular reforms, ranker soldiers who lost their status to educated ones and newly returned exiles who were not given status or jobs that they desired. With the already existing political tension between the CUP and liberal/religious

²⁵⁹Ibid., 67, 78.

²⁶⁰Zürcher, "31 Mart," 202.

²⁶¹Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 253.

²⁶²Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanı*, 96-97.

²⁶³Farhi, "The Şeriat as a Political Slogan," 294; Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 224.

opposition to this picture, the uprising found itself suitable environment.

It is also worth noting that there have been considerable allegations regarding the role of Britain in the Incident. Since main opponents of the CUP (i.e. Derviş Vahdeti, Kâmil Pasha and liberals rallied around the *Ahrar* Party,) advocated the Britain-sided policies and British embassy tried to prevent entrance of Action Army to İstanbul, the allegations seem reasonable to an extent.²⁶⁴ However, there is not enough evidence to prove that the Incident was explicitly organized by Britain.²⁶⁵ Overall, the Incident was one of the most crucial cornerstones of the power struggle among the CUP, the Sublime Porte and the Palace. By taking advantage of the uprising, the CUP managed to consolidate its power and eliminate most of its rivals.



²⁶⁴For detailed information see Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı*, 275-286.

²⁶⁵Zürcher, “31 Mart,” 206.

3. DERVİŞ VAHDETİ AND HIS THOUGHTS

3.1 Vahdeti's Life, Personality and Newspaper

Derviş Vahdeti²⁶⁶ was born in Ottoman Cyprus, Nicosia in 1870 as a son of poor shoemaker Mahmud Aga. With the support of his father, he attended traditional *medrese* when he was four years old. There, he received religious education that mostly focused on the canon jurisprudence of Islam (*fiqh*), Arabic language, expenditure (*sarf*) and Turkish syntax (*nahiv*). When he was eight years old, Ottomans lost control of Cyprus to Britain.²⁶⁷ This was highly influential on Vahdeti and his ideas. He was fourteen when he became *hafız* (one who knows the whole text of Qur'an by heart). Before the age of twenty, his mother committed suicide and his father died due to natural causes. The death of his parents left him responsible for his two brothers and a sister. His two brothers later died at young ages due to tuberculosis and his sister married and disappeared.

At the age of twenty-one, Vahdeti engaged with the Sufi understanding of Islam by attaching himself to the Naqshbandi order. For the rest of his life, he remained a follower of the same order as his ideas were influenced by Sufi doctrine. By utilizing

²⁶⁶For information regarding the life of Derviş Vahdeti see Derviş Vahdeti, "Kahraman-ı Hürriyet Niyazi ve Enver Beylere," *Volkan* 2, 12 December 1908; "Kâri'in-i Kirâmdan Ricâ," *Volkan* 3, 13 December 1908; "Volkan," *Volkan* 16, 27 December 1908; "Halife-i İslâm Abdülhamid Han Hazretlerine Açık Mektup yâhud Maraz-ı Millet," *Volkan* 17, 10 January 1909; "Halife-i İslâm Abdülhamid Han Hazretlerine Açık Mektup yâhud Maraz-ı Millet'ten," *Volkan* 18, 11 January 1909; "Volkan," *Volkan* 19, 12 January 1909; "Halife-i İslâm Abdülhamid Han Hazretlerine Açık Mektup yâhud Maraz-ı Millet'ten," *Volkan* 20, 14 January 1909; "Halife-i İslâm Abdülhamid Han Hazretlerine Açık Mektup yâhud Maraz-ı Millet'ten," *Volkan* 24, 23 January 1909; "Volkan," *Volkan* 27, 27 January; "İzâ erâd'allâhu şey'en heyye'e lehu esbâbehu," *Volkan* 75, 16 March 1909; Zekariya Kurşun and Kemal Kahraman, "Derviş Vahdeti," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Ansiklopedisi*, vol 9 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994), 198-200. His original name was Derviş (Dervish). Later, he assumed the name 'Vahdeti' that means follower of monotheism and the one who unites.

²⁶⁷With the Cyprus Convention which was signed on 25 May 1878, the Ottoman Empire temporarily and conditionally agreed to renounce its administrative authority on Cyprus to Britain. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Britain legally annexed Cyprus. This annexation was legally recognized with the Lausanne Treaty of 1923.

his knowledge of the Qur'an and religion, he served as a *müezzin* in the Hagia Sophia mosque in Cyprus, Nicosia. During this period, he realized the importance of learning English for job opportunities, however, he hesitated to learn since he perceived learning a European language as a sin. He overcame this hesitation only after his two month-lasting visit to İstanbul. This visit played an important role in the world view of Vahdeti as he emphasised by writing, 'my eyes opened'. In addition, Britain's control of Cyprus exposed him to British culture and English. He tried to learn English by himself until he began to take English lessons from a Christian missionary. Although he was irritated by using the Bible as a practice book and attending Sunday mass in a Christian church, he continued language classes. When he was twenty-five, his efforts for learning English became fruitful, and Vahdeti was hired by the British office. Although there is no clear information about the details of his work, it was likely a low-ranking position as his salary was quite low. His job exposed Vahdeti to the British culture and played an important role in shaping his pro-British political stance. This period also marked Vahdeti's increasing interest in domestic politics of the Ottoman Empire. It was in this period that he started to read Murad Bey's *Mizan* and was influenced by the liberal ideas of the Young Turks. It is known that Vahdeti distributed *Mizan* and *Meşveret* voluntarily, and helped Young Turks who escaped from İstanbul to Cyprus due to pressure of Hamidian autocracy. These activities made him a Young Turk in the eyes of the Hamidian rule, which led to an interrogation by the local court; however, he was not found guilty.

In 1902, Vahdeti left Cyprus for İstanbul in order to find a proper job and to follow politics more closely. Although he was employed in the Emigration Office (*Muhacirin Dâiresi*) as a transcriber (*mümeyyiz*), he felt that he deserved a better role. Thus, he periodically sent request petitions to the Porte for a better job. However, one of these petitions was somehow interpreted as an insult to bureaucratic authorities and he was exiled to the province of eastern Anatolia, Diyarbekir, after being kept in prison for thirty-four days.²⁶⁸ In Diyarbekir, he met with Ziya Gökalp and Sheikh Ahmed who were influential in his mindset. As Vahdeti stated in one of his articles, he harmonized the Sufism of Sheikh Ahmed with the philosophy of Gökalp, and this harmony helped him to change himself. It is known that Vahdeti engaged in political activities for the first time in Diyarbekir as he participated in the occupation of the telegram office that was organized by the CUP. After three and half years in Diyarbekir, Vahdeti decided to return to İstanbul by ignoring his status of being in exile. Nevertheless, he was captured while passing through the Euphrates and was incarcerated in Diyarbekir. At the end of his ten days in prison, he was released on

²⁶⁸Petition may not be the only reason for the exile. It is possible that there were another charges. However, there is no evidence for this assumption.

parole with the help of one of his friends. In order to go to the Capital, he had to wait for the amnesty which was granted after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.

When he arrived in İstanbul, he was not alone. There was a large number of unemployed victims of Hamidian autocracy who returned to the capital with big hopes. However, most of them were soon disappointed, and Vahdeti was among these people. He could not find a proper job and became a member of “Devotees of the Nation Society” (*Fedâkâran-ı Millet Cemiyeti*), an association established by returnees and exiles in order to provide for the needs of people who were suffering under similar conditions.²⁶⁹ He did not approve of some activities of the association and terminated his membership. The popularity of the printing press led by the revolution encouraged him to publish a daily newspaper where he could express his complaints and ideas. He published one hundred and ten issues in total until 20 April 1909.

It is known that Vahdeti sold his entire estate in Cyprus before he went to İstanbul.²⁷⁰ Thus, it is possible that he financed his newspaper, for a short period, by relying on his savings. His visit to the Palace to demand financial support from the Sultan and his demand for a loan from his friend, Enderunlu Lütü, was evidence that he experienced financial difficulties as time went by.²⁷¹ Following the refusal of his demand by the Palace, it is highly possible that he searched for alternative sources of funding. Regarding Vahdeti’s financial source, there are three logical assumptions. First, it is possible that Vahdeti found money that he needed from the sales of *Volkan* since the growing popularity of his persona increased the sales of the newspaper. Second, he received financial support from Said Pasha who was the son of Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Kâmil Pasha. This was possible because Vahdeti was a zealous supporter of Kâmil Pasha and he was defending his son, Said Pasha, against the criticisms of *Tanin* in his writings in *Volkan*.²⁷² Third, Vahdeti probably received financial support from Sultan Abdülhamid as a reward for his harsh criticism targeting freemasons. Although Chief Palace Secretary Ali Cevat Bey writes that Vahdeti’s financial demand was refused by the Palace, there are also historical accounts that reveal the financial help of the Sultan.²⁷³ Nevertheless, same historical accounts indicate that Vahdeti did not receive money personally but he sent his friend Enderunlu Lütü since Vahdeti thought that receiving money from the Sultan

²⁶⁹Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 223.

²⁷⁰Zekariya Kuşun and Kemal Kahraman, “Derviş Vahdeti,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Ansiklopedisi*, vol 9 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994), 198.

²⁷¹Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyet’in İlanı*, 60; Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı*, 41.

²⁷²Derviş Vahdeti, “Şûrâ-yı Ümmet tehdide, Tanin jurnalciliğe başladı: Şûrâ-yı Ümmet evvelki günkü nüshasında,” *Volkan* 17, 10 January 1909. Ali Birinci also draws attention to Said Pasha’s financial support to Vahdeti and his newspaper. See Birinci, “31 Mart Vak’asının Bir Yorumu,” 202.

²⁷³Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım: Milli Mücadeleye Gidiş*, vol. II, 38-40.

might degenerate his ‘unyielding’ reputation in the eyes of his followers.²⁷⁴

The outbreak of 31 March Incident on 12/13 April 1909 was a crucial point in Vahdeti’s life. On 17 April, the CUP ordered his interrogation on the allegations that his active role in the Incident. Accordingly, he went to Prince Vahdeddin’s mansion hoping to hide there, but his demand was refused. Then, he left İstanbul on 18 April and arrived at Gebze, a district of the independent subprovince of Izmit, where the Muhammadan Union was organized as well. He remained covered in Gebze for three days by the members of the organization.²⁷⁵ On 21 May, he left Gebze and embarked for Smyrna. However, he was captured as soon as he arrived Smyrna on 25 May, and taken into custody.²⁷⁶ After he was sent to İstanbul, he was judged by the Military Court (*Divân-ı Harb*) and found guilty. He was sentenced to the death penalty and was hanged on 19 July 1909. As he stated in one of his articles, he published nothing except his articles in *Volkan*.²⁷⁷

The considerable number of articles in *Volkan* was written by Derviş Vahdeti himself. While he put his signature on most of his writings, some of them were left unsigned without reason. The genre of these unsigned writings reveal that they belonged to Vahdeti as the content of some of these writings included Vahdeti’s name and referred to his other writings explicitly. Apart from Vahdeti, more than a hundred individuals wrote for the newspaper, whereas only thirty of these individuals, including Vahdeti, wrote more than one single article. Said Nursi, Faruki Ömer, Mehmed Sıdkı and Abbas Lütfi were most active and prominent ones of these writers. Such domination of Vahdeti over the *Volkan* also meant that it was Vahdeti who constituted the backbone of the political stance of the newspaper.

Although Vahdeti wrote in the first issue that the ultimate purpose of *Volkan* is serving humanity, the most outstanding feature of the newspaper was the opposition against the CUP. Starting with a modest language but increasing its dose within the time, the activities and policies of the CUP were criticized in *Volkan*. From the time that its popularity grew enough, *Volkan* was one of the most effective and active opposition platforms against the CUP. The Committee was blamed for interfering with the activities of the government. Vahdeti, for example, labelled the CUP as

²⁷⁴Ibid. Also see Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı*, 41-42.

²⁷⁵Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım: Milli Mücadeleye Gidiş*, vol. II, 34-35.

²⁷⁶Zabtiye Nezareti Evrakı (ZB) 332/35, 22 April 1909/9 Nisan 1325.

²⁷⁷Derviş Vahdeti, “Üçüncü İhtar,” *Volkan* 95, 5 April 1909, “Ancak bizim *Volkan*’dan mâada eserimiz olmadığı gibi, İttihâd-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti’nin de hiç neşr olunmuş bir risâlecîği bile yoktur. . .” Also see İttihâd-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti Dersaadet Merkezi, *Volkan* 100, 10 April 1909, “Memleketi fesâda vermek için “Celâlâd” nâmıyla ve Hâfız Ahmed imzâsıyla bir risâle neşr olunmuş ve bu risâlenin, gûyâ İttihâd-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti tarafından neşr olunduğu gösterilmiştir. Şimdi cemiyetin, *Volkan*’dan mâada mürevvic-i efkârı bulunmadığı ilân olunur.”

being a ‘government within the government (*hükümet içinde hükümet*)’.²⁷⁸ The CUP was a glorious organization that paved the way for the constitutional rule, yet started to corrupt soon after the revolution, Vahdeti wrote.²⁷⁹ Now, people who were concerned about their interests were taking the CUP under their control. Any party or person, who struggled to break the CUP’s power, were supported and defended in the articles of *Volkan*. The friendly approach of *Volkan* to Kâmil Pasha and the Liberal Party was an example of this attitude.²⁸⁰ Besides, disappointed victims of Hamidian autocracy, officers who could not receive their payments in time and ranker soldiers who were alienated from the CUP, were addressed. In other words, *Volkan* was the ‘brave’ voice of resentments.

