CONFLICTUAL APPROACHES to NATIONALISM in THE ISLAMIC THOUGHT in THE LATE OTTOMAN SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY of THE JOURNAL *SEBILÜR-REŞAD* (1908-1924)

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine the journal Sebilür-reşad to understand how nationalism was coupled with Turkish Islamic thought in the journalistic discourse between the years 1908 and 1924. For this study, I analyzed thirty articles published in Ottoman Turkish in the journal between those years. The mainstream idea of the journal during this period was to stress a perceived conflict between the Muslim world and western powers and to advocate the idea of the unity of Muslims against the colonialist activities of western powers in the region. The idea of this unity, however, seems to be articulated in different and even contesting nationalist terms. Therefore, my intention here is to demonstrate how Islamic discourse was mediated by journalistic activity with reference to varying nationalist approaches (Turkish, Ottomanism and territorial nationalism) and their 'others' under changing political circumstances.

Keywords: *Sebilür-reşad, Nationalism, Ottomanism, Islamism, Journalism*

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Geç Osmanlı Toplumu İslami Düşüncesinde Milliyetçiliğe Çatışmalı Yaklaşımlar: *Sebilür-reşad* Dergisi (1908-1924) Üzerine Bir Çalışma

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, 1908-1924 yılları arasındaki gazetecilik söyleminde milliyetçiliğin Türk İslami düşüncesine nasıl eklemlendiğini anlamak için Sebilür-reşad dergisini incelemektedir. Bu çalışma için belirtilen yıllar arasında dergide Osmanlıca basılan otuz makale incelenmiştir. O dönem boyunca derginin başlıca amacı Müslüman dünyası ile batılı güçler arasında gerçekleştiği düşünülen bir çatışmayı vurgulamak ve Batılı devletlerin bölgedeki sömürgecilik faaliyetlerine karşı Müslümanların birliği fikrini savunmaktır. Fakat bu birlik fikrinin, farklı ve hatta çatışan milliyetçi terimlerle ifade edildiği görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla benim buradaki niyetim, değişen siyasi şartlar altında İslami söylemin, farklı milliyetçilik yaklaşımlarına (Türkçülük, Osmanlıcılık ve bölgesel milliyetçilik) ve bu yaklaşımların "öteki"lerine referans vererek gazetecilik eylemi tarafından nasıl sunulduğunu göstermektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sebilür-reşad, Milliyetçilik, Osmanlıcılık, İslamcılık, Gazetecilik

Introduction

In the scholarly works that focus on the relation between Islam and nationalism the most important question is in what ways Islamic sense of belonging and social unity (*ummah*) overlap or contrast with the notion of national community and identity. In this article, I try to reflect upon the same question by analyzing a significant transitory period between 1908 and 1924 in order to examine the interplay between Islamic thought and nationalism in the Late Ottoman Empire. This short period of time grabs one's attention because of the historical developments that occurred during that time: the constitutional monarchy was re-established, the Ottoman government launched Turkification policies in the public institutions of the empire, the Ottoman Empire lost World War I (hereafter WWI) and was disintegrated by the winning powers and a liberation war was commenced and led by Turkish nationalist officers in Anatolia.

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Over the course of this historical transformation, I aim to examine the Ottoman journal *Sebilür-reşad*, which is generally characterized with its traditional Islamic editorial line. The journal started to be published with the title of *Sırat-ı Müstakim*[1] on 14 August 1908. The year of 1908 is also significant because of the overthrow of Sultan Abdulhamid II. With the end of his reign, the censorship over the intellectual and political life declined, and various differing thoughts and ideologies were able to be debated freely in hundreds of newly emerging newspapers and journals. It was also the time when Ottomanist and nationalist ideologies interchangeably affected the Islamic discourse of the journal. As Ismail Kara argues, the historical process between 1908 and 1924 indicates a profound political and intellectual transition from being 'the Ottoman subject' to being 'the citizen of the Republic of Turkey' (Kara, 1985: 1408). Even though this transition constitutes a non-linear, fluctuating and complex historical process at first glance, I was able to categorize it by developing a formula of triple periodization: 1908-1913 (the period of political liberalization and pluralization); 1913-1919 (WWI and the separation of Arab provinces); and 1919-1924 (The Liberation War in Anatolia). I consider these major historical and political changes the key social dynamics which gave new directions to the construction of nationalism in the Islamic discourse of the Ottoman journal at each different time period.

