

Perception of Europe Among Ottoman Intellectuals and Politicians Following The Second Constitutional Revolution (1908-1913)

II. Meşrutiyet İhtilali Sonrası Osmanlı Aydınında ve Siyasetinde Avrupa Algısı (1908-1913)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is revealing the perception of the West/Europe among the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians mainly using certain newspapers, memoirs and publications published in Turkey during the Second Constitutional Era. The reason for using these sources is an attempt to directly reveal the perception of the west among the Ottoman intellectuals and administration. However, this perception will not be studied throughout the entire Second Constitutional Era, only between the years 1908-1913. Revealing the extent to which political developments such as the declaration of the constitution, the invasion of Tripoli and the Balkan Wars influenced the perception of Europe particularly in the period mentioned will serve in determining the purpose of this study. At this point, the events that occurred during this historical process will also contribute to explaining the profile, perception these generated in the minds of the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians, the attitude of the Turks in Turkish history and even among some today. Therefore, the current perception of Europe among the Turks emerged within an historical process and carries the hallmarks of history. On the other hand, explaining the Ottoman intellectuals and Europe/Western conception is also important in terms of this study reaching its goal. Indeed, understanding the topic of this study is only possible and directly relevant by explaining these concepts. At this point, what we are implying by the European concept is Western thought and the attitude and policies the major European countries and politicians adopted towards the Ottoman State. In this context, this study takes into account the need to explain the dilemma between the Ottoman/Turk intelligentsia's dependency on the West and their sense of being betrayed by Europe.

Keywords: Second Constitutional Period, Ottoman Intellectuals, Balkan Wars, European Perception.

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, temelde II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türkiye'de yayınlanmış bazı gazeteler, hatıralar ve telif eserler kullanarak Osmanlı aydın ve siyasetindeki Avrupa/Batı algısını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu kaynakların kullanılmasının gerekçesi, doğrudan doğruya Osmanlı aydın ve yöneticisindeki Batı algısını verme çabasıdır. Ancak bu algı, bütün II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi boyunca değil, sadece 1908-1913 yılları arasında aranacaktır. Özellikle ifade edilen zaman aralığındaki meşrutiyetin ilanı, Trablusgarp'ın işgali, Balkan Savaşları gibi siyasi gelişmelerin, Avrupa algısını ne derece yönlendirdiğinin ortaya konulması, çalışmanın amacını daha iyi oraya çıkaracaktır. Bu noktada ifade edilen tarihi süreç içerisindeki yaşananların Osmanlı aydını ve siyasetçinin zihninde oluşturduğu biçim, algı Türk tarihinin ve günümüzde dahi kimi Türklerin tavırlarının izahına katkı sağlayacaktır. Dolayısıyla Türklerdeki mevcut Avrupa algısı, bir tarihi süreçte ortaya çıkmıştı ve oldukça tarihe ait özellikler taşımaktadır. Diğer taraftan bu çalışma amacına ulaşma noktasında, Osmanlı aydını ve Avrupa/Batı kavramlarının açıklanmasını önemli bulmaktadır. Zira araştırma konusunun anlaşılması bu kavramların izah edilmesi ile mümkündür ve doğru orantılıdır. Bu noktada bu çalışmada Avrupa kavramıyla kastedilen, Batı düşüncesi ve Avrupa'nın büyük devletlerinin ve siyasetçilerinin Osmanlı Devleti'ne karşı takındıkları tavır ve politikalarıdır. Nitekim bu araştırma bu bağlamda, günümüze kadar Avrupa ile yaşanan ilişkiler sürecinde Osmanlı/Türk aydınındaki Avrupa/Batı'ya bağlılık ve aldatılmışlık arasında ikilem taşıyan hisseleri ve düşünceleri, belli bir dönem içindeki gelişmeler üzerinden ve tarih perspektifinden açıklanması ihtiyacını dikkate almıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi, Osmanlı Aydınını, Avrupa Algısı, Balkan Savaşı.

Introduction

This study aims to reveal the Europe/Western perceptions from the aspect of developments that occurred in the Ottoman State following the declaration of the Second Constitution between the years 1908-1913. An attempt was made to unveil this objective mainly using the press, memoirs and also published works from the Second Constitutional

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Era. In this respect, using only Turkish sources is an effort to reveal the perception of Europe among the Ottoman elite and administration.

There are three points that must be emphasized before discussing the findings of this study. Firstly, what is implied by Ottoman intelligentsia? Basically, this sector is intellectuals that gradually began to appear among the Ottoman society from the beginning of the 19th century. This intelligentsia not only established a connection with Europe and its ideas simply by learning foreign languages and reading books by Western intellectuals, at the same time they also appeared in circles of literature and media, and also in political positions and movements. In view of this, at the same time it is possible to see these intellectuals in literary and political circles, and also in Ottoman bureaucracy. In this context, there is a classification in the form of literatures-politicians-intellectuals or in the form of those occupied with literature and politics. Therefore, an attempt will be made to unveil the perception in terms of a section of the Ottoman intellectuals that considered the West/Europe and the political system it employed as an ideal.

