

## MODERNIST AND NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS IN THE OTTOMAN STATE

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### SUMMARY

The westernization in the Ottoman State first began in the military field by the government. The reforms carried out many reforms in bureaucracy, law and education, by taking the European models as a base. The westernization movement was turned into an ideological movement during the reign of the Sultan Abdulaziz. A group of intellectuals started an ideological struggle for establishing a parliamentary monarchy which based on an European constitution. The westernization process opened an ideological gap among the people. The Young Turks tried to fill this gap by using nationalism as an ideology.

### 1. Introduction

The Muslims obtained superiority against the Christians twice in the continent of Europe. One of these was the State of Emevite established in the western part of Europe, in Spain. The other one was the Ottoman State founded in the eastern part of Europe. While the Muslim superiority in Spain declined during the 14th and 15th centuries, the Muslims were strengthening their superiority over Christians, on the eastern front.

The Ottomans set up their state on the ruins of the Seljuks as a small emirate in the western Anatolia. They organized their state on the Islamic principles and started to expand their territorial boundaries. Towards the end of the 17th century, they reached up to Vienna. In the earlier, their state was functioning according to the Islamic principles, including an excellent system of justice. When they started to decline, their belief and moral practices did also. The main reasons for the decline of the Ottoman State can be summarized as follows:

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- The expending luxurious life among the ruling elite of the state,
- The sprouting corruption and exploitation in the administration,
- The negligence of scientific institutions of their studies and research activities,
- The dissolving of the army and the bureaucratic organisations and land tenure system,
- The beginning of the 'industrial Revolution' in the western Europe,
- The rising of a strong state like Russia in the North. The internal conflicts caused by non-muslim minorities and economic problems arise by the defuncting of the social institutions, all paved the way of loosing the wars which took place between the Ottoman State and the western countries. European countries developed their warfare by using new technology in defence industries. The war that took place between the Ottoman State and the western countries. The war that took place between the Ottoman State and the Russia during the 18th and the 19th centuries exhausted the economic resources of the State. Despite the decline of the Ottoman military power against the European states, the Ottoman State was still the greatest political power in Europe.

Some of the ruling class of the State suggested some reforms in the administrative system of the State in order to stop this decline. The reformers wanted to reorganise economic, political and military institutions of the west. Later the reformers wanted to expand the westernization to all social institutions. In spite of providing social solidarity among the people of State, these reforms increased differences between the muslim majority and the ruling elite. Owing to these reasons, reforms hastened the fall of the State.

## 2. Westernization movement

The westernization in the Ottoman State first began in the military field, by the government. The Sultan Selim III (1789-1808) was a reformist. He wanted to abolish the Janissary army and to set up a new army similar to the Europeans. He established new schools which were\* based on the French educational system. The teachers who gave lectures at these schools were brought from Europe. The newly founded printing house, published military books which were translated from western languages. These books were read by the students of these schools. It has been put forward that the ideas of the French Revolutions first entered into the

country by these translated books (Levis, The Impact, 105-125). The Sultan Selim III was planning new reforms based on the western models in the non-military fields too, but he was murdered by the Janissary before realizing his aims.

The Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839) was also a reformist who succeeded The Sultan Selim III. The new Sultan Selim abolished the Janissary as a first duty and set up a new army. Then he carried out many reforms in bureaucracy, law and education, by taking the European models as a base for his reforms. The European powers increased their interference on the internal affairs of the Ottoman State during the reign of the Sultan Mahmut II. They used the rights of the christian minorities advantageously as a cover for their interventionist activities.

Mustafa Reşit Paşa the Grand Vezir of the Sultan Abdülmecit (1839-1861) who succeeded the Sultan Mahmut II was fond of the western Civilization. He served as an ambassador of the Ottoman State in Paris and London over a long period. The westernists call him 'the Great Reşit Paşa' convinced the Sultan Abdülmecit to carry out the basic reforms. He declared the decree of 'Restoration' (Tanzimat Fermanı) under the pressures of the western states. In the Restoration, it was accepted that the muslim and the christians had equal rights. The traditional 'millet' system<sup>(\*)</sup> of the ottoman State was left out and instead, the compatriot system of the europe was adopted. From this date on, the christian citizens began to get high level administrative positions such as ambassadors, government advisors, ministers and etc. Consequently the Christians used the governmental facilities for the interests of their own communities.