I consider *Sebilür-reşad* a journalistic site of cultural representation, which carries shifting meanings of 'the imagined national communities' (Anderson, 2006) simultaneously during these sixteen years. I argue that the notion of the nation was constantly reconstructed in this journalistic site as an imagination. The imagination of the nation as reflected in the Islamic discourse of the journal denotes varying references to contesting nationalist thoughts, concepts and historical pasts. As Risser (1997) puts it, the symbolic representations,

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[1] It means 'straight path,' and according to the Muslim faith is also the name of the bridge leading to paradise.

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which refer to a particular history and ideology, come to sight as images in discourse. Hence, for this study, I conducted interpretative textual analysis in order to investigate the ways in which various national identities and communities were represented in the journalistic discourse of *Sebilür-reşad*.

This study is based upon my empirical research in the archives of National Library in Ankara, Turkey. During this research, 30 op-ed articles published in *Sebilür-reşad* between 1908 and 1924 were selected for analysis. I chose *Sebilür-reşad* for the analysis because of its influence over the public debates in the late Ottoman society. It was an overarching major mouthpiece of Muslim intellectuals at the time in the Ottoman Empire. The prominent authors and the managers of the journal, Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Eşref Edip, were among the most influential Muslim scholars in the empire. Even the leading reformists of the Muslim world, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rıda, wrote for the journal. Moreover, the journalists of *Sebilür-reşad* worked and gathered news information about Muslims in different parts of the world, such as Western Europe, the Balkans, Central Asia, the Fertile Crescent and Anatolia. In its most popular times, the journal, which consisted of sixteen pages without cover page, had a weekly nationwide circulation of around ten thousand. Thus, *Sebilür-reşad* played an influential role in the reproduction and dissemination of Islamic discourse in the late Ottoman society. Furthermore, its journalistic discourse mediated the relationship between Islamic thought and nationalism during a significant moment of the contemporary Turkey's nation-state building process. This study is intended to not only develop a better understanding of the changing and shifting meanings of Turkish nationalist ideology in Islamic thought, but also illuminate the numerous aspects of Ottoman journalism which has seldom been examined.

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A General Outline of the Construction of Nationalism in the Islamic thought of *Sebilür-reşad*

The idea of Ottomanism[2] was propagated in the Ottoman Empire in order to maintain the unity of the empire by recognizing equal social rights to non-Muslims (Deringil, 1993). During the period of Abdulhamid II, however, it was not able to hinder the disintegration of the Christian territories from the empire, as parochial nationalisms were flourishing. The empire lost the control over the most of its Christian territories in Europe after its defeats in the Ottoman-Russian War (1876-1878) and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913).

In the aftermath of the wars, the loss of territory and the subsequent massive Muslim migration from Europe and Caucasia to Anatolia strengthened the Islamic identity of the empire on a grand scale. Sultan Abdulhamit II sought to capitalize on this new demographic situation for caliphal aspirations. He placed news emphasis on Islamic symbols, Ottoman state's Islamic identity and the sultan's personal religious role as caliph. This new emphasis was intended to contribute to his foreign policy of rallying support among different Muslim societies and communities against the European political encroachment (Kayalı, 1997: 31). Meanwhile, the grant of equality in rights and status to the non-Muslim populations after the Tanzimat doctrine (1839-1876) created considerable impact on the escalation of Islamic reaction to the demise of the empire (Berkes, 1998: 267; Gülalp, 1995). The increasing emphasis on Islamic references transformed the discourse of the 'unity of the empire' in Ottomanism into the 'unity of the Muslim societies' (Deringil, 1993: 4-5). One can contend that the notion of an ideal Islamic unity might have provided Ottomanist ideology with a national meaning for the Turkish

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[2] The ideology of Ottomanism dates back to the reign of Mahmud II. It was specifically developed during the Tanzimat period and established as the basic pillar of the state ideology of the Ottoman Empire until the Balkan Wars (1912-13). Its major aim was to foster a type of citizenship including all the Ottoman subjects, irrespective of their religious and proto-national origin.