Secondly, in this study the terms Europe and West represent a field of meaning that has become integrated. Here, what is meant by the term West in the text of this study is the European thought and Europe that is considered as the center that represents this thought in the field of politics. In these terms, the perception of Europe among Ottoman intellectuals and politicians will be examined on the basis of the policies employed against the Ottoman State by European states and politicians. In Ottoman political language, these policies are called the politics of *Düvel-i Muazzama* (Great Powers). The processes in international politics analyzed between the dates mentioned are important in terms of the influence these generated regarding Europe in the minds of the Ottomans. Indeed, the disappointment, and dilemma of being deceived and deserted that followed the appreciation and admiration for the west frequently seen in the last centuries of Ottoman/Turkish history offers significant examples in terms of the time span of this study. As a result, this perception that turned from positive to negative will significantly determine the political developments during the period that we will be studying and reveal the approaches that were irreversible for the Ottoman/Turks. Thirdly are the years we will be studying. The term of this study are the years between the declaration of the Second Constitutional Revolution (23 July 1908) and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913).

On the other hand, the Second Constitutional Era and completion of this process, that is a part of general Turkish history, and revealing its importance will contribute to understanding the context of this study. The Committee of Union and Progress (ITC) fought against the autocracy of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1878-1908) and for the declaration of the constitution and the opening of parliament both in Turkey and abroad.¹ In general terms, the Committee of Union and Progress only reached their goal when the Constitutional Regime (*Meşrutiyet Rejimi*) was declared for the second time in Ottoman history on 23 July 1908 as a result of the campaign by the Ottoman Freedom Society, a Selanik based Young-Turk group. On July 24 1908, Sultan Abdulhamid II reenacted the constitution and removed the obstacles preventing parliament from assembling. The Young Turks, who also called themselves Young Turks, were associated and labeled with the words Constitutional Regime, freedom, equality and brotherhood.² Although there were differing opinions, the Second Constitutional Era came to an end when Mehmet Vahdettin dissolved parliament on 21 December 1918. In a

¹ For detailed information see. Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri(1895-1908)*, İstanbul, 1992; Ahmet B. Kuran, *İnkılap Tarihimiz ve İttihat ve Terakki*, İstanbul, 1948.

² Ahmed Bedevi Kuran, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İnkılap Hareketleri ve Milli Mücadele*, İstanbul, 2012; *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları (1881-1908)*, Prepared by. Halil Erdoğan Cengiz, İstanbul, 2015.

sense, this period can also be called the years of the Committee of Union and Progress.³ While those who fought for the constitution in a period when the national states or national liberation movements existed, protected the borders of the multinational and multi-religious Ottoman State that existed at the beginning of the 19th century, they also set out with the aim of preserving the pluralistic structure while enabling the survival of the state and transforming this into a thriving developed country.⁴ Keeping in mind the structure and objectives of the Ottoman State that harbored these diversities, we can clearly see the importance of the Constitutional Revolution and Period for the Ottoman society.

The declaration of the Constitution for the Ottomans was not simply a new political system or new life, it was also considered to be the beginning of a new era that would protect their land and prosperity. The most important thing required for this was long-term conciliation with domestic calm, an era of “peace.” Revolutionists aimed to establish this framework. One of the other expectations of the revolutionists was to reach a status equal to that of the great powers on an international level.⁵ They believed this was their right. The political system they declared was nothing other than the path all over civilized states adopted and this promised equality for their societies, with no discrimination. While the new system created, structured a new life on one hand, on the other this also protected from both domestic and international political and social pressure.

At this point, the question that actually concerns this study is how the international political platform prepared the ground for the objectives of the Constitutional Revolution. The revolutionists that were attempting to prosper on one hand, while trying to protect their existing borders on the other focused on the constitution that they considered a western political system, as a solution to their problems, whereas this solution itself was indoctrinated by the West.

The revolutionists were hopeful that their objectives would materialize. Their demonstrations of joy that embraced every layer of the society at the beginning can be classified as a reflection of this hope.⁶ There were also other signs of this hope among revolutionists for the constitution. The most important of these was the approach, appreciation of certain Ottoman intellectuals and politicians towards the West.

Ottoman Intellectuals, Politicians and Europe at the Beginning of the Second Constitutional Era

During the Second Constitutional Era, certain Ottoman intellectuals and politicians considered western thought and the European society within a perception of progressive history that was constantly advancing, a capstone. Europe was the heroic nation of constructive, astonishing developments. For example, the root of Western thought was based on the Ancient Greeks and philosophers, the first implementers of the constitutional system.⁷ The English were the brave, dignified leaders that paved the way for the constitutional

³ For more extensive evaluations of ITC (Committee of Union and Progress) and the Second Constitution see. Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler-İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, I, İstanbul, 1998; see. Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler-İttihat ve Terakki, Bir Çağın, Bir Kuşağın, Bir Partinin Tarihi*, III, İstanbul, 1998.