The westernization process which was implemented in the military and technological fields after the Restoration, got momentum in the legal, administrative aspects and cultural life of the country. The western laws were translated systematically into Turkish and were put into practice. New schools were opened which gave education according to the western style and the western countries obtained the right of opening schools in the Ottoman State. The imperialist European powers (Britain, USA, France, Italy and Germany) opened many schools using this opportunity. They carried

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People living within the boundaries of the Ottoman state were grouped according to their religious beliefs such as millets of Islam Jewish and Christians. According to the Islamic law each of these groups were under the jurisdiction of their own jurisprudence such as in Personal law, Family Law and Inheritance law matters. After the Restoration this system was abandoned and all Ottoman State was governed with the same law. (Cevdet Kucuk, 'Ottoman Nation system and the Restoration', encyclopaedia of Turkey from the Restoration to the Republic, Istanbul 1985)

out missionary and other subversive activities at these schools, as well (Bailey, 25-38;Karpas, 12).

The westernization movement was turned into ideological movement during the reign of the Sultan Abdulaziz (1861-1876) by the intellectuals like Namık Kemal, Şinasi, Ziya Paşa and Ali Suavi. These people were under the influence of the French Revolution. They started an ideological struggle for establishing a parliamentary monarch which based on an European constitution. They set up a secret committee which was called the New Ottomans and they opposed the Sultan Abdulaziz. The Committee of New Ottomans was closed and some of its members were appointed to new duties outside of Istanbul by the Sultan Abdulhamit II and the rest of them went to Europe (Ebuzziya, 60).

In the Ottoman State, pro-western intelligentsia whom were first called 'the New Ottomans' and later, 'the Young Turks' were not able to understand the Western Civilization adequately, so that they imitated the western social life and the institutions as they were. They thought that everything European were good and right, but the things which were Islamic and based on their own cultural values were out of date and worthless. The Young Turks began to wear like Europeans did. They developed relations with the people around them, the same way as the European did.

Even some of them suggested that traditional Turkish food was not enough, and therefore it was necessary to replace it with the European cuisine and the way of nourishment<sup>(\*)</sup>. In short, they wanted to imitate all the values of the western culture.

The westernization process stopped during the reign of the Sultan Abdulhamit II (1876-1909). Abdulhamit was a religious person. He tried to reimplement the Islamic legal system and to arrange a suitable atmosphere for the development of Islamic thought. He especially followed an Islamic foreign policy. The policies of the Sultan Hamit irritated Young Turks as well as the external enemies of the Islam. From now on, the Young Turks and the western imperialist powers focused all their efforts to dethrone the Sultan Hamid.

The muslim people liked the Sultan Abdulhamid and supported his

(\*) Mehmet Kamil was teacher in the Faculty of Medicine. While he was in France he got accustomed to French food. He wrote a book which was called "melcet-ul Tabbahin" (the Shelter for Cooks). In this book, he defended that traditional Turkish food was not good enough, and it should be replaced by that of Europeans (Hilmi Ziya Ulken, History of Modern Thought in Turkey, Istanbul, 1977, p.81)

policies. The Young Turks were aware of that, it was not possible to change the people; therefore they aimed their efforts to the officers and the intelligensia. Before getting to power, the Sultan promised that he would declare a new constitution and would open the parliament. As soon as he got throne he opened the parliament and declared the constitution.