Starting from the forty-eighth issue, *Volkan* was presented as the press organ of the Muhammadan Union with the statement (*İttihâd-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti’nin mürevvic-i efkârıdır*) that appeared on the first page of the newspaper. Although the party was legally opened on 5 April 1909 with a stirring ceremony, its organization started long before. In early February, Vahdeti wrote that many branches of the party in various Islamic countries were opened, including the one in İstanbul.²⁸¹ As stated in the party program that was published on 16 March, the ultimate purpose of the Muhammadan Union was to unite and encourage political activities of all Muslims.²⁸² The party was highly international and unique compared to other parties in the Ottoman political life. The titular head of the party was Prophet Muhammad and there was no territorial limitation for the activities of the party as its membership policy was quite flexible.²⁸³ In addition, the party did not recognize any law except the shari‘a.²⁸⁴ Although the Communist Party of Marx was labelled as a way of anti-religiosity in *Volkan*, the Muhammadan Union, ironically, resembled to the Communist Party in terms of its organization and internationality.²⁸⁵

Volkan irritated the CUP most since the Committee had to deal with multiple opponents at the same time. The most important source of the CUP’s disgust was the influence of *Volkan* in the army as the CUP perceived the army as insurance

²⁷⁸ Derviş Vahdeti, “Hükümet içinde hükümet,” *Volkan* 88, 29 March 1909.

²⁷⁹ Derviş Vahdeti, “Yaşasın Hilmi Paşa! Yaşasın 10 Temmuz muhtedileri!” *Volkan* 83, 24 March 1909.

²⁸⁰ See for example Derviş Vahdeti, “Kâmil Paşa,” *Volkan* 2, 12 December 1908; Lutfi, “Bir pîr-i siyâsetimiz için,” *Volkan* 53, 22 February 1909.

²⁸¹ Derviş Vahdeti, “Din - Kavmiyet,” *Volkan* 41, 10 February 1909.

²⁸² Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihâd-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti Nizâm-nâmesi,” *Volkan* 75, 16 March 1909, “... ve kâffe-i müslimînin faaliyet-i siyasiye ve içtimaiyelerini tezyid ve tevhid etmek...”

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihâd-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti’nin Tesirâtı ve Memlekete Birinci Hizmeti,” *Volkan* 99, 9 April 1909, “İttihâd-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti, cemiyet-i muhaddese değildir ki, kânûn-ı beşere tâbi olsun. Onun kânûnu, Kânûn-i ilâhi’dir.”

²⁸⁵ Derviş Vahdeti, “Dindarlık-Dinsizlik ve Tarikatlar,” *Volkan* 36, 5 February 1909, “... Karl Marks’ın cemiyet-i beynelmileli, anarşist fırkaları, idâre fırkaları ve daha birçokları vardır ki, bunlar hep birer tarikat-tir. Dinsizliğin başka bir yoludur.”; Şerif Mardin, “İslamcılık,” 1403.

and derived its power from it. The CUP was aware that growing discontent within the army could endanger the authority of the Committee, and *Volkan* was obviously trying to accomplish this task. Problems of soldiers, particularly ranker soldiers, often appeared in the articles of *Volkan* and complaint letters of soldiers were published.²⁸⁶ To a considerable extent, *Volkan* was successful in communicating with complainers both within and the outside of the army.²⁸⁷ Thus, the CUP was quick to blame and shut down *Volkan* soon after 31 March Incident took place.

3.2 Religious Thought

3.2.1 Vahdeti and Islam

In the mindset of Vahdeti, Islam meant more than just a religion. As an only truth (*hakikat*), Islam was the *sine qua non* of most of his social, cultural or political ideas. This fact was quite obvious in his writings as he tried to either base or reconcile his ideas with Islam. For instance, Islam was the ultimate condition for the existence of freedom, equality and fraternity in the Empire.²⁸⁸ Similarly, there was no philosophy that was unrelated to Islam and Islam was a must for world peace.²⁸⁹

However, Vahdeti's perception of Islam did not welcome social change. Contrary to Islamic understandings of his modern/reformist Islam-oriented counterparts who, for example, rallied around the journal named *Sırât-ı Müstakim* (True Path),²⁹⁰ Vahdeti's understanding of Islam was traditional and against the practice of *ictihâd* (interpretation of Islamic law).²⁹¹ To him, the door of *ictihâd* was closed since the Islamic law already took its best form with the efforts of qualified Ottoman *ulema*. Such understanding was shared by uneducated masses but not Islam-minded intel-

²⁸⁶See for example Kûşe-yi nisyanda kalmış bir zâbit, "Varaka-i mühimme," *Volkan* 6, 16 December 1908; Karaman taburu zâbitân nâmına Yüzbaşı Mustafa, "Volkan sâhib-i imtiyazı Derviş Vahdeti Bey'e" *Volkan* 80, 21 March 1909.

²⁸⁷For the extent of influence of *Volkan* on soldiers and public see Baykal, "The Ottoman Press", 166-179.

²⁸⁸Derviş Vahdeti, "Nutuk," *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908, "*Bütün benî beşer mutmain olsunlar ki: Dinsiz hürriyet, adâlet, müsâvât, uhuvvet kat'iyen temin edilemez.*"

²⁸⁹Ibid., "*Hiç bir felsefe yoktur ki İslâmiyet'te dâhil olmasın.*"; Derviş Vahdeti, "Vahdet-i Vücut," *Volkan* 32, 1 Februart 1909.

²⁹⁰For detailed examination of *Sırât-ı Müstakim* see Esther Debüs, *Sebilürreşad*, trans. Atilla Dirim (İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2009).

²⁹¹Derviş Vahdeti, "Diyarbakir'den: İcmâ'-i Siyasî - İ'tizâl-i Siyasî," *Volkan* 19, 12 January 1909.

lectuals. As Şerif Mardin emphasised, two kinds of Islamic understanding emerged in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire. While one of these understandings was represented by intellectuals who argued that Islam had to be reformed in conjunction with necessities of modernity (the cadre of *Sırât-ı Müstakim* belonged to this category), the other understanding was embraced by the masses and Sufis who opposed the idea of reform in Islam.²⁹² Vahdeti, as a Sufi and opponent of the practice of *ictihâd*, belonged to the latter, which was why he was quite successful in communicating with the masses in the language of Islam.

The traditional Islam, in a way, was an identity for Vahdeti and its influence was obvious in his thought. Most notably, he constantly referred to Islam while discussing political ideologies. This was quite natural for Vahdeti since he perceived Islam as political in nature.²⁹³ In other words, Islam was an inseparable part of politics, and Muslims had to discuss politics always within the context of Islam.

According to Vahdeti, Islam was also a social religion, and its scope was broad.²⁹⁴ This meant that Islam was not only meaningful in conjunction with the spiritual or other world but also with the living world. Thus, Islam had a considerable impact on worldly matters and it was practical for Muslims. One of its practical features, for example, was its civilizing effect on Muslim societies. It was Islam that civilized Arabs, Persians and Turks, Vahdeti wrote.²⁹⁵ If Islam had not enlightened Turks, they would have stayed in the dry steps of Central Asia. Similarly, Arabs would have continued to live in their primitive tends in the isolated desert of Arabia. Such an assumption was not surprising as the traditional Islamic narrative labelled the pre-Islamic period as a period of ‘ignorance’ (*jahiliyyah*).

Considering the relationship between progress and Islam, Vahdeti’s ideas resembled to a large extent the ideas of the Young Ottomans. He argued that Islam is not an obstacle for the progress, but rather a condition of it.²⁹⁶ This was one of the most popular subjects among the Young Ottomans in the 1870s as they aimed to prove this assumption by referring to multiple Islamic sources. However, the Young Ottomans discussed the issue at a certain intellectual level while Vahdeti did not.

²⁹²Şerif Mardin, “İslamcılık,” in *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 1400.

²⁹³Derviş Vahdeti, “Sebbeke men Bellegake [Yapılmış olan bir hakareti sana ulaştıran kimse, sana hakaret etti],” *Volkan* 49, 18 February 1909, “... yoksa, bütün siyâsetler, dindedir. Zâten din, mâhiyeti itibâriyle bir siyâset-i fevkalâde üzerine müessesdir.”

²⁹⁴Derviş Vahdeti, “Diyarbakir’den: İcmâ’-i Siyasî-I’tizâl-i Siyasî,” *Volkan* 19, 12 January 1909, “Din-i İslâm içtimâî bir dindir, yalnız selâmet-i uhreviyyeyi değil, saâdet-i dünyeviyyeyi de kâfildir.”

²⁹⁵Ibid., “Din-i İslâm, Arablan bâdiye çadırlarında, Acemleri fesad-i ahlâk mastabalarında, Türkleri bozkır yurtlarında buldu, bir nefha-i irşâdla bu kavimleri haziz-i cehâletten, evc-i fazilete is’âd etti, sâha-i şarkı, bekayâ-yı indirâsıyla hâlâ Avrupa’nın gözlerini kamaştıran bir medeniyet-i lami’aya tulû’gâh eyledi.”

²⁹⁶Derviş Vahdeti, “İkâz,” *Volkan* 47, 16 February 1909, “Eğer İslâmiyet mâni-i terakkidir, diyen ve demeye muktedir olan varsa meydan-ı mübâreze-i kalem açıktır.”

Vahdeti simply emphasised the importance of reason and logic for the prosperity of Islam without going into detail. It is possible that Vahdeti distanced himself from such detailed discussions because he was incapable of doing so due to his improper education. Accordingly, his references to Qur'an were somewhat irrational and simple, and far from complex. For instance, he argued that Qur'anic verses informed Muslims about future developments.²⁹⁷

An interesting point that should be noted is Vahdeti's approach to positivism and positivists. It is known that positivism is a highly anti-religious philosophy that perceived science as an absolute truth. Considering the pious stance of Vahdeti, one can rightly expect a highly critical approach from Vahdeti regarding positivist ideas. Nevertheless, this was not the case as Vahdeti hailed some prominent positivists such as Ahmed Rıza and Abdullah Cevdet.²⁹⁸ Furthermore, he explicitly preferred positivists to fake Muslims who were taking West as a model.²⁹⁹ Vahdeti was a victim of the Hamidian autocracy, and he was aware that the Hamidian autocracy was abolished by these positivists. Thus, he probably aimed to emphasise his anti-Hamidian regime stance by praising important names of the CUP and ignoring their positivist leanings. However, Vahdeti's initially "soft" approach to positivism dramatically changed as his popularity among religious-minded Ottoman subjects increased and the authoritarian attitude of the CUP became more apparent. While he was praising positivist Ahmed Rıza in the second issue of *Volkan*, he was also criticizing the same person and his positivist ideas in the fifty-sixth and ninety-eighth issues of the newspaper.

3.2.2 Shari'a

Vahdeti's writings reveal that he was a dedicated supporter of shari'a. However, Vahdeti perceived shari'a in two different ways. First, shari'a was simply Islamic law which derived from traditional sources of Islam (e.g. Quran, Sunna, ijma', qiyas). Second and more important, shari'a was justice (*adâlet*). Both of these understandings appeared in the writings of Vahdeti in conjunction with the shari'a and played an important role in his ideas. Regarding the first meaning of shari'a, Vahdeti's reference was simple; the Ottoman Constitution had to be congruent with

²⁹⁷ Derviş Vahdeti, "Ve yahluku mâ lâ talemûn [Ve daha sizin bilmediğiniz nice şeyler yaratmaktadır]," *Volkan* 63, 4 March 1909, "Demek oluyor ki Kur'ân-ı Kerîm, mu'cize olarak bin üçyüz sene sonra ve daha kim bilir kaç yüz bin sene sonra meydana gelecek şeyleri haber vermiştir."

²⁹⁸ Derviş Vahdeti, "Kahraman-ı Hürriyet Niyazi ve Enver Beylere," *Volkan* 2, 12 December 1908; "Hüseyin Cahid Bey'e," *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908.

²⁹⁹ Derviş Vahdeti, "Volkan," *Volkan* 44, 13 February 1909.

shari'a.³⁰⁰ That meant that none of any articles of the Ottoman Constitution had the luxury to conflict with the rules of God. This was natural to Vahdeti as he argued that the Ottoman Constitution itself was derived from shari'a. Those who opposed this view could read the Mirror of the Ottoman Constitution (*Mir'ât-i Kanûn-i Esâsî*), a pamphlet of the Islamic jurist Ömer Ziyaeddin Efendi which was devoted to proving this fact by referring several hadiths, wrote Vahdeti.³⁰¹ He refused any kind of law not rooted in Islam. To him, the idea of making or regulating law was unnecessary since the shari'a was already perfect and included answers to every possible question. Furthermore, the shari'a was equal to progress as it was an inevitable part of Islam.³⁰² Ottoman Civil Code (*Mecelle-i Ahkâm-ı Adliye*) was there with its all glory in case of any necessity. One small exception in this issue for Vahdeti was his proposal for making new criminal code, however, this code also had to be based on shari'a.³⁰³

Considering the defence of shari'a, Vahdeti's tone and language was quite assertive and rife with activism. He defined himself as a protector of shari'a and standard-bearer of those who demand it.³⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the logic behind such a protectionist attitude of Vahdeti needs an explanation. The CUP or Porte did not attempt to secularize the Ottoman Constitution at that time, and there was no actor trying to undermine the shari'a in the judicial context, yet Vahdeti emphasized the importance of shari'a on the Ottoman Constitution. It is possible that Vahdeti intended to enhance his Islam-based identity by presenting himself as a protector of one of the most fundamental phenomena of Islam: shari'a. As previously mentioned, Vahdeti was communicating with his audience in the language of Islam, and the predominance of shari'a played an important role in the consolidation of this language.