⁴ For a more extensive assessment of the Second Constitution see. Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, İstanbul, 2001.

⁵ Hüseyin Cahit, “Beynelmilel Hakem Usulü”, *Tanin*, 29 January 1909, no.178, p.1; Hüseyin Cahit, “Temin-i Sükun”, *Tanin*, 20 March 1909, no.228, p.1.

⁶ Hasan Amca, *Doğmayan Hürriyet*, İstanbul, 1958, p.28-30; Kazım Nami Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Hatıralarım*, İstanbul, 1957, pp.33-34; Falih Rıfki Atay, *Çankaya*, İstanbul, 1984, p.29; Ahmet Hilmi Kalaç, *Kendi Kitabım*, İstanbul, 1960, p.47.

⁷ Hüseyin Cahit, “Yunanlılar ve Osmanlılar”, *Tanin*, 2 October 1908, no.63, p.1. “Türkler ve Fransızlar”, 11 September 1908, no.42, p.1

system, and together with the French were the “cradle” of the late European civilization⁸ and the “guide” of civilization and humanity. In this respect, the telegraphs containing messages of congratulation and achievement on the occasion of the opening of the first Ottoman Chamber of Deputies (Meclis-i Mebusan), active during the years 1908-1912 of the Second Constitution, from the “earliest” Parliament of England were applauded for a long period. This applause manifested in a different form than the Ottoman politicians gave to the English. Again, the request for the response to the telegraphs from England, that had continued its support for the Ottoman State for a long time, to be written with care and “courtesy” and to bear the signatures of all the Ottoman representatives of parliament, was an indication of the importance they gave to the English.⁹ As for the Germans that were producing hardworking pioneers of philosophy and philosophic thought, they were praised as the long-standing friends of the Ottomans.¹⁰

However, as in previous years, during the Second Constitutional Era the French held a special place among the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians. The French was a nation that took center stage among all the Europeans. In fact, the French were believed to have similarities with the Ottoman society in many aspects. Firstly, France was a cultural community that won recognition and was adopted by the Ottoman society. In fact, France was a cradle where the European civilization “reaped”; the “nation” of science, and a country where scientists were a guide for the whole of humanity. The French and philosophers were considered as a kind of teacher of Ottomans, and their fondness for the French was more apparent compared with other nations.¹¹ This opinion and perception is revealed in the parliamentarians questioning whether the French had sent a congratulatory telegraph on the opening of the first Ottoman parliament, and what kind of expectations this generated in Ottoman politics.¹² In this respect, the telegraph sent by France congratulating the opening of the Ottoman parliament was widely applauded by parliamentarians. A consensus was reached that the response letter to the telegraph should bear the signature of all the parliamentarians.¹³ In the response letter sent to the French Parliament, the French were described as a nation that spread progress, freedom and equality around the world.¹⁴

Russians also earned a place in the Ottoman perception. In this respect we should not forget that many of the important figures that influenced Turkish nationalism lived in the Russian geography and its territories.¹⁵ Again, the influence of the Balkan and Russian Narodnic movements was felt strongly in the concept of populism that was to emerge in the

⁸ Hüseyin Cahit, “Türkler ve Fransızlar”, *Tanin*, 11 September 1908, no.42, p.1; Hüseyin Cahit, “Kral Edward”, *Tanin*, 8 May 1910, no.604, p.1; *Proceedings of the Chamber of Deputies/Meclis-i Mebusan (MMZC)*, Period (P)1, Meeting Year (MY)1, II. Session 3 (22 December 1908), p.16; *MMZC*, P.3, MY.2, II. Session 42 (9 March 1916), p.415.

⁹ *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 3 (22 December 1908), p.23; *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 6 (28 December 1908), p.68.

¹⁰ Hüseyin Cahit, “Siyaset”, *Tanin*, 2 August 1908, no.2, p.1; Hüseyin Cahit, “Türkler ve Fransızlar”, *Tanin*, 11 September 1908, no.42, p.1.

¹¹ Hüseyin Cahit, “Türkler ve Fransızlar”, *Tanin*, 11 September 1908, no.42, p.1; Hüseyin Cahit, “Avrupa Nazarında Osmanlılar”, *Tanin*, 11 June 1909, no.278, p.1; Hüseyin Cahit, “Mütefekkirin”, *Tanin*, 27 February 1910, no.534, p.1. According to Rahmi Apake, the “fashion” in that period was the French culture. Rahmi Apake, *Yetmişlik Bir Subayın Hatıraları*, Ankara, 1957, pp.15-16.