The first Ottoman Parliament was a cosmopolitan one and consisting of 125 members. 77 members were muslim, 44 members were christian and 4 members were jewish. The Sultan understood that under western influence the parliament could not do any good for the benefit of the country and he closed it. The Sultan explained reasons of closing the parliament as follows:

The parliamentarians should be in the service of the nation and the state, but ours entered under the administration of some certain interest groups and foreign powers. The christian members are serving only for the interest of their communities: Armenians are working for the benefit of Armenistan and the Greeks are working to give some more territories to Greece (Öke, 64)

After closing the parliament, the Young Turks increased their opposition activities and tried to make people believe that all problems of the country were origination from the administration of the Sultan Abdulhamid. The western powers supported the movement of the Young Turks by pointing out the rights of the christian minorities. The interventive activities of the western countries caused many problems and difficulties for the Sultan. He gave the following answer to the British Government, concerning the rights of the christian minorities:

'England has been colonising India for many years. Could you tell me if you appointed any muslim governer to India? Are there any weapons in the hands of Indians to defend themselves? Is there any Indian representative who defend the rights of his people at the British Parliament, which is the oldest parliament, which is the oldest parliament in the World? (Öke, 62).

The young Turks, who could not succeed in struggling openly, set up secret organizations against the Sultan. The most important of these organizations was 'The Union and Progress'. It was founded in 1889. The Union and Progress got support from the army officers, intellectuals and christian minorities in Balkans, but it could not receive support from the muslim majority.

### 3-The Emergence of Nationalism

The Young Turks had a weak understanding of the World affairs. They did believe in a parliament and a constitution as a magical tool solving all problems. According to Huseyin Cahid who was one of the leading members of the Committee of Union and Progress, 'although the Young Turks did not see how meets and works, they did believe in parliament as an 'amulet' solving all problems/(Yalçın, 14). Also the Young Turks did not have the ability to understand the ideas of leading western thinkers of their time/(Mardin, 16). The Young Turks thought that by imitating the western social life and values they will get the ability of understanding their thought. On the other hand, the Young Turks tried to cover their shortcomings in this area by using the emerging slogans of the French Revolution, such as 'equality', 'fraternity', 'justice' and 'liberty' and so on. For this purpose, nationalism was accepted as a political ideology (Mardin, 24).

The islamic institutions, which the pro-westerners were against, were spoilt and not functioning to solve problems facing the people. Despite of this, the people did believe in them and paid great respect. Whereas, the institutions which were adopted from the west, had no relations with the history of the people and their faith. Owing to this reasons, the people saw these institutions doubtful.

The westernization process continued as the new needs arouse and the well-practised institutions of the west were imitated. This situation opened an ideological gap among the people. The young Turks tried to fill this gap by using nationalism or so called 'Pan-Turkism' was used to replace Islam.

Nationalism was the product of western thought as socialism, liberalism, democracy and secularism. They entered into the muslim communities too late. Nationalism first started among the christian minorities with the influence of the western countries in the Ottoman land. Nationalism showed its effects among Turks and the muslims later on. It could be well stated that the Islamic policy of the Sultan Abdülhamid caused this delay.

The Young Ottomans, like Şinasi, Ali Suavi and Suleyman Pasha started Turkish nationalism as a form of interest towards the Turkish Language and Turkish History/(Ülken, 81). There was not any ideological and political side of nationalism on those days. Despite of that, it did not gain much support from the ruling circle/(Mardin, 89). Under the influence of the French Revolution, Turkish nationalism changed its nature, in time. After the Balkan War of 1913, it gained an ideological character as

'PanTurkism' (Turanism). Turkish nationalism drew attention among the westernizers and this interest has continued during the Republican Era.

The word of 'turan' was first used in Hungary in 1839 to search the roots of Turkish Qaum. Hermann (Haym) Vambery who was a founder of 'Turanism'/(Ülken, 205). A turanic society was founded in Budapest in 1911. Then Ziya Gökalp laid down the principles of Turanism. Ziya Gokalp was a famous Young Turk and he was a member of the Central Committee of the Union and Progress. According to Ziya Gokalp, 'Turanism' is a concept which means, a country in which all Turkish speaking people are brought together under a single flag.(Gökalp, 89)

Ziya Gökalp was a secular thinker. He suggested that the religion should be separated from the state affairs and social lives and the influence of Arabian and Persian cultures should be taken away. The secularity of Turkish nationalists and their desire to reduce or take away the Islamic influences from the social life caused some troubles among other people of the state and speeded up nationalism(Antonius, 106).