Alternatively, Vahdeti's emphasis of shari'a meant demand for justice. Here, justice was not only referring to judicial fairness but also to the social order where disadvantaged people are protected by the state. This idea was not something new, rather, it was an expression of pre-modern understanding in the Second Constitutional Period. The idea of perceiving justice as a condition of the well-functioning social order existed in old Persian state tradition and it was inherited by the Ottomans.³⁰⁵ The idea found its best expression in the term 'circle of justice' (*dâire-i*

³⁰⁰Derviş Vahdeti, "Asker Kardeşlerimizden Selâmet-i Vatan Nâmına Rica," *Volkan* 108, 18 April 1909, "... ve meclisimizde yapılacak olan kanunlarımızın şeriat-i Ahmediyyemize muvafık olmasına dikkat ve gayret edeceğiz."

³⁰¹Derviş Vahdeti, "Kânûn-i Esâsi," *Volkan* 51, 20 February 1909.

³⁰²Derviş Vahdeti, "Volkan," *Volkan* 64, 5 March 1909, "Yukarıda beyân olunduğu üzere ancak şeriat sayesinde terakkî eden bu âlem..."

³⁰³Derviş Vahdeti, "Kânûn-i Adâlet mi? Yoksa Kânûn-i İstibdâd?" *Volkan* 35, 4 February 1909.

³⁰⁴Derviş Vahdeti, "Volkan," *Volkan* 64, 5 March 1909, "Biz şeriatı isteyenlerin, emin olabilirsiniz ki, sancakdârlıyız."

³⁰⁵See for example Kınalızade Ali Çelebi, *Ahlâk-ı Alâ'î*, ed. Mustafa Koç (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2007).

adâlet). Until the end of the seventeenth century, the idea of the circle of justice preserved its popularity among Ottoman thinkers/statemen and it was perceived as a condition of social order. By relying on a similar understanding, Vahdeti employed the idea of justice and expressed this in the guise of shari'a. His demand for shari'a meant a call of justice for victims of purges carried out by the CUP. When rebels demanded the restoration of shari'a during the 31 March Incident, their reference to shari'a was identical to Vahdeti's reference to shari'a.

Vahdeti's demand for shari'a also pointed out the anti-religiosity of the CUP. Although his reaction to positivist members of the committee was remarkably gentle in some of his writings, he was aware of the power of the anti-religiosity in order to damage both the reputation and authority of the CUP. Thus, he was delivering the message that the shari'a and/or justice was undermined due to the policies of the CUP. The Committee's reaction to this implicit accusation was to juxtapose the demand of shari'a with a yearning for Hamidian autocracy and reactionism. Hüseyin Cahit, for example, explicitly interpreted Vahdeti's demand for shari'a as demand for anarchy and autocracy.³⁰⁶ Vahdeti refused this accusation by repeating that shari'a is the condition of freedom, progress and happiness.³⁰⁷ He also added that he was simply demanding a full and proper application of shari'a since there was a freedom in the empire now.³⁰⁸

Overall, shari'a had different meanings in the mind of Vahdeti and he referred these meanings selectively. He was aware of the potential of the concept and used it as a weapon against the CUP. However, it was also this emphasis on shari'a that the CUP used at the end as a tool for eliminating Vahdeti and his newspaper.

3.2.3 Sufism

Although the existence of much more romantic explanations, etymologically, the term 'Sufism' derives from the Arabic word '*suf*' (wool).³⁰⁹ Since Sufis have tended to wear modest clothes which were made from wool in order to refer to their aversion to the 'temporary' and 'material' world, '*suf*' as an origin of Sufism seems more

³⁰⁶ Derviş Vahdeti, "Aynen "Likü lli mubtılın muhik" [Her iptal edilen için haklı bir sebep vardır]", *Volkan* 76, 17 March 1909.

³⁰⁷ Derviş Vahdeti, "Volkan," *Volkan* 64, 5 March 1909.

³⁰⁸ Derviş Vahdeti, "Aynen "Likü lli mubtılın muhik" [Her iptal edilen için haklı bir sebep vardır]", *Volkan* 76, 17 March 1909.

³⁰⁹ Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Kalabadhi, *The Doctrine of the Sufis: (Kitab al-ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf)*, trans. Arthur John Arberry (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5–11.

likely.³¹⁰ Although Sufis are eager to refer to Prophet Muhammad as their first sheikh and his close companions as the first disciples (dervish),³¹¹ the rise of Sufism as one of the standard ways of Islamic understanding dates back to the Middle Islamic period.³¹² However, it was not until the tenth century that there was a distinctive understanding of Sufism which made itself apparent with Sufis, such as Abu-l-Qāsim al-Junayd who became one of the most influential actors in Sufi doctrine. Considering the efforts made by scholars to define Sufism, one term that dominates the literature is asceticism (*zuhd*).³¹³ Asceticism, as the main pillar of Sufism, is one's aversion to worldly temptations. In other words, it describes a reaction to the material and temporary world. In addition to asceticism also applied to what Sufis perceived as the orthodox and colourless piety of the *umma* (Islamic community). Ascetics prioritized individualism, emotions, and mysticism in their way to reach God, the ultimate goal of Sufism. Despite harsh criticisms and setbacks, Sufism managed to maintain its dynamism, and continued to diversify and spread in the following centuries, particularly with the formation of various Sufi orders.³¹⁴

The Naqshbandiyya, which Vahdeti attached himself when he was twenty-five years old, was one of these orders. There is no detailed information on his first encounter with the Sufism. For instance, questions such as; *who was his first sheik?* or *to what extent he attached himself to his sheik?* remain unanswered. Nevertheless, Vahdeti himself emphasized the influence of Sufism on his ideas.³¹⁵ Some of his articles devoted to Sufism and references that were given to famous Sufis in his articles are proof of this.³¹⁶ Vahdeti's approach to Sufism was limited to romantic rhetoric as he was not involved in any discussion regarding the nature, principles or practices of Sufism. This was one of the important points that distinguished Vahdeti from his modernist Islam-oriented counterparts. Such discussions on Sufism were appearing in the other journals or periodicals of the time. For example, an *ulema* and member of the CUP, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, assertively opposed basic practices and principles of Sufism in *Sırât-ı Müstakim*.³¹⁷ Contrary to this critical approach,

³¹⁰ Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 152.

³¹¹ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 5-6.

³¹² Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 152.

³¹³ For detailed information see Leah Kinberg, "What Is Meant by Zuhd," *Studia Islamica*, no. 61 (1985): 27-44.

³¹⁴ Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 231-248.

³¹⁵ Derviş Vahdeti, "İzâ erâd'allâhu şey'en heyye'e lehu esbâbehu," *Volkan* 75, 16 March 1909.

³¹⁶ Derviş Vahdeti, "Hakikat," *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908, "Zuhûr-i Âdem'den beridir bir aşk-ı lâhûti ile, kiminiz da'vâ-yı uluhiyyetle merdud, kiminiz imhâ-yı enâiyyetle "ene'l-Hak" diyerek makbûl-ı Kibriyâ oldunuz."

³¹⁷ See Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, "Tefsir-i Şerif," *Sırâtılmüstakim* 11, 5 November 1908; "Tefsir-i Şerif," *Sırâtılmüstakim* 12, 12 November 1908.

Vahdeti had taken Sufism for granted.³¹⁸ He embraced the limits of reason and logic, and perceived Sufism as a way of meaning ‘extraordinary’ scientific developments.³¹⁹ Vahdeti argued that human beings could not overcome their astonishment led by scientific developments without the explanations of Sufism.³²⁰ One single and simple exception for Vahdeti’s uncritical approach to Sufism might be seen in his ideas regarding the relationship between the sheik and dervish. In this regard, he argued that a dervish can suspect his sheik and ask him questions in order to satisfy his loyalty.³²¹ Since the traditional Sufi understanding considered suspecting and questioning sheiks inappropriate, it can be argued that Vahdeti’s stance was more or less liberal in this regard.

Vahdeti’s approach to Sufism demonstrated that he did not receive a proper education on Sufism. While he distanced himself from discussions which basic principles of Sufism were questioned, he preferred to employ Sufi understanding and language in order to romanticize Islam. His reference to Sufism was limited and far from being sophisticated.

3.2.4 Woman, Family and Education

According to Vahdeti, the ideal woman (he named this ideal woman type as an Islam’s woman (*İslam Kadını*)) was the one who covers every part of her body and feels the love of her husband very passionately.³²² This ideal type of woman also obeyed her husband and remained silent in conversations about which she had insufficient knowledge. A woman who appeared in the streets often did not fit Vahdeti’s definition of ideal woman.³²³ In the first decade of 1900s, this type was a comparatively conservative portrait of a Muslim woman living in Ottoman İstanbul, as the Western lifestyle had gained popularity in İstanbul, particularly in *Beyoğlu*. However, Vahdeti interpreted the growing popularity of Western lifestyle among Ottoman woman as a consequence of moral degeneration which was triggered by the importation of European moral understanding to the Empire. Due to this degeneration, young Ottoman men began to change their standards in their search for women to marry. Now, women who went to the theatre and who danced were attractive for

³¹⁸Derviş Vahdeti, “Dindarlık-Dinsizlik ve Tarikatlar,” *Volkan* 36, 5 February 1909.

³¹⁹Derviş Vahdeti, “Hakikat,” *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908; “Hayretler,” *Volkan* 32, 1 February 1909.

³²⁰Derviş Vahdeti, “Hayretler,” *Volkan* 32, 1 February 1909.

³²¹Derviş Vahdeti, “Ahlasu dineke... [Dininde ihlâslı, samîmi ol],” *Volkan* 60, 1 March 1909.

³²²Derviş Vahdeti, “Tiyatrolar Ahlâkımıza Nasıl Tesir Ediyor?” *Volkan* 39, 8 February 1909.

³²³Derviş Vahdeti, “Volkan,” *Volkan* 11, 21 December 1908.

Ottoman men, Vahdeti wrote.³²⁴

In the opinion of Vahdeti, the theatre was responsible for this degeneration. Theatre in its nature conflicted with the moral rules, and it was full of disgustingness such as dance, argued Vahdeti. A woman certainly had to stay away from theatre since she could only learn how to wear *décolleté* dresses there. Even the theatre special to only women was unacceptable for Vahdeti.³²⁵

Regarding the family unit, the embrace of the hierarchical order was quite obvious in the writings of Vahdeti, where the patriarchal family structure in which the family was led, and decisions were made, by the father was considered the best. The law of the family was simply the consent of father, and those who do not obey rules of the father were doomed to lose their reputation and respect of other members of the family and that of their Muslim brethren. Vahdeti legitimized the patriarchal family by referring to Islam. To him, the father represented Adam and his rules represented shari'a. Those who refused this also refused morality, shari'a and Islam, Vahdeti argued.³²⁶

Regarding the issue of education, Vahdeti was aware of the Empire's disadvantaged literacy numbers compared to Western powers. Accordingly, he emphasised the immediate need for schools where people of Empire could learn how to read and write. In every village of the Empire, schools had to be founded and state had to do its best in order to accomplish this task. Additionally, newly recruited soldiers were required to learn how to read and write. The military could be a very effective tool for dealing such challenging task.³²⁷ Deficiencies in curricula was a long-standing problem, Vahdeti argued. Thus, there was an immediate need for reform regarding curricula of schools of the Empire. This was important for Vahdeti, particularly for the sake of constitutional regime, because education was the only way of instilling the idea of freedom and constitution in the minds of children. The guarantee and base of constitutionalism was education, Vahdeti argued.³²⁸ Talking on education, *mürebbiyes* (non-Muslim woman teachers "governesses") also constituted an issue for Vahdeti. The children of the nation had to be liberated from the dirty hands of *mürebbiyes* who were instilling European morality (*ahlâk-ı frengiyye*) in children. *Mürebbiyes* had to be replaced with Muslim women graduates of *Dârülmuallimât* (Female Teachers Training College) who were endowed with esteemed Islamic moral-

³²⁴Derviş Vahdeti, "Volkan," *Volkan* 11, 21 December 1908.

³²⁵Derviş Vahdeti, "Tiyatrolar Ahlâkımıza Nasıl Tesir Ediyor?" *Volkan* 39, 8 February 1909.

³²⁶Derviş Vahdeti, "Vahdeti Vücûd," *Volkan* 32, 1 February 1909, "Pederin rızâsı ki: O âilenin kanûnudur. Her kim o kanûna riâyet etmezse teveccüh-i pederden sâkât olur."

³²⁷Derviş Vahdeti, "Askerlerimiz Ne Olmalı," *Volkan* 6, 16 December 1908.