¹² *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 3 (22 December 1908), p.19.

¹³ *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 4 (23 December 1908), p.39; *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 6 (28 December 1908), p.69.

¹⁴ *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 8 (31 December 1908), p. 101.

¹⁵ Yusuf Akçura, İsmail Gaspiralı, Hüseyinzade Ali, Ahmet Ağaoğlu are figures that first come to mind.

Second Constitutional Era and was later to influence the Turkish state.¹⁶ In addition to French literature, the Russians also gained appreciation with their own literal works during this period.¹⁷

As I attempted to explain above, the praise and positive depictions of the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians is somewhat difficult to describe in terms of the policies of European states. However, a positive picture can be marked in the beginning of the Second Constitutional Era. Indeed, the declaration of the Constitution generated an atmosphere of cheer among Turkish intellectuals and politicians; in domestic politics and also foreign politics. There was now belief that they could gain the friendship of European states. Superficial developments supporting this also occurred. In the early days of the constitutions declaration, substantial “sympathy” was generated in Europe towards the Ottoman state, and the English, French and Russians welcomed the declaration with great joy.¹⁸ As I attempted to explain previously, the opening of the first Ottoman parliament was congratulated by European states and civil organizations with a positive perspective. Again, European socialists also applauded the Young Turks coming into power.¹⁹

Nevertheless, although the Ottoman Constitution was welcomed by European states, a negative approach towards the Turks was continuing in Europe. European states did not want a powerful Ottoman State.²⁰ Ottoman intellectuals later confessed there was something they did not understand in the early days of the constitution. As long as this did not endanger their own interests or alliances, leaders of the bipolar Europe; the English and Germans²¹ did not

¹⁶ Cezmi Eraslan, *Yakın Dönem Türk Düşüncesinde Halkçılık ve Atatürk*, İstanbul, 2033, pp.28-34; Erdem Sönmez, “Narodnik Hareketin Ortaya Çıkışı ve Gelişimi”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, p.164, pp.64-69.

¹⁷ Although the first translation from Russian literature was done by by Mizancı Murat Efendi in 1884, we see that since 1890 translations were also done by Madam Gülnar Olga Dölebedef from Pushkin and Tolstoy. Madam Gülnar not only provided information regarding the author in her works in Russian literature and translations, but also wrote a book titled Russian Literature. During the Second Constitutional Era, many works by Russian literaturists including Maksim Gorki, Liyopol Kamp, Tolstoy were also translated. For more information see İsmail Habib Sevük, *Avrupa Edebiyatı ve Biz (Garptan Tercümeleler)*, II, İstanbul, 1941, pp.267-283, 519-524; Türkan Olcay, “Cumhuriyet Dönemi Öncesi Rus Edebiyatından Türkçeye Yapılan Çeviriler Üzerine”, *Litera: Batı Edebiyatları Dergisi*, p.18, İstanbul, 2005, pp.41-54. Congratulation telegraphs sent by Russian, Italian and German officials and civil organizations following the opening of the first Ottoman Parliament were welcomed with as much praise and applause as those received from England and France. *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 3 (22 December 1908), p.19; *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 3 (22 December 1908), p.19; *MMZC*, P.1, MY.1, II. Session 6 (28 December 1908), p.69.

¹⁸ Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım*, I, İstanbul, 1966, p.86; A. H. Mithat, *Hatıralarım (1872-1946)*, İstanbul, 1946, pp.206-207; Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, *İnkılap Tarihimiz ve İttihat Ve Terakki*, İstanbul, p.251; Halil Ersin Avcı, *Türkiye 1908 İngiliz Büyükelçisi Sir Gerard Lowther'in 1908 Yılı Türkiye Raporu (Translation and Assessment)*, Çanakkale, 2003, p.133; *Prens Sabahattin, Hayatı ve İlmi Müdafaları*, Prepared by. N. Nurettin Ege, İstanbul, 1977, pp.147-148. Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, suggests that behind this positive approach of the Russians was that they believed that if the countries adopted a system other than the autocracy based on the monarchism in the East, this would lead to their destruction. Due to this, the Russians welcomed the declaration of the constitution. Hikmet Bayur, “İkinci Meşrutiyet Devri Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler”, *Belleten*, XXIII, p.90, Ankara, 1959, p.267. During the 1908 Revolution, the deep fondness for the English and political tendency was apparent in the spirits of the Ottoman intellectuals. Malet, the British envoy who visited İstanbul after the declaration of the constitution, was welcomed and applauded by large crowds at the Sirkeci station. This crowd unhitched the horses pulling the envoy's carriage and pulled the carriage with their own hands.” Ahmet İhsan Toksöz, *Matbuat Hatıralarım*, İstanbul, 1930, p.106.