Turanism came out as a dominant ideology from the general meetings of Union and Progress in 1916. Since there was not any social class in the meaning of the western sense, 'religion' and 'race' were determinants of political movements. Since, the westernization movement was against Islam, nationalism was accepted, but it was not easy to replace Islam with nationalism in a community where life was shaped with Islam for centuries. Even the Young Turks who defended secularism made decisions under the religious influence for some time. Some Young Turks such as Mizancı Murat, suggested that it would be possible to integrate Islam with the western thought and Islam could be used as a means for the foreign policy (Mardin, Genesis, 298)

It is difficult to explain why people who served and defended Islam against the west for five centuries, became pro-western. Some people attributed this change to the progress that took place in the west. In fact, this should be attributed to the decline of the Islamic institutes in the decline of the Islamic institutes in the Muslim world rather than the development which was realized in the west, was based on the exploitation of millions in the South Asia and Africa. The pro-westerns viewed the western civilization from very far, they could not deal with its all institutions.

If the muslims could produce alternative ideas and institutions to that of the west, the westernization movement could not easily get such high momentum. The muslim scholars of those days did not follow the scientific and technical development which took place in the World. They spent

their time discussing minor problems and they could not introduce Islam as a panacea that could solve the problems of their age.

Besides, these results of the westernization and nationalist movements caused awakening of muslims. Especially, during the reign of the Sultan Abdulhamid II, some activities went on concerning history, law and the other Islamic sciences. Some writers like Mehmet Akif, Eşref Edip, and Said Halim Paşa followed Jamal ad-Din Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Ferit Vejdi and defended Islamic views.

#### 4-Conclusion

The Young Turks who failed in the struggle against the Sultan Abdulhamid II, later set up the secret society of the Union and Progress. That secret committee found many supporters among the non-muslim minorities in Balkans, especially in Selanik, but the same interest was not shown by the muslims. The situation of Selanik may be attributed to the cosmopolitan nature of the city. The city had a population of 140 thousands and more than half of that population was Jews and 'converted jews' (donme). Emanuel Karasu, who was later brought to an important post in the committee of Union and Progress, was the grand master of the lodge of 'Macedonia Risorta'(Ahmad, 281)

One of the subjects which were discussed at the committee of the Union and Progress in 1902 was a foreign intervention needed or not to dethrone the Sultan Abdulhamid II. In this discussion the pro-British group wanted an external intervention to dethrone the Sultan. When the second parliamentary monarchy proclaimed in 1908, a group of pro-British Young Turks, among whom there was Dr Rıza Nur, went to the British Embassy in Istanbul and prayed that 'the World seas should be full of with the British ships and the Britons should help the Turks in gaining their freedom' (Tuncay, 22-23)

The Young Turks were divided into two groups, one them were pro-British, by the masonic lodges. This division may be attributed to their ideology. The pro-British group of the Young Turks were liberal. They wanted to implement liberal economic policies and establish a liberal administration. While the pro-Germans wanted to centralize the governmental administration and follow more government intervined economic policy.

The Ottoman State first got in touch with the western culture through France. Many Turkish students were sent to France for their education and French teachers came to Istanbul to teach. After the Crimean War, the Ottomants' relations with European countries increased. But after the Balkan



war, the pro-British Young Turks lost and pro-Germans strengthened positions. In fact, the government of the Union and Progress entered World War I with Germany.

## OSMANLI DEVLETİNDE MODERNİST VE MİLLİYETÇİ AKIMLAR

Osmanlı Devletinde batılılaşma hareketleri ilk olarak devlet tarafından, idari ve askeri alanlara yönelik olarak başlatıldı. Reformcular, batıdaki modelleri örnek alarak hukuk, idare ve eğitim alanlarında değişiklikler yaptılar. Abdülazız döneminde, batılılaşma hareketi, devletin siyasi rejimini değiştirmeye yönelik bir ideoloji savaşına dönüştü. Aydınlar, ülkede anayasalı ve parlamentosu olan batılı bir monarşinin kurulması için mücadele başlattılar. Batılılaşma yolunda yapılan değişiklikler halk ile yöneticiler arasında bir ideolojik kopukluğa neden olmuştu. Bu boşluğun doldurulması için Jön Türkler milliyetçiliği kendilerine yeni bir ideoloji olarak benimsediler.

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