³²⁸Derviş Vahdeti, "Askerlerimiz Ne Olmalı," *Volkan* 6, 16 December 1908, "Hürriyetin, meşrutiyetin zâmin ve kâfili maariftir."

ity.³²⁹ In this way, children who internalized patriotism (*hubb-ı vatan*) and Islamic morality would have produced works that resembles the works of well-known Muslim intellectuals such as Avicenna and al-Farabi. So, reform in the education also meant progress for Vahdeti.

Vahdeti's writings on the issue of women reveal that he did not oppose the education of women. Although he drew a conservative portrait regarding the position of women in society, he was not reactionist as he encouraged the education of Muslim women.

3.3 Political Thought

3.3.1 Pan-Islamism(*İttihâd-ı İslam*)

Since God connected Muslims to each other by calling them brothers and advised them to be unified in believing in the precepts of the Quran, the idea of Pan-Islamism can be seen as Islamic principle.³³⁰ However, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that the term took a well-defined political shape.³³¹ In its ideological meaning, the Pan-Islamism basically referred to the union of all Muslims for a particular purpose and it has been mostly employed in conjunction with the Ottoman Empire. As Adeeb Khalid puts logically, the key principle of pan-Islamism was a 'series of local, territorially defined, Muslim nationalisms with anti-colonial agenda'.³³² Since Ottoman Sultans emphasised their status of being Caliph, Muslim rulers, particularly Indian and Asian, tended to appeal for help from Ottoman Sultans by reminding them of the responsibilities of Caliphs. This was the case particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century as the Muslim world confronted a new threat, the domination of Europe over the Muslims. Although by then the Empire experienced a series of military defeats by European powers, it was

³²⁹ Derviş Vahdeti, "Nâci," *Volkan* 5, 15 December 1908, "*Evlâd-ı vatani ecnebi mürebbiyelerinin kirli elerinden alıp müşîman kadınlarının, ama nasıl müşîman kadınlarının! Meryem ve Fâtımasîret; Dârülmuallimât'ta okumuş, ahlâk-ı islâmiyyeyi takınmış, afife, necîbe, sâliha müslüman kadınlarının ellerine verecektir.*"

³³⁰ The Qur'an 49: 10 and 3:103. See Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Quran*, 1341, 153.

³³¹ Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924* (New York: Brill, 1997), 22-23.

³³² Adeeb Khalid, "Pan-Islamism in practice: The rhetoric of Muslim unity and its uses," in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 204.

still the most powerful Muslim entity in the nineteenth century. Thus, the Ottomans appeared as a most logical and reliable candidate for the leadership of such union. The increasing anti-Europeanism within the Empire also served the formation of suitable conditions.³³³ Such suitable circumstances triggered the popularization of the Pan-Islamism among Ottoman intellectuals who were looking for a solution for the problems of the Empire. The term '*İttihâd-ı İslam*' was first used by prominent Young Ottoman, Namık Kemal, in *Hürriyet* newspaper in 1869.³³⁴ The popularity and discussions on the term continued to intensify as the ideology appeared in the other pro-Young Ottoman newspaper, *Basiret*. *İttihâd-ı İslam*, a pamphlet written by Esad Efendi, civil servant at the Maritime Trade Court (*Mahkeme-i Ticaret-i Bahriye*), in 1873, was soon translated into Arabic and became popular also in other Muslim countries. Esad Efendi explicitly emphasised the necessity of solidarity and union among Muslims, and proposed Pan-Islamism as an effective tool against European colonialism.³³⁵ The term became highly popular with the ascendancy of Abdülhamid II in 1876. Hamid practically utilized Pan-Islamism against European powers and managed to elevate Pan-Islamism as a serious threat for the colonial purposes of Europe.³³⁶ After the fall of Abdülhamid, Pan-Islamism, with raptures, preserved its importance and remained as an option for the salvation of the Empire together with Ottomanism and later Turkism. The mushrooming printing press, with the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908, provided a suitable environment for the discussion of the Pan-Islamism.³³⁷ Before moving into Vahdeti's perception of Pan-Islamism, it should be noted that Pan-Islamism is not identical with political Islam. While the former refers to the union of all Muslims in a political sense, the latter comprehensively refers to the active role of Islam in the political sphere as discussed before.

According to Vahdeti, there were four kinds of union (*ittihâd*) and these were; the union of nation (*ittihâd-ı milli*), the union of ethnicity (*ittihâd-ı kavmi*), the union of religion (*ittihâd-ı dini*) and the union of Sufi order (*ittihâd-ı tariki*).³³⁸ Since the union of nation, the union of ethnicity and the union of Sufi order will be examined in the following pages, here only the union of religion will be taken into consideration.

Vahdeti identified the union of religion as solidarity among people who followed the

³³³ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 277.

³³⁴ Azmi Özcan, "İttihad-ı İslam," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 23 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2001), 470-475.

³³⁵ Esad Efendi, *İttihad-ı İslam* (no date), 5-6, 15.

³³⁶ Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, 46.

³³⁷ For example see Tahrir Heyeti, "Ceridemizin Neşrindeki Emel-i Muazzez," *İttihad-ı İslam* 1, 17 December 1908, "... vatan-ı müsterek-i İslam'da lisan ve kavmiyyet ihtilaflarına bakmayarak bilcümle müsliminin aynı maksad-ı ulviye sarf-ı mukadderat etmelerini terğib velhasıl tekâmül-i içtimaiyye-i İslam'la bütün insaniyete hizmet etmek ceridemizle takip edeceğimiz emel-i muazzezdır."

³³⁸ Derviş Vahdeti, "İttihâd," *Volkan* 49, 18 February 1909.

same creed. Such union was possible for Muslims (*İslamlık*) as it was possible for followers of other religions since Christians (*Hristiyanlık*) or Buddhists (*Budistlik*) could have felt a similar kind of solidarity. For Vahdeti, the union of Muslims was identical to the Pan-Islamism and the essence of this union was a sense of solidarity among Muslims. It was only this sense of solidarity that enabled Muslims of Empire to feel the pain of Muslims in China who were tortured, Vahdeti argued.³³⁹ This was also a necessity for Muslims since they were brethren according to Islam.³⁴⁰

In the mindset of Vahdeti, there was a symbiotic relationship between the Empire and Pan-Islamism. The role of the Empire for the implementation of Pan-Islamism was crucial since Turks (e.g. Ottomans) were the most powerful Muslim actors among other Muslim countries.³⁴¹ However, it was Islam that bestowed such power to the Ottomans, Vahdeti claimed.³⁴² Pan-Islamism, on the other hand, was quite practical and useful for the Empire. First, it was the driving force of progress in both the Empire and Islam.³⁴³ While this progress meant prosperity for Islam, it meant technological and economic development for the Empire. Second and more important, Vahdeti perceived Pan-Islamism as a way of preventing the dissolution of the Empire. He argued that the ethnicity-motivated secessionism could prevail if the doors of the union are closed.³⁴⁴ Vahdeti also acknowledged the potential of Pan-Islamism as a deterrent to Russians who were pursuing pan-Slavism. Thus, he appreciated the parliament deputy, Rıza Tevfik, who pointed out Pan-Islamism in this regard in the Chamber.³⁴⁵

Vahdeti explicitly proposed Pan-Islamism and urged Ottoman bureaucrats to pursue Pan-Islamism.³⁴⁶ This was an action that the Empire had to take immediately. Germans and Americans were quite fast in taking this decision before the Ottoman Empire and they were, of course, following the right path, Vahdeti maintained.³⁴⁷

Last but not least, Vahdeti named the period in which they lived as a ‘period of the union’. But he also stated that this ‘period of the union’ is marked by pen but not by

³³⁹Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihad,” *Volkan* 50, 19 February 1909.

³⁴⁰Derviş Vahdeti, “Din - Kavmiyet,” *Volkan* 41, 10 February 1909.

³⁴¹Ibid., “*En kuvvetlimiz biz Türkler değil miyiz?*”

³⁴²Ibid.

³⁴³Derviş Vahdeti, “Diyarbakir’den: İcmâ’-i Siyasî İttizâl-i Siyasî,” *Volkan* 19, 12 January 1909, “*Sadr-i İslâm’da görülen hareket-i tekâmülüyye hep bu ittihâd-ı fikir ve emelin mahsulüdür.*”

³⁴⁴Derviş Vahdeti, “Melhameler Mitranlar,” *Volkan* 23, 17 January 1909.

³⁴⁵Derviş Vahdeti, “Mebus Rıza Tevfik Bey’in Siyâseti yâhud Rumeli Kiliseleri,” *Volkan* 33, 2 February 1909.

³⁴⁶Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihad,” *Volkan* 50, 19 February 1909, “... vahdet-i İslâmiyyenin husûle gelmesiyle ola-cağını düşünerek ittihâd-ı dînînin, her halde ittihâd-ı millî ve kavmiyetten daha kavi daha ziyâde cihet-i câmiayı hâiz olduğunu gördüğümüzden...”

³⁴⁷Derviş Vahdeti, “Mülk-Vatan ve Din Muhabbeti,” *Volkan* 42, 11 February 1909, “*Bugün görüyoruz ki Amerika’da birçok hükümetler birleşerek bir kitle-i ittihâd ve cumhuriyet teşkil etmiş, Avrupa’da Almanlar, aynı mesleği tâkib ettikten sonra, iki devleti de ittifakına almış...*”

sword.³⁴⁸ Vahdeti's symbolism of the pen can be interpreted in two different ways. First, he intended to indicate the importance of peace among all Muslims. Second, his idea of Pan-Islamism was only political and solidarity-based but not militaristic and cultural. As it will be shown in the following pages, Vahdeti constantly hailed the Islamic-Ottoman culture and criticized the other cultures, particularly Western culture.

Vahdeti's writings reveal that he proposed Pan-Islamism for the salvation of the Empire. However, it is interesting that his approach to Ottomanism was far from being negative.

3.3.2 Ottomanism (*Osmanlıcılık*)

Ottomanism, simply, can be defined as an ideology that is based on the equality of every single Ottoman subject, disregarding their religion and ethnicity. In other words, Ottomanism was an ideology that aimed to create an Ottoman citizen and individual that found its essence on a legal base. The early nineteenth century marked the emergence of Ottomanism since the effects of the French Revolution had started to be felt in the Empire. With the outbreak of various secessionist and nationalist-motivated rebellions in non-Muslim populated provinces, the Empire's approach to the non-Muslims started to change. The traditional *millet* system, the administrative and legal division of non-Muslims in the Empire based on religion but not on ethnicity, started to degenerate. For example, the Greek *millet* of the Empire was no longer trustworthy in the eyes of Mahmud II and they had to be excluded from state service after the Greek Rebellion of 1821.³⁴⁹ Newly emerging non-Muslim generations endowed with nationalist ideas was also another important factor that rendered the *millet* system unfunctional.³⁵⁰ Such developments and changing perception toward non-Muslims pushed Ottoman statemen to search for a solution in order to deal with nationalist ideas and non-Muslims of the Empire.³⁵¹

Ottomanism as a policy rested on three main principles; the sense of loyalty to

³⁴⁸ Derviş Vahdeti, "Dindarlık-Dinsizlik ve Tarikatlar," *Volkan* 36, 5 February 1909, "*Devrimiz, kılınc devri değildir, kalem devridir.*"

³⁴⁹ Hakan Erdem, " 'Do not Think of the Greeks as Agricultural Labourers': Ottoman Responses to the Greek War of Independence", in *Citizenship and the Nation-state in Greece and Turkey*, ed. F. Birtok and T. Dragonas (New York: Routledge, 2005), 74.

³⁵⁰ Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Osmanlı Refom Çağında Osmanlıcılık Düşüncesi (1839-1913)," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, ed. Mehmet Ö. Alkan (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 90.

³⁵¹ Şükrü Hanioglu, "Osmanlıcılık," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 1390.

the state, patriotism (*hubb-ı vatan*) and the idea of a common Ottoman identity disregarding ethnicity.³⁵² However, Ottomanism was a dynamic concept and had experienced different shapes since its emergence. In the early nineteenth century, Ottomanism was based on rational pragmatism in order to prevent the secessionist movements. Although there was a reference to equality, the main reference point of this equality was religion (e.g. Islam) as every Ottoman subject was equal in the eyes of God and the Ottoman Sultan. With the advent of the Young Ottomans, Ottomanism was harmonized with the parliamentarism and the parliament was presented as an ultimate way of achieving this equality. During this period, the concept of ‘nation’ and ‘patriotism’ rose to the surface, particularly with the contributions of prominent Young Ottoman Namık Kemal. With the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, Ottomanism started to lose its prominence due to flourishing alternative ideas, particularly the Nationalism/Turkism. Although the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution created a short-lived positive environment for Ottomanism, nationalist ideas soon prevailed, and Ottomanism became an insufficient ideology with the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 which made the Empire less cosmopolitan.³⁵³

Although Vahdeti clearly stated that he advocated Pan-Islamist ideology rather than Ottomanism (*ittihâd-ı milli*) and nationalism (*kavmiyyetçilik*),³⁵⁴ his many other writings in *Volkan* proves that he tried to integrate Ottomanism to Pan-Islamism. This attempt did not aim to harmonize Ottomanism with Pan-Islamism since such harmonization could result in the emergence of a hybrid ideology. This was not the case for Vahdeti; what he intended was to ingrate Ottomanism to Pan-Islamism and remain as a supporter of Pan-Islamist ideology. To put it another way, Ottomanism of Vahdeti was embedded in Pan-Islamism. The most important evidence of this assumption is a strong emphasis on religion that Vahdeti puts on while he discusses the fundamental principles of Ottomanism.