¹⁹ Engin Deniz, *Alexander Israel Helphand (Parvus Efendi) 1867-1924 Hayatı ve Fikirleri*, İstanbul University, 2011, Unpublished Master's Thesis, p.48.

²⁰ H.Z. Uşaklıgil, *Saray ve Ötesi*, İstanbul, 1965, pp.386-387; Hasan Amca, *Doğmayan Hürriyet*, İstanbul, 1958, p.93.

²¹ It cannot be said that Ottoman politicians agreed on foreign politics. The opposition of intellectuals and politicians that began to appear in the world since the end of the 19th century was also valid in Ottoman territories. Certain intellectuals and politicians displayed a tendency of siding either with England, France and

object to the territories being severed from the Ottoman State. During the Second Constitutional Era, the main aspect that was to change the positive to a negative approach among Ottoman intellectuals and politicians was the stance of the European state's foreign policies.

In this case, the European great powers making no objection and even supporting the Principality of Bulgaria declaring independence shortly after the declaration of the constitution on 5 October 1908, and the Austria-Hungary Empire announcing the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 7 October 1908 is an example of one of the most important damaging political developments in foreign politics.²² The atmosphere of prosperity these political developments were believed to generate turning into disappointment²³ led to the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians reviewing European politics. The Italian invasion attempts on Tripoli from 1 September 1911 were a direct declaration of war, an attack of one the great European powers on Ottoman territories.²⁴

However, the development that shocked the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians the most during the Second Constitutional Era was the Balkan War that began on 8 October 1912 and its repercussions. The Balkan States demanded reforms in Rumeli, a territory under the Ottoman State rule. This demand was also repeated by the European great powers. Although the Ottoman administration considered this demand as intervening in internal affairs, it declared that the reforms would be employed.²⁵ Nevertheless, this move by the Ottoman State failed to prevent the tension that had continued for a long time in the Balkans. Amidst this atmosphere, the great powers, especially France wanted to prevent this process that could lead to new conflicts of interest and a general war in Europe. In fact, at the beginning of the war the French President and Foreign Affairs Minister Raymond Poincare adopted the policy of protecting the existing "status quo" and its discourse. This discourse generated enthusiasm among Ottoman intellectuals and increased their expectations. Europeans, especially the French were expected to persist in protecting the status quo. Indeed, in the beginning, the great powers believed the Ottoman State would emerge from the war with victory. In view of this, even if Ottomans won the war, they would pressure the Ottoman State into maintaining the existing status quo.²⁶

However, the aim of these great powers was neither the reforms nor maintaining the status quo, but rather protecting their own interests. There was conflict of interest in the Balkans among European states that were divided into two blocks, namely England, France and Russia, and Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. In view of this, Raymond Poincare's

Russia, and their oppositions Germany, Austria-Hungary. This political division was to become even more intense with World War I.

²² A. Hilmi Kalaç, *Kendi Kitabım*, İstanbul, 1960, p.23; Branislav Djurdjev, "Bosna Hersek", *DİA*, VI, p.301; Nazif Kuyucuklu, "Bulgaristan", *DİA*, VI, p.399.

²³ Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, *İnkılap Tarihimiz...*, p.259. Prens Sabahattin, *ibid.*, p.265; According to both Kuran and Prince Sabahattin, disapproving of the methods adopted by the Committee of Union and Progress in the process following the constitution, the European states that welcomed the constitution, particularly the Russians reverted back to the methods they previously adopted towards the Ottoman State. At this point, it should not be forgotten that the Russians made a secret treaty of amity with Italy on 24 October 1909 and with the Bulgarians in December 1909 regarding the Straits and Tripoli. Also, for Russia's policies on the Second Constitutional Era see. Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi*, Ankara, 1993, pp.408-410.

²⁴ Ahmet Kavas, "Trablusgarp", *DİA*, XXXXI, p.290.

²⁵ "Hâl ve Mevki", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 13 October 1912, no.557, p.1; "Meclis-i Vükela (Council of Ministers)", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 13 October 1912, no.557, p.1

²⁶ Yunus Nadi, "Avrupa Efkâr-ı Umumiyesi", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 21 October 1912, no.564, p.1; "Ne Hazin Misal-i İbret", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 26 October 1912, no.600, p.1; "Puvankara'nın Beyanatı", *Tazminat*, 23 December 1912, no.404, p.1. In the French Senate, Raymond Poincare announced they wanted the Ottoman State to "preserve the territorial integrity." "Puvankara'nın Ayanda Beyanatı", *Tazminat*, 23 December 1912, no.404, p.2.

policy of maintaining the status quo should be considered as Austria-Hungary's prevention against Russia acquiring land in the Balkans.²⁷ At this point, Ottoman intellectuals and politicians were aware that maintaining the status quo was not only due to concern that the Ottoman State would win the war in the framework of the Russian policies, but also that confliction could emerge between the Blocks and Austria.²⁸ As a result, when the war began to turn against the Ottoman State, the French resorted to a policy change. This policy could change the status quo in the scope of the Balkan state's interests. Yet the great powers were expanding their countries by taking advantage of this change.²⁹