In some of his writings, Vahdeti appreciates and emphasizes the importance of one of the basic principles of Ottomanism, patriotism. To Vahdeti, patriotism is a truth that every single Ottoman subject should keep in his heart.³⁵⁵ Activist members of the CUP such as Atıf Kamçıl and Enver Bey are hailed by Vahdeti as true patriots.³⁵⁶ However, there is a clear limitation for patriotism, Vahdeti argues. This limitation, not surprisingly, is Islam. Without Islam, patriotism means nothing for Vahdeti

³⁵²Somel, “Osmanlı Refom Çağında Osmanlılık Düşüncesi (1839-1913),” 91-92.

³⁵³Hanioğlu, “Osmanlılık,” 1392-1393.

³⁵⁴Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihad,” *Volkan* 50, 19 February 1909.

³⁵⁵Derviş Vahdeti, “Mülk-Vatan ve Din Muhabbeti,” *Volkan* 42, 11 February 1909, “*Muhabbet-i vataniyye her cinsin, her ırkın, her anâsırın, kalbinde tutacağı bir hakikat iken...*”

³⁵⁶Derviş Vahdeti, “Atıf Bey’e,” *Volkan* 2, 12 December 1908.

since he perceives Islam as the main source of patriotism.³⁵⁷ Thus, the nation and Islam together must be loved. To legitimize this assumption, Vahdeti refers to the particular hadith that juxtaposes Islam with patriotism; ‘the love of nation derives from the faith (*hubbü’l-vatan mine’l îman*):³⁵⁸

According to Vahdeti, the superiority of Islam is relevant also for the concept of ‘nation’ itself. That is to say, Islam is, simply, more important than the nation.³⁵⁹ For instance, Ottoman soldiers, contrary to soldiers of other nations, should fight for Islam but not for the land.³⁶⁰ In this way, Vahdeti explicitly stresses the superiority of Islam to the nation. As far as the concept of ‘nation’ is considered, Vahdeti seems to internalize the concept itself. In his definition, nation is something that can exist only with the constitution which attaches people of different ethnicities to a single centre.³⁶¹ He constantly and consciously employs the term and distinguishes from other concepts. To him, the concept of nation is a ring in the development chain of humanity that comes after the individual, society and tribe.³⁶² In the formation of this nation, the Ottoman Constitution plays a critical role as the constitution is considered as a glue by Vahdeti.

Since it is interesting, it is worthwhile to state that Vahdeti perceived the language as a critical condition of being a nation. A nation needs to have a specific and fixed language which people of the nation consciously prefer to other languages.³⁶³ In the Ottoman case, this language was, of course, Turkish. Although such emphasis on the language can bring nationalism to the mind in the first place, Vahdeti presented this union of language as a prevention mechanism against ethnic nationalism. According to him, embracing one single language for the nation could preserve the union of the nation, and could prevent possible disintegration that triggered by existence of multiple languages that based on ethnicity.³⁶⁴ However, Vahdeti was quick to align ‘nation’ with Pan-Islamism as he argued that the idea of the nation does not conflict with the Pan-Islamism.³⁶⁵ Since Vahdeti himself did not elaborate on

³⁵⁷ Derviş Vahdeti, “Mülk-Vatan ve Din Muhabbeti,” *Volkan* 42, 11 February 1909, “*Lâkin muhabbet-i diniye ile kalbleri taşkın olanlar, vatana zımnen değil, alenen himaye ve sıyanet ederler.*”

³⁵⁸ Derviş Vahdeti, “Volkan,” *Volkan* 103, 13 April 1909, “Vatani din ile beraber, sevelim. “*Hubbü’l-vatan mine’lîman*” sırrına daima mazhar olalım. . .”

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Derviş Vahdeti, “Mülk-Vatan ve Din Muhabbeti,” *Volkan* 42, 11 February 1909, “*O halde anasır-ı sâire toprak için kavga etseler bile yine biz i’lâ-yı kelimetullah için cenk etmeliyiz.*”

³⁶¹ Derviş Vahdeti, “Nutuk,” *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihad,” *Volkan* 49, 18 February 1909, “*... bir millet olmak için kavmiyeti bertaraf etmesi lâzım geldiği gibi lisânına da unutmalıdır, yani lisân-ı millîyi lisân-ı kavmiye tercih etmelidir ki: millet hâlinde yaşamağa başlasın.*”

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihâd-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti ve Mevlid-i Nebvî-i Hazret-i Mustafavî Resm-i Küşâd,” *Volkan* 95, 5 April 1909, “*... dinî ittihâdların Osmanlılar arasında tefrika husûlüne bâdî olacağı fikrini kat’iyyen kabul edemeyiz.*”

his assumption, it is hard to make predictions regarding the logic of this argument. However, it is possible that he categorized Pan-Islamism as an ideology that covered the idea of nationhood.

Last but not least, the idea of Ottoman citizenship, another fundamental principle of Ottomanism, also appears in the writings of Vahdeti. To him, every single Ottoman subject and Christians who are fighting for the nation are Ottoman citizens.³⁶⁶ This citizenship meant full equality before the law. Such understanding can be interpreted as an obvious reference to the Ottoman identity which is free of any other classification since Vahdeti explicitly stressed this by writing that *Volkan* refuses anything that in conflict with Ottoman citizenship.³⁶⁷ Nevertheless, some of his other writings reveal that this citizenship had an Islamic reference. First, Vahdeti presented the laws that are fully congruent with shari'a as a guarantor of this citizenship.³⁶⁸ This meant that the Ottoman citizenship that Vahdeti advocated was derived from shari'a itself. Second, Vahdeti perceived Ottoman citizenship as a way of pleasing God. It was impossible to be endowed with the support of God without guaranteeing the equality and citizenship of non-Muslims, Vahdeti argued.³⁶⁹ In terms of citizenship only, Vahdeti's approach to Ottomanism resembles the Ottomanism of 1830s since, at that time, equality and citizenship had strong Islamic references such as the idea of being equal in the eyes of God.

3.3.3 Ethnic Nationalism (*Kavmiyetçilik*)

Once nationalist ideas of the French Revolution started to shake the millet system of the Ottoman Empire and triggered nationalist movements in the Ottoman lands, particularly in the Balkans, Ottomanism became a questionable ideology. Following various nationalism-driven rebellions in the Balkans, the nationalist ideas started to be influential within the Muslim populated lands of the Empire also. In the 1880s, for example, demonstrations were taking place in Egypt and people were praising their Arab ethnicity while they were cursing Turks.³⁷⁰ Such developments, naturally, influenced the mindset of the Ottoman intellectuals and the emphasis

³⁶⁶ Derviş Vahdeti, “‘Beyannâme’,” *Volkan* 57, 26 February 1909.

³⁶⁷ Derviş Vahdeti, “Kariin-i Kirâmdan Rica,” *Volkan* 30, 30 January 1909, “*Volkan havâdis-i âdiye gazetesi değildir. Osmanlığa mugâyir gördüğü en ufak şeyleri bile tenkid eder, en ince hilekârlıkları enzâr-ı kârîne arz eder.*”

³⁶⁸ Derviş Vahdeti, “İntibâh,” *Volkan* 62, 3 March 1909.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Şükrü Hanioglu, “Türkçülük,” in *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 1395.

that put on the Turkishness began to increase. The popularity of the ‘Pan’ movements, particularly the pan-Slavism, flux of intellectuals who were highly influenced by national sentiments from Central Asia to the Empire and harsh debates playing out in the Ottoman press on nationalist sentiments were instrumental in this process.³⁷¹ While the concept of ‘Turk’ started to change shape and acquire new meanings, the interest in Turkish history started to develop.³⁷² For instance, Süleyman Hüsnü Paşa, a Young Ottoman sympathizer, military officer and lecturer in the War Academy, wrote a textbook in 1876, named ‘History of Universe (*Tarih-i Alem*)’, where he classified and explained Turkic states in detail under the title of Turkish People (*Taife-i Türk*).³⁷³ Also, the Turkish language was recognized as an official language of the Empire in the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. In the early years of the twentieth century, Turkism became more visible among Ottoman Turkish intellectuals as it was presented as an alternative ideology by Yusuf Akçura in 1904.³⁷⁴ Akçura’s work was important since it exemplified the growing sceptical attitude of Ottoman intellectuals towards other prominent ideologies; Ottomanism and Islamism.³⁷⁵ Later, the popularity of Turkism was enhanced with the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, and the ideology, gradually, evolved into Turkish nationalism. In this process, intellectuals such as Ziya Gökalp, Tekin Alp and Ömer Seyfettin played an important role.³⁷⁶

Unlike Pan-Islamism and Ottomanism, Vahdeti explicitly opposed ethnic nationalism. His stance was quite clear and close to the discussion. He argued that ethnic nationalism was outlawed by Prophet Muhammad in the early Islamic period.³⁷⁷ Thus, in his view, ethnic nationalism conflicted with one of the main sources of Islam. If there was Islam, there was no room for ethnic nationalism. Besides, ethnic nationalism conflicted with a Quranic verse in which God identified Muslims as brethren.³⁷⁸ All Muslims had to work for Islam but not for ethnic nationalism, Vahdeti argued. Even if ethnic nationalism prevails, there was no future for it without Islam.³⁷⁹

³⁷¹David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876-1908* (Totowa N.J.: Frank Cass, 1977), 8-10, 14-20.

³⁷²For the survey of the concept of ‘Türk’ see Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism*, 20-23.

³⁷³Süleyman Hüsnü Paşa, *Tarih-i Alem* (İstanbul, 1876 [1291]), 383-543.

³⁷⁴Akçura, *Üc Tarz-ı Siyaset*, 23-36.

³⁷⁵Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism*, 5.

³⁷⁶Hanioğlu, “Türkçülük,” 1398.

³⁷⁷Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihad,” *Volkan* 50, 19 February 1909, “*Ey alem-i İslamiyyet! Asabiyet davaları bin üçyüz küsur sene evvel, Amine Hatun’un o gözbebeği Hazret-i Mustafa canibinden ref olunmuş...*”

³⁷⁸Derviş Vahdeti, “Din - Kavmiyet,” *Volkan* 41, 10 February 1909, “*Kürd kürdlük, Türk türklük, Arnavud anavudluk için çalışmak fikri nereden geliyor? İslâmiyet kelimesi yalnız kitaplarla lisanlarda kalmış, yahut “İnneme’l-mü’minüne ihvetun [Muslims are brother to each other]” âyet-i celilesi bütün kalblerden silinmiştir.*”

³⁷⁹Ibid.

As for the concept of Turk, Vahdeti's approach was more or less in line with the spirit of the time, in that the concept of Turk had a positive meaning in the mind of Vahdeti. First of all, it has to be noted that it was Islam that made Turks glorious.³⁸⁰ Accordingly, Islam could not have preserved its glory without Turks, Vahdeti claimed.³⁸¹ It was Turks who maintained the Holy Sanctuaries and Holy Relics of Islam, which was a source of jealousy among Arabs. Vahdeti's approach to Arabs was somewhat negative. He stated that there was no way that Turks and Arabs could live in peace together.³⁸² It is highly possible that Arab nationalism was the most important reason for this negative perception. Since Greek Orthodoxes, Bulgarians or Serbians were non-Muslims, their nationalism-driven demands were somewhat more acceptable to Vahdeti, or he could make sense of these developments by ascribing these demands to their infidelity. However, he was particularly angry with Arabs since they were 'Muslims' who were working against Pan-Islamism and unity. To Vahdeti, Arabs were always useless as the Empire never could recruit soldiers from Arab provinces.³⁸³

Although Vahdeti clearly opposed ethnic nationalism in many of his writings, he contradicted himself by presenting ethnic nationalism as a rightful cause for some ethnicities under a particular condition. This condition was not being under the control of the Ottoman Empire. For instance, Greek Orthodoxes who lived in Ottoman Greece had no right to pursue the nationalist cause. However, the situation was different for Greek Orthodoxes who do not live in Ottoman land. They had the right to advocate ethnic nationalism, Vahdeti argued.³⁸⁴ It is possible that Vahdeti, with this assumption, pragmatically aimed to legitimize the negative effects of nationalism on other countries. Since such an assumption could cause misunderstandings within the Ottoman context, he kept Ottoman lands out of the picture.

3.3.4 Decentralization (*Adem-i Merkeziyet*)

³⁸⁰Ibid., "Bize Türk yahut Osmanlı dedirten, ancak mevcudiyet-i İslâmiyedir."

³⁸¹Derviş Vahdeti, "Telâşlar, Teaccübler," *Volkan* 43, 12 February 1909, "Bilinmiyor ki, Türkler olmasa bugün İslâmiyet şimdiki kuvvetini muhafaza edebilecek miydi?"

³⁸²Ibid., "Arabla Türkün eti bir tencerde kaynamaz."

³⁸³Ibid., "Basra'dan, Bağdad'dan Musul'dan, Zor'dan, Yemen'den, Hicaz'dan hatta Suriye'den devlet ne vakit asker alabildi."

³⁸⁴Ibid., "Zîrâ Yunanistan'da bulunan Rumlar milliyet teşkil eyledikleri ve Yunanîlik sıfatını hâiz oldukları halde Osmanlı toprağında bulunanlar hiç bir vakitte Yunanîlik davâsına selâhiyetdâr olamazlar. Lâkin Rumluk itibâriyle dünyanın herhangi noktasında mevcûd olan Rumlar; Rumluk iddiâsında bulunabilirler; Ve bu hak hiçbir kavimden nez'edilemez."

Until the arrival of the Second Constitutional Period, decentralization, for the Ottoman bureaucrats and intellectuals, simply meant an administrative system whereby the centre shares its authority with the periphery (provinces). However, one of the prominent intellectuals of the Second Constitutional Period, Prince Sabahaddin, contributed to the term by broadening its intellectual framework. According to Sabahaddin, decentralization was a way to progress. In order to make progress, the state control over the society and administration had to be delimited so that the collectivism could be replaced with individualism (*ferdiyetçilik*). In this way, a newly emerging middle-class bourgeoisie could make investments freely and contribute to the economy of the Empire, Sabahaddin believed.³⁸⁵ The organization of the Society for Private Initiative and Decentralization was an outcome of Sabahaddin's idea of decentralization. Nevertheless, the members of the CUP and many other intellectuals did not welcome the notion of decentralization. Decentralization mostly was juxtaposed with disintegration. In other words, they perceived the idea of decentralization as a danger which could accelerate the dissolution of the Empire.

Vahdeti's perception of decentralization was rather simple. By ignoring the intellectual background of the idea, Vahdeti identified decentralization as a limitation of the state's authority on provinces and empowerment of local administrations. Although his approach to both Prince Sabahaddin and his idea of decentralization was positive, he argued that conditions were not suitable for the implementation of decentralization in the Empire. Since there was no consciousness of being Ottoman, the timing was not yet appropriate, Vahdeti claimed.³⁸⁶ On the other hand, Vahdeti believed that decentralization would be quite popular in the future. He argued that local councils would flourish in the future, and these councils would pave the way for technological, administrative and economic developments.³⁸⁷

Vahdeti also defended both Prince Sabahaddin and his ideas against the members of the CUP, particularly against Hüseyin Cahit. When Hüseyin Cahit criticized Sabahaddin by presenting decentralization as an administrative system that aimed to disintegrate the Empire (*inkısam-ı memlekete badi olacak bir surette*), Vahdeti accused Cahit of manipulating the idea of decentralization and being a denigrator.³⁸⁸ In order to justify decentralization, Vahdeti took British Cyprus as a case, discussed in detail and presented it as a prosperous province where decentraliza-

³⁸⁵Serif Mardin, "Âdem-i Merkeziyet," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Ansiklopedisi*, vol 1 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1988), 364-367.

³⁸⁶Derviş Vahdeti, "Fırka-i Ahrâr Yâhud Ali Kemâl! Ali Kemâl! Nidâları," *Volkan* 16, 27 December 1908, "Vakıa adem-i merkeziyyet bugün olmaz.", "... her ferdi, Osmanlılık için yaşamayı, Osmanlılık için ölmeyi bir vazife-i milliyeye olarak kabul ettiği gün, adem-i merkeziyyet usûlü de mevki-i icrâya konulabilir."

³⁸⁷Ibid., "Bir rub'-ı asır sonra görülecek ki her memlekette meclis-i idâreler yerine küçük mikyâsta meclis-i mebusanlar, mekâtib-i âliyeler..."

³⁸⁸Derviş Vahdeti, "İkinci Temâyyül Altında Mürâkabe-i Cânib," *Volkan* 21, 12 January 1909.

tion was implemented.³⁸⁹ There, local councils and autonomous courts had the authority to make laws and administrative bureaus which were free in their actions, Vahdeti maintained. It was this decentralized administrative system that led the well-developed infrastructure in Cyprus, Vahdeti stated.³⁹⁰

To Vahdeti, Prince Sabahaddin was a patriot who sacrificed his father for the sake of freedom, and was deserving to be a deputy in the newly reopened assembly.³⁹¹ One possible reason for Vahdeti's positive approach to Sabahaddin and his idea was, probably, Sabahaddin's critical stance against the CUP. In other words, the CUP was common 'enemy' for both Vahdeti and Sabahaddin. It is known that Sabahaddin distinguished himself from the CUP and established a different organization after the First Young Turk Congress of 1902. Additionally, Sabahaddin rallied with Kâmil Pasha during the power struggle between the CUP and its opponents. Thus, Vahdeti's defence for Sabahaddin could be seen as an outcome of an implicit alliance against the CUP. Another reason might be related to the nature of decentralization. Since Vahdeti prioritized Islam and had a tendency to reconcile his ideas with it, anti-religiosity was constituting a serious problem for him. However, the idea of decentralization, in its nature, did not include any anti-religious thought or idea. Thus, he could comfortably defend Sabahaddin and his ideas for the pragmatic purposes.

3.3.5 Westernism (*Batıcılık*)

Although the ideological roots of Westernism goes back to the implementation of Western type of reform programs in the Empire following the Crimean War, it was not until the Second Constitutional Period that the politicization and popularization of the term was a full-fledged concept. Westernism rested on the acceptance of the West as a source of civilization and implementation of Western-type reforms in various fields in order to be considered civilized. One of the prominent members, later opponents, of the CUP, Abdullah Cevdet, was one of the most radical and enthusiastic supporters of the Westernism in the Second Constitutional Period. He embraced the idea that the Empire needed to advocate Westernism in order to make progress.³⁹² Abdullah Cevdet expressed his ideas on Westernism in the journal

³⁸⁹Ibid.

³⁹⁰Ibid.

³⁹¹Derviş Vahdeti, "Hüseyin Cahid Bey'e," *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908, "*Fesubhânallah Prens Sabahaddin padişah saraylarından çıkıp da, hürriyet uğrunda pederini şehid verdiği, vâlikesinden, âilesinden, evlâdından, sevgili vatanından mahrum kaldığı halde vatan! vatan! diye feryâd ederken...*" Also see Derviş Vahdeti, "Varaka-i mühimme," *Volkan* 6, 16 December 1908.

³⁹²Selçuk Aksin Somel, "Abdullah Cevdet," in *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire*, 1-2.

İc̣tịhad, which he personally edited. Westernists also publicized their ideas in another journal, named *Mehtab*.³⁹³ Westernism was mainly criticized by conservatives who argued that Westernism conflicted with the traditional values of the Ottoman Islamic society. The Young Ottomans, for example, approached Westernism with suspicion and aimed to limit the content of Westernism by praising traditional values of the Ottoman society and Islam.

In general, Vahdeti's perception of West/Europe was highly critical and antagonistic. Although he appreciated the superiority of the West in the material sense, he harshly criticized the it when it came to morality and lifestyle.

Regarding science and technology, Vahdeti was well aware of the superiority of the West over the Empire. For instance, the West had well-functioning marine transportation system and roads while the Ottoman Empire was deprived of these items, Vahdeti wrote. He also inquired the reasons for this fact and came up with a simple and a rather irrational answer.³⁹⁴ To him, the main reason for the success of the West was their devotion and will. While Europeans devoted themselves to their work in order to achieve their tasks, Ottomans simply replicated Europe rather than making any effort.³⁹⁵ In other words, Ottomans were deprived of aspiration and dedication, Vahdeti thought. According to Vahdeti, imitation was not a way to progress, thus, Ottomans had to stop imitating Europe in order to make real progress. In this vein, he criticised the employment of French and British specialists for the implications of reforms.³⁹⁶ For example, he appreciated the expertise of German Commander Colmar von der Goltz in the field of the military but did not support his employment in the Ottoman army.³⁹⁷ This did not mean that Vahdeti completely opposed the utilization of European knowledge. Pragmatically, it was possible to utilize European knowledge for 'things' that the Empire could not possess.³⁹⁸ Therefore, Vahdeti encouraged the utilization of European knowledge by referring to a saying of the Prophet. It was the Prophet Muhammad who encouraged Muslims to search for knowledge disregarding how it is hard, Vahdeti reminded.³⁹⁹

³⁹³Şükrü Hanoğlu, "Batıcılık," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 1384.

³⁹⁴Derviş Vahdeti, "İnanmak," *Volkan* 28, 28 January 1909, "*Bizim tedeniyyât-ı teessüfâverimiz ise mukallidliğimiz sebebiyledir. Avrupahlar balonlarla evc-i semâda gezdikleri halde biz yer yüzünde rahat yürüyecek bir şoseye bile mâlik değiliz. Belediyelerimiz var ama hep taklit. Avrupahlar gemilerle kutuplara kadar seyahat ettikleri halde biz sahillerimizi dolaşacak sağlam bir gemiye mâlik değiliz. Bahriye nezâretimiz var, lâkin mukallid.*"

³⁹⁵Ibid.

³⁹⁶Derviş Vahdeti, "Altı Aylık Meşrûtiyetimiz Böyle mi Olacaktı?" *Volkan* 34, 3 February 1909, "*Pek ziyâde sıkıldık mı gelsin Fransız mâliyemizi ıslâh etsin. Gelsin İngiliz de rûsumatımıza, bilmem kimler de şuabât-ı sâiremize. Bizde adam yok mu?*"

³⁹⁷Derviş Vahdeti, "Volkan," *Volkan* 8, 18 December 1908.

³⁹⁸Derviş Vahdeti, "Halîfe-i îslâm Abdülhamid Han Hazretlerine Açık Mektup yâhud Maraz-ı Milletten," *Volkan* 22, 16 January 1909, "*Bizde olmayan şeyleri, Avrupahlardan alabiliriz.*"

³⁹⁹Derviş Vahdeti, "Alaylı-Mektebli Zâbitanlar Askerler," *Volkan* 82, 23 March 1909.

Additionally, Vahdeti accepted the positive role that European ideas played in Ottoman society. He perceived growing relations between West and Ottoman society as one of the driving forces of the Young Turk Revolution, with the idea of freedom becoming popular among Ottomans due to the influence of European newspapers.⁴⁰⁰ However, he clearly opposed to the adaptation of European law to the Empire and repeatedly emphasised this in his various writings. Laws need to be promulgated by taking the spirit of the nation into consideration, Vahdeti believed.⁴⁰¹

Vahdeti believed Muslim Ottomans should be aware of their potential and past achievements. For example, they had to be aware of the fact that the source of the knowledge was, actually, the Islamic world. It was this knowledge that Europeans transferred from the Islamic world by the art of translation, Vahdeti stated.⁴⁰² He argued that Europe managed to process this knowledge in order to utilize. According to Vahdeti, being ignorant of this fact was nothing but ignorance.

Regarding moral issues, Vahdeti was quite assertive and certain. He likened Western morality to tuberculosis that was gradually consuming the Ottoman society.⁴⁰³ Since the Ottoman Muslim moral understanding completely conflicted with Western morality, it had to be refused by any means in order to be replaced with glorious and old traditions and morality of the Ottomans.⁴⁰⁴ Vahdeti did not prevent himself from insulting Europe. He accused Europeans of being treacherous, uncivilized, murderous and impostors.⁴⁰⁵ Also, it was Europe that caused the dissemination of anti-religiosity in the Empire. By relying on his own research on the past of anti-religionists, he asserted that he detected that anti-religionism became popular after the Empire started to dispatch ambassadors to Europe.⁴⁰⁶ In a similar vein, he criticized minister of Interior Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha by pointing out his efforts to get along with Europeans.⁴⁰⁷ Similarly, he accused Hüseyin Cahit of being party

⁴⁰⁰ Derviş Vahdeti, "Esbâb-ı İnkılâb," *Volkan* 3, 13 December 1908, "Avrupa ile temas ziyadeleşti. Orada herkes serbest söz söylemekle, Avrupa gazeteleri okumakla, evet ahrâr-ı sâdikanın neşriyatı da buralara idhâl edilmekle, iyiden iyiye dâhili uyandırdı."

⁴⁰¹ Derviş Vahdeti, "Ulemâ-yı Kirâmın Nazar-ı İntibâhına," *Volkan* 40, 9 February 1909, "Çünkü bir kanûn, bir milletin ahvâl-i rûhiyyesine, efkâr-ı umûmiyyesine göre yapılır."

⁴⁰² Derviş Vahdeti, "Volkan," *Volkan* 64, 5 March 1909, "Şariat sayesinde ki, Endülüs ulemâsından, Fransızlar, senelerle medâris-i İslâmiyede tahsil etmiş ve bütün âsâr-ı İslâmiyye tercüme ve te'lif suretiyle Fransa'ya naklölünmüştür."

⁴⁰³ Derviş Vahdeti, "Din-Kavmiyet," *Volkan* 41, 10 February 1909, "O esaslar ki, ahlâk-ı frengiyedir, takliden ve tedricen memleketimize girmiştir; verem mikrobu gibi bizi günden güne yiyor, temel fareleri gibi esas kuvvetimizi tahrib ediyor."