The most distinct declaration of this change of policy in the Balkans came from the French President who adopted the stance of maintaining the status quo from the very beginning. Bulgaria's first victory in the Balkan Wars was the reason for this change in attitude. Raymond Poincare accused the Turks of being "savage" and called the war in the Balkans the campaign of the "Cross and Crescent." Therefore, at the beginning of the 20th century, European civilization had reached the point³⁰ where the Balkan Wars were turned into a religious war and a campaign of siding with coreligionists. At this stage a majority of the Europeans were virtually acting or thinking like "20th century people of the cross."³¹ Since the very beginning, the Balkan states positioned the war as a battle of the "Cross and Crescent."³² This approach totally erased the Turks "belief and sympathy" towards the French.³³

During this process, Ottoman intellectuals and politicians relied on the Triple Alliance, particularly Austria-Hungary to preserve the status quo. Indeed, there was conflict of interest between European states in the Eastern Question, that is, dividing the Ottoman "heritage." There was a struggle for influence between Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkans. At this stage, the Russians were supporting Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro. Austria-Hungary was in a conflict of interest in this struggle for influence and land especially with Serbia.

²⁷ "Puvankara'nın Beyanati", *Tazminat*, 23 December 1912, n.404, p.1.

²⁸ Yunus Nadi, "Avrupa Efkâr-ı Umumiyesi", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 21 October 1912, n.564, p.1;

²⁹ Ali Kemal, "İhtilaftan İhtilafa", *İkdam*, 13 November 1912, n.5651, p.1. England and Russia gave a quick, positive response to this proposal by France. Although Germany, Italy and especially Austria-Hungary did not object, these countries were not quick in responding.

³⁰ These criticisms towards the 20th century European civilization were not only cited regarding the policies adopted during war, but also in terms of the persecution of the Muslims in regions lost by the Ottoman Army. Europeans remained silent to the persecution against Muslims. Ebüzziya Tevfik, "Yirminci Asırda İhtirasat-ı Vahşiyane", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 9 Aralık 1912, n.613, p.1.

³¹ Ali Kemal, "İhtilaftan İhtilafa", *İkdam*, 13 November 1912, n.5651, p.1; "Ne Hazin Misal-i İbret", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 26 November 1912, n.600, p.1; Ebüzziya Tevfik, "Von Bethmann Hollweg'in Reichstag'daki Nutku", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 6 December 1912, n.610, p.1; "Grafik Gazetesinin Marifetleri", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 2 January 1913, n.635, p.1. Although Bulgarian King Ferdinand declared the war as a war of race and religion, Ottoman Deputy Commander Rasim Pasha commanded the Ottoman military that it was incumbent upon them to respect all religious beliefs and protect the civilians. Wilhelm Feldmann, *İstanbul'da Savaş Günleri*, Trans. Necmettin Alkan, Istanbul, 2004, p.42. The crusaders are meant from the perhaps "people of the cross".

³² The Bulgarian public declared the war launched by the Balkan states against the Ottoman State as a "crusade." Yunus Nadi, "Avrupa Efkâr-ı Umumiyesi", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 21 October 1912, n.564, p.1; "Ne Hazin Misal-i İbret", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 26 November 1912, n.600, p.1; Ebüzziya Tevfik, "Avrupa Harbi, Şark Meselesi, Avusturya-Rusya İhtilafatı Münasebetiyle", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 30 November 1912, 604, p.1. At the beginning of the Balkan War, Lütfi Fikri, an Ottoman intellectual and politician disapproved of the relations between the Ottomans and Europeans in the 20th century being evaluated as a Cross and Crescent campaign. According to him, the era where an attitude of such was something of the past. Ottoman-European relations could not be maintained on the basis of religion. Lütfi Fikri, "Tevsi-i Hududa Niçin Hakkımız Olmasın?", *Tazminat*, 17 October 1912, n.383, p.1.

³³ İlhami Masar, *Bir Ömür Boyunca*, Istanbul, 1974, p.46.

Nevertheless, Austria-Hungary remained neutral from the beginning of the war; it showed no resistance to the Balkan states and even gave partial support.³⁴

This negative approach against the Ottomans was generated not only among European states, but also the public. In fact, the European public considered the Balkan Wars more as a struggle between the Cross and Crescent. Actually, this approach was not anything new for the Ottomans. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the Ottomans became acquainted with this approach with “unpleasant experiences.” At this point, the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War (War of 93) was launched with the excuse of “saving the Christians” under the Ottoman rule.³⁵ A similar approach was demonstrated by the Europeans in the 1897 Greco-Turkish War. Moreover, among *the Balkan Committee* that was one of the major sources of the disorder in the Balkans, there were some of England’s most known figures.³⁶ In fact, during the four year period after the declaration of the Second Constitution the Europeans took “drastic steps” against the Ottomans.³⁷ Peace talks began in London when the Ottoman Army was unsuccessful and was defeated in the Balkan War. During these negotiations, the great powers pressuring the Ottoman State’s envoys to sign an agreement supporting the Balkan states and including a significant loss of land, was clear proof of the European’s change of policy at the beginning of the war.³⁸

Europe’s struggle against the Ottomans was based on the Cross and Crescent hostility in the name of the “Eastern Question.”³⁹ In fact, not only politicians but also the public was using a “ruthless, remorseless” language, even to the extent of humiliating the Ottomans. In view of this, war was not only on the battlefield for the Ottomans, but also meant winning the European public.⁴⁰ In this respect, the Balkan War was an “exceptional” means of understanding the “spirit” of the Europeans and their thoughts and feelings towards the Ottomans.⁴¹

³⁴ Ali Kemal, “İhtilafatın İhtilafa”, *İkdam*, 13 Kasım 1912, n.5651, p.1; Ebüzziya Tevfik, “Avrupa Harbi, Şark Meselesi, Avusturya-Rusya İhtilafatı Münasebetiyle”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 30 November 1912, 604, p.1. Germany announced against Austria-Hungary of which it was in alliance, that it would not accept expansion and an exchange of territories in the Balkans. Principally, rather than protecting the Ottoman State, eliminating the concerns of Austria-Hungary and increasing its influence in Ottoman politics was behind this stance of Germany. Ebüzziya Tevfik, “Von Bethmann Hollweg’in Riechstag’daki Nutku”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 6 December 1912, n.610, p.1.

³⁵ British leaders including William E. Gladstone, L. Salisbury instigated their own public against the Ottomans in the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War and the 1897 Greco-Turkish War. Yunus Nadi, “Avrupa Efkâr-ı Umumiyesi”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 21 October 1912, n.564, p.1; “Ne Hazin Misal-i İbret”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 26 November 1912, n.600, p.1.

³⁶ “Ne Hazin Misal-i İbret”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 26 November 1912, n.600, p.1.

³⁷ According to Ebüzziya Tevfik Bey, the disturbances in Yemen and Syria, and the events in Tripoli and the Balkans in the Second Constitutional Era were a continuation of the Eastern Issue. Ebüzziya Tevfik, “Avrupa Harbi, Şark Meselesi, Avusturya-Rusya İhtilafatı Münasebetiyle”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 30 November 1912, 604, p.1

³⁸ Yunus Nadi, “Üç Düşman”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 8 January 1913, n.641, p.1. Yunus Nadi explains that in the Second Constitutional Era, the policies of the Eastern Question that the Europeans adopted since the beginning of the 19th century was a pursuit to “remove the Turks from Rumelia.” Yunus Nadi, “Tarih Muvacehesinde”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 29 December 1912, n.631, p.1.

³⁹ For Europeans, the Eastern Question was a battle of “Islam and Christianity.” The Eastern Question was a contention that the Ottomans would be incapable of introducing a “diplomatically” civil administration. In addition, also refer to the statements of Russian novelist Dostoevsky for one of the best descriptions of the Russian approach to the Eastern Question. Ebüzziya Tevfik, “Avrupa Harbi, Şark Meselesi, Avusturya-Rusya İhtilafatı Münasebetiyle”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 30 November 1912, 604, p.1.

⁴⁰ Yunus Nadi, “Avrupa Efkâr-ı Umumiyesi”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 21 October 1912, n.564, p.1; “Grafik Gazetesinin Marifetleri”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 2 January 1913, n.635, p.1; Lütfi Fikri, “Pazarlık”, *Tazminat*, 9 January 1913, n.412, p.1.

⁴¹ “Ne Hazin Misal-i İbret”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 26 November 1912, n.600, p.1.

On the other hand, despite many problems that emerged in foreign politics since the early days of the Second Constitutional Era, there was the need for long-term peace and external economic support for Ottoman intellectuals and politicians to establish a new political system. In 1914, for this reason Ottoman politicians established committees of friendship with the French⁴² and the Russians.⁴³ The Ottomans attempted to form an alliance with France, Russia and the British.⁴⁴ But these attempts by the Ottoman State that were to conclude with the diminishing of German influence felt mainly among the intellectuals and politicians, were in vain. Moreover, it appeared that the Germans would not back down from securing political gains by leading the Armenian issue, and introduced policies that displayed no reservations in provoking Kurdish tribes in the east of the Ottoman State.⁴⁵

Conclusion

The political stance by the Europeans the Ottoman State experienced in foreign policies during the process since the beginning of the Second Constitutional Era needs to be studied in greater detail. This political stance that was classified as a great disappointment in terms of those who declared the Second Constitution was seriously questioned. Indeed, for Ottoman intellectuals and politicians, changing to the constitutional system would mean a decline in issues with Europe and even securing the support of great powers. In view of this, the foreign policy processes encountered since the beginning of the Second Constitution led to the disappointment, concern and the feeling of being abandoned among the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians, and was even considered as betrayal. As for the Ottomans, being governed under the constitutional system meant the transition to the family of European states.