⁴⁰⁴ Derviş Vahdeti, "Tiyatrolar Ahlâkımıza Nasıl Tesir Ediyor?" *Volkan* 39, 8 February 1909, "Lâkin bizim ahlâkımız Avrupa ahlâkına taban tabana zıd olduğu halde..." "Tedricî olarak memleketi giren ahlâk-ı Frengiyyeyi söküp atacak, yerine eski müslümanların âdâtını eski Osmanlıların gayretini, sebâtını, imanını, iman-ı kâmilini sokacaktır."

⁴⁰⁵ Derviş Vahdeti, "Hilekârlık yâhud Avrupa-i Medîni," *Volkan* 6, 16 December 1908.

⁴⁰⁶ Derviş Vahdeti, "Dindarlık-Dinsizlik ve Tarikatlar," *Volkan* 36, 5 February 1909, "Ne kadar dinsizlikle iştiâr eden adam varsa, mâzilerini iyice tedkik edersek göreceğiz ki: Hep Devlet-i Osmaniyye'nin Avrupa'ya sefir gönderdiği devirden sonra başlar."

⁴⁰⁷ Derviş Vahdeti, "Politikamızı Ne Kolaydır!" *Volkan* 32, 1 February 1909.

to devious plans of becoming Europeans.⁴⁰⁸ Overall, Europe/West was a functional scapegoat in the mind of Vahdeti.

3.3.6 Political Structure

It is obvious from the writings of Vahdeti that he was a strong supporter of the constitutional monarchy.⁴⁰⁹ To him, the Ottoman Parliament meant much as he perceived the parliament as a tool which gave every single Ottoman individual to participate in the administration of the Empire.⁴¹⁰ Thus, the functionality of the parliament was important for Vahdeti. For example, when soldiers rebelled on 13 April 1909, Vahdeti addressed the Sultan in his editorial dated 14 April 1909 and kindly asked him to not shut down the parliament at any cost.⁴¹¹

Vahdeti believed that the ‘period of despotism’ (*istibdât*) came to an end forever with the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, and freedom prevailed.⁴¹² Although the period of autocracy was, truly, an outcome of the Hamidian rule, Vahdeti ignored this fact by refraining from mentioning the Sultan directly in any discussion that he carried out in *Volkan* about the period of autocracy. For instance, he criticized the period by stating that Islamic books were torn into pieces and burnt.⁴¹³ Yet, he did not mention the Sultan or his responsibility for such events. Though Vahdeti was aware of the responsibility of the Sultan regarding the autocratic mechanisms of the period, he intentionally avoided criticizing the Sultan’s persona. More than that, he praised and emphasised the importance and functionality of the sultanate.⁴¹⁴ Accordingly, he argued that people of the Empire had to respect and obey their Caliph Sultans. Going further, he maintained that, if necessary, lives ought to be sacrificed for the Sultan.⁴¹⁵ What made the Sultan valuable for him, probably, was the institution

⁴⁰⁸Derviş Vahdeti, “Hüseyin Cahid Bey’e,” *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908, “*Biz şu sırada hak için meydana atıldık, Avrupa oyunlarını bir gün daha tatbik edebilirsin, yarın paydos.*”

⁴⁰⁹Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihad,” *Volkan* 50, 19 February 1909.

⁴¹⁰Derviş Vahdeti, “Nutuk,” *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908, “*Zira bir milletin parlamentosu, meclis-i meb’ûsânı olduğu için memleketin her ferdi idareye iştirâk eder.*”

⁴¹¹Derviş Vahdeti, “Halife-i İslâm Ahdülhamid Han Hazretlerine Açık Mektup,” *Volkan* 104, 14 April 1909. “*Zât-ı emirü’l-mü’mininleri için en büyük bir şeref varsa, o da meşrutîyet-i Osmaniyyemizin himâye buyurulması kazıyye sidir.*”

⁴¹²Derviş Vahdeti, “İntibâh,” *Volkan* 62, 3 March 1909, “*O devr-i bed-seyr-i istibdâd, artık ebediyyen gelmez, gelemez, gelemeyecektir.*”

⁴¹³Derviş Vahdeti, “İttihâd-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti - La Türki Gazetesi ve Bir Zahit Tehdidnâmesi,” *Volkan* 99, 9 April 1909, “*... devr-i istibdâdda, kütüb-i fıkhiyyeden tutunuz da ilm-i kelâma varıncaya kadar kütüb-i İslâmiyye külhânlarda yakıldı, bir çoklarının yaprakları söküldü. Bir çokları da tahrif olundu.*”

⁴¹⁴Derviş Vahdeti, “Volkan,” *Volkan* 103, 13 April 1909, “*... padişahları halife, ulemâmızı verese bildiğimiz devirlerdedir ki, bugün vatan vatan diye feryad ettiğimiz iklimleri yed-i gâlibiyetimize geçirdik; yoksa hocaları, padişahları tanımadığımız devirlerde değildir.*”

⁴¹⁵Derviş Vahdeti, “Öte, beri,” *Volkan* 107, 17 April 1909, “*... Japonlar gibi, hükümetlerini Mikadolarını*

of Caliphate that the Sultan represented. Since Vahdeti was a follower of Pan-Islamist idea, and the Caliphate constituted the basis of Pan-Islamism, criticizing the Sultan's persona (e.g. Caliph's persona) would be an obvious contradiction for him.

Other than the constitutional monarchy, Vahdeti only discusses the regime of republic. He was clearly against the introduction of a republican regime into the Empire as he argued that the Empire per se is the epicentre of the Caliphate (*dârülhilâfe*).⁴¹⁶ Yet, he did not explain why the republican regime conflicted with the institution of Caliphate. Thus, the logic of the relationship that he establishes between republic and Caliphate remains as a mystery.

3.3.7 Foreign Policy

Vahdeti's approach to the issue of foreign policy was identical to the approach of Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Kâmil Pasha. He completely agreed with Kâmil Pasha regarding the necessity of establishing an alliance with the British Empire.⁴¹⁷ Vahdeti argued that the Empire should follow a pro-English foreign policy since establishing alliance with Britain would serve best to the rational interests of the Empire.⁴¹⁸ He confidently claimed that he knew much about the English character and argued that the English never reveal their intentions without developing complete trust to a person or institution.⁴¹⁹

To him, Russians who were pursuing pan-Slavism policy in the Balkans constituted the main danger for the Empire.⁴²⁰ It was Russia who caused the loss of Egypt, Tunisia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Cyprus, Vahdeti argued.⁴²¹ Additionally, he as-

sever, sevdiği için yollarında fedâ-yı can eder, bir kavm-i necib olalım."

⁴¹⁶ Derviş Vahdeti, "Hakikat Nasıl Anlaşılacak?" *Volkan* 61, 2 March 1909, "Kaldı ki, cumhuriyet kelimesini ağzına almaktan tavahhuş etsin. Vakıa hür memleketlerde böyle sözlerin ehemmiyeti yoktur. Lâkin bizim memleketimizde hürriyet olmakla beraber böyle sözler olamaz, zira burası üç yüz milyon müslümanın Dârül-hilâfe'sidir."

⁴¹⁷ Derviş Vahdeti, "Hüseyin Cahid Bey'e," *Volkan* 1, 11 December 1908, "Yine bu menâfi uğrunda ramak kaldı İngiltere hükümeti ile aramızı açasın. Sadriâzam Kâmil Paşa'nın temin ettiği bir siyâset-i âlempesendâneiyi az kaldı rahnedâr edesin."

⁴¹⁸ Derviş Vahdeti, "Tanin," *Volkan* 19, 12 January 1909, "Ama: İngiltere? Evet: İngiltere menfaatperest değildir demiyoruz. Fakat menâfitimiz nokta-i nazarından sâir Avrupa devletlerinden ziyâde onun politikasını tâkip etmeye mecbûruz."

⁴¹⁹ Derviş Vahdeti, "Siyaset-i Hâzıra ve Sezâi Bey," *Volkan* 14, 25 December 1908, "İngilizler, itimâd etmedikleri kimselere kat'iyen zahîr olmaz."

⁴²⁰ Derviş Vahdeti, "İkdam refikimizden," *Volkan* 58, 27 February 1909, "Rusya'nın derdi, ister hükûmet-i Osmanîyenin lehine, ister aleyhine olsun Balkanlarda Rus nüfuzunu İslav siyasetini idâme, tezyittir."

⁴²¹ Derviş Vahdeti, "Siyasiyât-ı Hâzıramız," *Volkan* 54, 23 February 1909, "Rumeli-i Şarkî'nin de elimizden gitmesi Rus'un yüzünden. Bosna-Hersek ziyâi Rus'un yüzünden. Teselya'nın gitmesi Rus'un yüzünden. Kıbrıs'ın, Mısır'ın, Tunus'un da bunlara iltihâk etmesi yine Rus'un yüzünden olduğu gibi..."

served that the Russian navy would have come to invade Ottoman Balkans, if they had not gone to war with Japan.⁴²² Considering other European states, the Empire should establish good relations with them, however, by doing this their interests also had to be taken into consideration, Vahdeti argued.⁴²³

The fall of Kâmil Pasha from his grand vezirial post in February 1909 meant the beginning of the failure of Ottoman foreign policy as Vahdeti perceived Kâmil Pasha as a genius diplomat and politician. After the fall of Pasha, everything turned into terrible mess, Vahdeti wrote.⁴²⁴



⁴²²Ibid.

⁴²³Derviş Vahdeti, “İkdam refikimizden,” *Volkan* 58, 27 February 1909.

⁴²⁴Derviş Vahdeti, “Süzüle Süzüle Bakalım Ne Olacak?” *Volkan* 59, 28 February 1909, “*Siyaset bezi dokunup, düğümler tarağa gelmişken, Avusturya, Bulgar işi bitmişken, Rusya bir baş gösterdi. Kâmil Paşa ona da güzel oyun oynarken İttihâd’ça düşürüldü. Siyaset-i millimiz, bir çorbaya döndürüldü.*”

4. CONCLUSION

Derviş Vahdeti was born in 1870 as a first child of a poor Muslim family who lived in Ottoman Cyprus. As a member of a poor family, he was fortunate that his father encouraged him to receive an education starting from his early ages. Nevertheless, this education was mostly religious and traditional. Thus, he encountered the Islamic perspective in his very early ages. When he was eight years old, his birthplace was no longer under the Ottoman control as the Ottoman Empire lost the control of the island to England in 1878. He spent most of his youth in Cyprus which was administrated by the British Empire and he was exposed to British culture and language. This fact was highly influential in pro-England policies that he employed in the following years of his life. As he met with the Young Turk opposition with the newspapers, particularly with Murad Bey's *Mizan*, his desire for politics was enhanced. When he was exiled to Diyarbakir, he met with Ziya Gökalp and was influenced by his ideas. It is known that he also met with other Young Turks in Diyarbakir such as Hoca Muhyiddin Efendi and Feyzi Bey.⁴²⁵ There, he actively participated the activities of the CUP by joining the occupation of a telegram office under the leadership of Ziya Gökalp. His desire for politics and journalism motivated him to edit a newspaper, *Volkan*. His effective opposition to the CUP, within a short period of time, made him one of the prominent opponents and rivals of the CUP.

Although a number of newspapers, journal and periodical emerged after the Revolution of 1908, none of them had a name similar to Vahdeti's newspaper.⁴²⁶ The name '*Volkan*' had obvious violent and angry references. One possible reason for the choice of such name may have been an aggressive and harsh atmosphere that dominated the Ottoman press following the Revolution. The main source of such an atmosphere in the Ottoman press was the idea of 'unlimited' liberty that was perceived as a vital complement to Constitutional Monarchy by people and intellec-

⁴²⁵Derviş Vahdeti, "Sebbeke men Bellegake [Yapılmış olan bir hakareti sana ulaştıran kimse, sana hakaret etti]," *Volkan* 49, 18 February 1909.

⁴²⁶For the full list of newly emerged publications after the Revolution see Erol Baykal, "The Ottoman Press," 195-196. Among these publications, *Cellad* (executioner) and *Neşter* (lancet) can be seen as an exception. However, these two publications were satirical rather than political.

tuals of the Empire.⁴²⁷ By legitimizing their language with this idea, the Ottoman writers were not preventing themselves from employing harsh and provocative language. Although other publications did not have aggressive names, this did not mean that they preferred to employ naïf and soft language. For example, the language of Hüseyin Cahit Bey, one of the prominent writers of the pro-CUP *Tanin* newspaper, was proof of the tendency to also use aggressive language. Another example was the language that Mevlânzâde Rıfat Bey employed in another popular opposition newspaper, *Serbesti*.⁴²⁸ So, it can be assumed that Vahdeti chose such an aggressive name for his newspaper *Volkan* because he was influenced by this atmosphere. Alternatively, the name of the newspaper *Volkan* could also be symbolic, a reminder of the potential that he attributed to the Islamic world or the Ottoman Empire by referring to Volcanoes' potential of eruption.