The two hostile political blocks, namely Europe's Entente and Central Powers and the conflict of interest between these two blocks was behind this policy of the great powers. This conflict was clearly manifested in the Balkans where the Ottoman State owned a significant proportion of the lands. Russia, a member of the Entente Powers attempted to influence the Slav communities in the Balkans. In this way, the Russians aimed to prevent Austria-Hungary and Italy from among the Central Powers, from establishing a zone of authority and seizing land in the Balkans. In addition, with these policies Russia aimed to impose their goals on the Ottoman State. Austria-Hungary and Italy followed the policy of preventing the Russian zone of authority, confederacy between the Slavic States and land reclamation. In fact, if this went in their favor the European political balance, that is, the status quo intended to incorporate land into their own countries.

On the other hand, the declaration of the Second Constitution caused concern for Russia, Austria-Hungary, Italy and the Balkan States that had other plans for the Ottoman State's territories in Rumelia. One reason for this concern was that when the Ottoman State changed to a constitutional system, a council that represented their own geography and people, including the Balkans, the *Meclis-i Mebusan* (Chamber of Deputies) would assemble in the capital Istanbul. At this point, for Ottoman intellectuals and politicians the constitution

⁴² Salih Tunç, "I. Dünya Savaşına yaklaşırken Osmanlı-Fransız İlişkilerinde Yakınlaşma Girişimleri: Fransa-Türkiye Dostluk Cemiyeti ve Cemal Paşa'nın Paris Seyahati", *Osmanlı Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi (Journal of Ottoman Research and Implementation Center)*, p.25/2009, pp.183-201.

⁴³ Halil Ersin Avcı, "I. Dünya Savaşı Öncesinde Türk Hükümeti'nin Rus Baskısını Azaltma Girişimleri: Türk-Rus Komitesi'nin Kurulması ve Talat Bey'in Livadya gezisi", *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi (Journal of South-East European Studies)*, p.18, pp.20-36; Zeki Arıkan, *Tarihimiz ve Cumhuriyet Muhittin Birgen (1885-1951)*, Istanbul 1997, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁴ Salih Tunç, *op.cit.*, p.186.

⁴⁵ For more detailed information see. Fatih Ünal, *Kürt Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı (II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi)*, Istanbul University, 1995, Unpublished Master's Thesis.

was an initiative to expand in the political, social and economical terms. For this reason, the Bulgarian declaration of independence amidst this concern, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina before the parliament elections. The great powers voiced no serious objection to these imposed developments.

Additionally, the declaration and implementation of the constitution in the Ottoman State constituting an example for Muslims was also a cause of concern for the great powers. Indeed, there were significantly large numbers of Muslim societies in the territories and colonies of these great powers. For example, this was also a matter of concern for the Russian State that had a significant number of Muslims in its territories. The Ottoman State strengthening with the constitutional system was one of the fears of the Russian State. Similar opinions were conveyed to Moscow by the Russian ambassador in Istanbul.⁴⁶ Taking into consideration the stances in foreign policies I attempted to explain above, it will appear that the welcoming of the constitution by the great powers at the beginning did not actually reflect the truth.

On the other hand, although developments in foreign policies exalted European civilization and thoughts among Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals and politicians, this generated a major paradox, a contradiction. In other words, political developments did not prove to be anything like the friendship established in European opinion. What actually left the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians in dilemma was on one hand Europe being the cradle of civilization, development and humanity, while on the other being ruthless, a source of inequality towards the Ottomans. In such that the principles, the morality Western civilization brought to the people of the twentieth century were clearly being violated by Europeans against the Ottomans. The Balkan Wars being portrayed as a religious war between the Cross and Crescent was totally unacceptable for the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians.

This situation was to generate frustration, disappointment and a confidence crisis towards the West, and in later periods was to shape the Turk's perception of the West. This perception can be summarized as follows: It was a fact that the Western civilization was fashioning the whole world. This civilization was also to influence, and even fashion the Turks. However, irrelevant of how great, how persuasive the Western civilization was, Europeans and European politicians were violating these honorable values. In other words, the legal system and lifestyle the Europeans considered suitable for their own people was not valid when its came to the Ottomans. This indicates that there was a dilemma among the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians regarding the perception of Europe. Europe, the source and example of civilization, progress and humanity, at the same time was the headquarters of injustice for the Ottomans and Muslims.

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