Despite the fact that Vahdeti attached himself to both the Young Turk movement and CUP, his ideas dramatically changed following the Revolution of 1908, and he became a fervent opponent of the CUP. For the exploration of the possible reasons for this sharp turn, Vahdeti's ideas provide important clues. It can be argued that Vahdeti's ideas did not intersect with the CUP's thoughts to a large extent, with the little exception of the idea of the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution and liberty (e.g. *hürriyet*). Apart from the idea of constitution and liberty, Vahdeti's ideas generally differed from CUP thought. For example, the CUP's approach to Westernism or the role of Islam in politics was different from the approach of Vahdeti. The situation was also the same for the idea of decentralization and ethnic nationalism. Considering such differences in the ideological scheme, Vahdeti's turn against the CUP was understandable. Another probably reason was the CUP's attitude towards victims of the old regime. As one of these victims, Vahdeti was unhappy that he could not find a place for himself in the new order of the CUP. Besides, he believed that the CUP violated the liberal spirit of the constitution by pursuing an authoritarian attitude. This was unacceptable to Vahdeti since he perceived the liberal spirit of the constitution as vitally important to paving the way to progress.

In the mindset of Derviş Vahdeti, Islam was a fundamental principle as he referred to Islam in nearly all discussions that he carried out in his newspaper. For example, to him, Islam was a condition to freedom, equality and progress in the Empire. As he strongly believed Islam's positive role in politics and people of the Empire, it seems reasonable to label him a sincere political Islamist. His strong adherence to shari'a can be seen as another factor that supports this assumption. Vahdeti, for instance, referred to shari'a in order to emphasise existing unjust conditions. Similarly, he

⁴²⁷Birinci, "31 Mart Vak'asının Bir Yorumu," 195.

⁴²⁸Ibid., 196.

perceived shari'a as an ultimate source of law.

In the political writings of Vahdeti, the importance and functionality of the term 'union (*ittihâd*)' was obvious. For example, he classified and identified ideologies by employing the term 'union' as he named Ottomanism as a 'union of the nation' and ethnic nationalism as a 'union of ethnicity'. Furthermore, he described the period in which he lived a 'period of the union'.

Similar to his contemporaries, Vahdeti also searched for a solution to the problems of the Empire. Among others, he advocated the Pan-Islamist policy the most as he perceived Pan-Islamism as functional and logical for both domestic and foreign issues of the Empire. However, the Pan-Islamism that Vahdeti approved had no militaristic and cultural aspects. In his mind, pen prevailed over sword and Ottoman culture always preserved its distinct Islamic feature. What he emphasised as a basis of Pan-Islamism was solidarity among whole Muslims against the enemies of Islam.

Pan-Islamism was not the only ideology that Vahdeti approached from a positive perspective. He also discussed nearly every basic principle of Ottomanism from the perspectives of patriotism, national existence and citizenship. Vahdeti emphasised the necessity of these principles for the sake of the Empire, however, he intentionally aimed to reconcile these principles with Islam. Such an effort meant an attempt to integrate Ottomanism into Pan-Islamism. In other words, Vahdeti preferred an Ottomanism which is embedded in Pan-Islamism.

Vahdeti's approach to ethnic nationalism was lucid since he explicitly opposed it. To him, ethnic nationalism fundamentally conflicted with Islam's main principles, particularly with the sense of brotherhood among all Muslims. Such confliction made ethnic nationalism unacceptable for Vahdeti because Islamic principles were indispensable to him.

As far as decentralization is concerned, Vahdeti's approach was conditionally positive. He appreciated the functionality of decentralization by presenting British Cyprus as an example. However, he argued that conditions were not suitable for the implication of decentralization in the Ottoman context. He paid attention to the defence of the idea of decentralization as he defended the prominent follower of the idea, Prince Sabahaddin. Vahdeti's attitude was likely pragmatic with respect to this issue since Prince Sabahaddin represented the liberal opposition to the CUP.

Although Vahdeti accepted the superiority of the West over the Empire regarding science and technology, he enthusiastically opposed imitation of the West. To him, it was possible to utilize Western knowledge, yet this utilization had to be limited to material matters. He argued that Ottomans had the potential of making progress

since Islam is the original source of knowledge. Imitation of the Western culture could serve only the degeneration of the Ottoman society, Vahdeti believed.

Within the political framework of the first months of the Second Constitutional Period, Vahdeti can be considered as a religious opponent of the CUP and a sincere adherent of the Pan-Islamist ideology. His support for Kâmil Pasha, together with liberal actors of the period (i.e. Liberal Party, Prince Sabahaddin), was ultimately based on the idea of forming alliance against the CUP. His alliance with the other actors and his conditionally positive attitude towards the idea of decentralization, were not on an ideological level but rather a pragmatic one. However, his religious identity requires further explanation due to its complicated portrayal. First and foremost, Vahdeti was not a reactionary or religious extremist since he constantly emphasised the necessity of a constitutional monarchy and the disadvantages of tyranny. His writings also reveal that he acknowledged progress as he tried to reconcile progress with Islam. Nevertheless, it is hard to locate Vahdeti's religious stance within the established forms of Islamist thought. Like modernist Islamists who mostly rallied around the periodical *Sırât-ı Müstakim*, Vahdeti advocated the idea of Pan-Islamism and the superiority of Islamic morality as he perceived the early Islamic civilization as an original source of the knowledge. However, he contradicted with the modernists when it came to the issue of *ictihâd*. While modernists approved the practice of *ictihâd*,⁴²⁹ Vahdeti did not. What complicates further his religious stance is that Vahdeti was an adherent of Sufism. Although Sufis did not come into sight as a representor of organized Islamist/political thought, they became involved in the Ottoman press by expressing their ideas (mostly in religious matters but slightly in political matters also) in several periodicals and newspapers such as *Tasavvuf* and *Ceride-i Sufiyye*.⁴³⁰ Since modernists, with the exceptions,⁴³¹ disapproved of Sufi practices, Vahdeti distinguished himself from modernists in this regard as well. Notably, modernists labelled Vahdeti as an instigator of the 31 March Incident which they perceived as a great disaster.⁴³² By going further, Vahdeti was accused of being cursed (*mel'un*) by Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, one of the prominent representor of the Islamist modernist thought.⁴³³

⁴²⁹ See for example Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, "Bâb-ı İçtiâd Dâimâ Küşâde Bulmaktadır," *Sırâtı-müstakim* 34, 03 May 1909.

⁴³⁰ Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Sırât-ı Müstakim: Islamic Modernist Thought in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1912," *Journal of The Middle East Studies* 1, no. 1 (1987): 57-60.

⁴³¹ For example, Musa Kazım as a follower of the Naqshbandi Sufi order was one of the influential writers of *Sırât-ı Müstakim*.

⁴³² Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, "Fâriza-i Şükran," *Sırâtı-müstakim* 37, 20 May 1909, "Ale'l-husûs 31 Mart hâdisesi fecî'a-i mel'anet-kârânesi te'sîrât-ı dehşetnâki üzerine bizler burada kurbanlık koyun sürüleri mesâbesinde bir alay dermân-degân-ı ümmet biçâre kalmış, müncî-i âlem ve bâdî-i âsâyiş-i ümem olan mukaddes ordunun İstanbul civârına..."

⁴³³ Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, "Mevaiz," *Sırâtı-müstakim* 42, 24 June 1909, "Buna kapılan insanda idrâk mi var? Demek şimdiye kadar herkes ne'uzu-billah Mecûsî imiş! Şimdi Derviş Vahdeti mel'ûnu ortaklığı müşlûman edecek. Hay edebsiz herif!"

The most outstanding characteristics of Vahdeti was his ability to communicate with people by employing romantic and populist language. He was able to attach himself to the number of people by utilizing this feature. The Islamic discourse that he employed in his writings provided him with an important advantage for achieving this task. Vahdeti was not bigoted, on the contrary, he was a man who understood the importance of transformation and change when it was necessary. For example, he made an effort to learn English despite initially perceiving the endeavour as a sin. He was quick to understand and then adapt to the necessity of learning English after the growth of British influence on his birthplace, Nicosia. It may be argued that Vahdeti was not an intellectual but an activist journalist. Although he referred to the number of thinkers and their ideas such as Darwin and Darwinism respectively, his writings reveal that he did not carry out discussions on an intellectual level. However, he actively discussed daily political developments of the Empire, conducting interviews with bureaucrats.⁴³⁴ Since he propagated Islamic principles in his writings constantly, it is possible to assume that he lived a pious life and practised daily prayers of Islam. Nevertheless, it is impossible to prove this.

Although Derviş Vahdeti is mentioned in nearly all the studies that focus on the Second Constitutional Period, Vahdeti's ideas and personality, so far, are not analysed in detail. This gap constitutes a great barrier for the exploration and evaluation of one of the most critical and controversial events of the late Ottoman history/Second Constitutional Period, the 31 March Incident. Since Vahdeti was influential (at least allegedly) on the Incident, studies on the 31 March Incident are doomed to remain insufficient without having detailed information on the ideas of Derviş Vahdeti. The main aim of this study is to contribute to both history of ideas in the late Ottoman Empire and the future studies on the 31 March Incident. Since further enlightenment of the 31 March Incident will pave the way for the having a better understanding of the Second Constitutional Period, this study will also contribute to the clarification of the Second Constitutional Period, particularly from the political perspective.

As argued, Vahdeti was an influential and active journalist who made a considerable impact on the post-Revolution Ottoman press. He engaged in intense political discussions with other prominent journalists of the period such as Hüseyin Cahit Bey as he was subject to writings of the number of other journalists both positively and negatively. Thus, the examination of his political identity will be beneficial for understanding the nature of Ottoman press in the Second Constitutional Period.

⁴³⁴For example see Derviş Vahdeti, "Dâhiliye Nâzırı Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa ile Mülâkât," *Volkan* 20, 14 January 1909.

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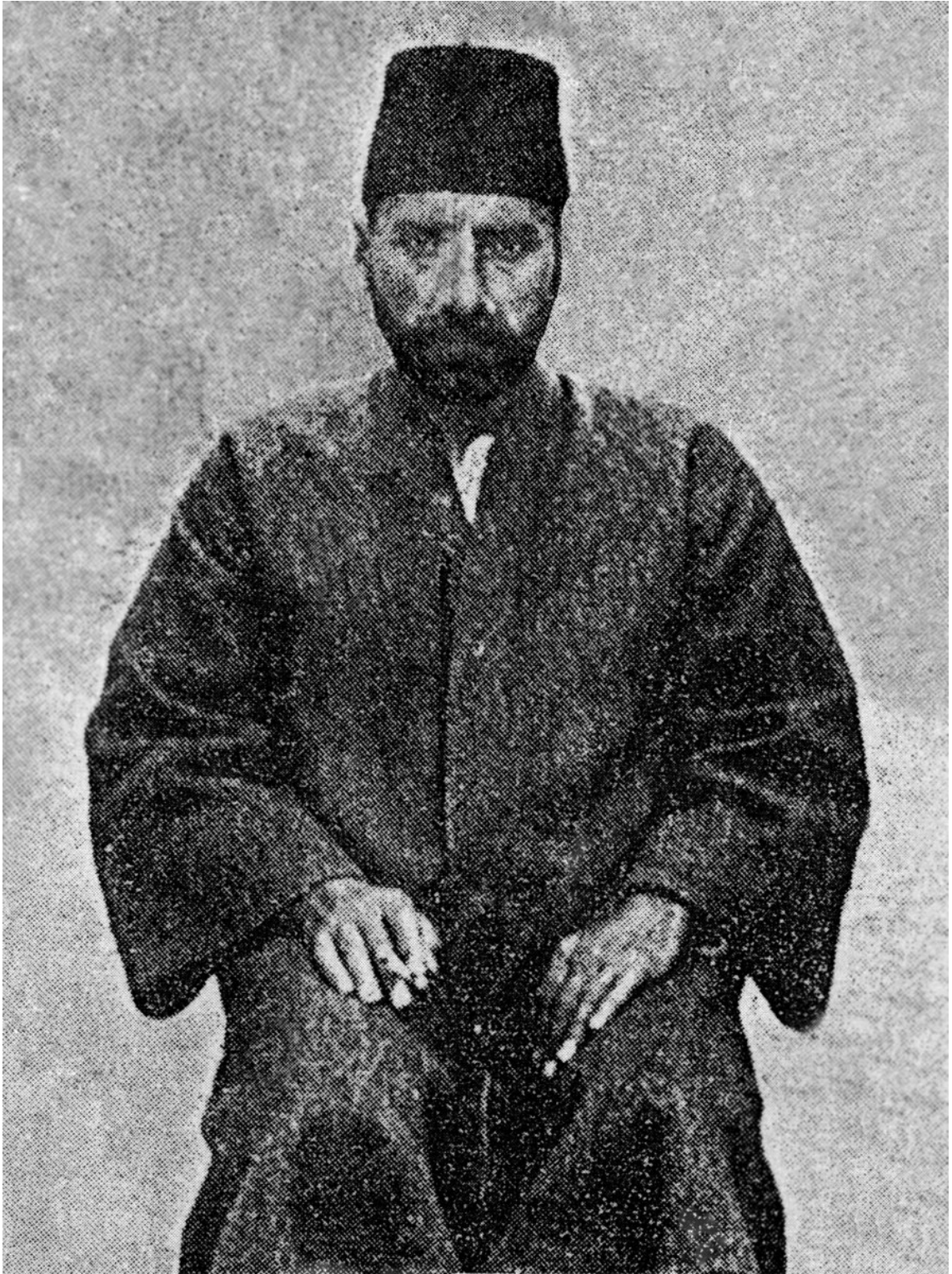
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Figure 4.1 Derviş Vahdeti



Source: “Derviş Vahdeti,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Ansiklopedisi*, vol 9 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994), 198-200.