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Muslim subjects and a transnational one for Arabs. Yet, it did not keep Ottomanism from diminishing at the turn of the twentieth century.

Sebilür-reşad came out in this transition period with two major political goals: to emphasize a perceived conflict between the Muslim world and Western powers, and to advocate for the idea of Muslim unity on the basis of a moral and political solidarity against Western colonialism. In the pursuit of these two goals, the journal showed considerable support for 1908 Revolution and the second constitutional regime, which was established and ruled by the Committee of Union and Progress[3] (hereafter the CUP). The major political impetus behind its support was the expectation from the CUP of freeing Muslims from the Western political hegemony and building the *ummah*, which would gather all Muslims under one single nation.

Accordingly, *Sebilü-r-reşad* obtained and published countless information and news about the political conditions of the Muslims all over the world. The journal's news reports and articles covered a vast territory. This geography overlapped with the Ottoman and even Turkic territories in Central Asia, particularly in Turkistan. Any military or political threat to the Turkic societies in Central Asia was considered to be an onslaught on the religion of Turks. The journal, therefore, endorsed Turkism[4] to some extent for the sake of supporting the

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[3] The Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) was founded initially as a secret society in 1889 by pro-Western Ottoman intellectuals, politicians, officers and professionals of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. It became a political organization in 1906. During the disintegration period of the Ottoman Empire, the committee members came to power between 1908 and 1918 and entered the war on the side of Axis countries.

[4] Turkism advocates an ethno-nationalist project (Turancılık) with the aim of uniting all Turkish people in Anatolia, Caucasia and Central Asia under a single nation based on the supposed Turkish blood (Akçura, 2005: 55-62). Turkism is generally claimed to constitute one of the basic pillars of the CUP's political ideology. In fact, their well-known nationalist project, Pan-Turkism (Turancılık), was propagated towards the end of WWI with the aim of the unification of all Turkish and Turkic people living in Anatolia, Caucasia and Central Asia under a single nation based on 'Turkish

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Muslim Turkic countries in the name of Islam. For instance, Eşref Edip stated that 'Turks are the precious one of all nations… They are the best Muslims among all the Muslim societies. Rather than other nations, it is Turks whose nature is the most suitable to Islam and it is the leading nation which will elevate Islam' (Arabacı, 2004: 127). Edip's statement provides a general idea about the extent to which 'the Turkish nation' was elevated and privileged in the journal's Islamic thought.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish the notion of nationalism in *Sebilür-Reşad* from Turkism. The aim of Turkist ideology was to forge a new past and an ethnic genealogy by 'rediscovering' the history of Turks. As Gündüz puts it, the main theme of Turkism is building a new nation over the territory, which would implicitly or explicitly be shaped on the basis of race (2007: 226). On the other hand, the journal always had the idea of *ummah* instead of racist and ethnic markings, and the salvation of the Turkish nation was correlated with the salvation of Islam (2007: 247). For example, in one of his articles, Eşref Edip argued about how 'the soul of Islam' politically and culturally enhanced Turkish and Arabic people (1335/1919: 166-168). He claimed that Turkish people, who had had a void and materialist life before Islam, found the meaning and the goal of life in Islam. The matter of which one is prioritized in the articulation of self-identity is always not an easy task in the first place.

The articulation of Turkish nationalism in *Sebilür-reşad* can primarily be identified with a discursive pendulum swinging between two different understandings of Turkishness: the first one claims the salvation of Turks to be bound to Islam, and the second one offers an idea of the Turkish nation which protects and elevates Islam as the triumphant nation over other Muslim communities. What I will discuss in the following sections is how the Islamic thought is mediated by the

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ethnicity'. During that period, Turkism also directed the government's public policies towards the non-Turkish population of the empire.

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journal through these shifting notions of Turkishness in the face of different 'others'.

Changing Formulations of Nationalism in the Discourse of *Sebilür-reşad* between 1908-1924

a) 1908-1913: The alliance between the journal and the CUP

Facing the rise of the separatist nationalist movements in the Balkans and the Middle East, the CUP regime sought to generate a primordial Turkish nationality against Arab, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian identities. This attempt was presented as a solution for the continuity of statehood in the face of not only the separatist movements but also the European political and military encroachment. In this political context, the advent of the CUP regime was welcomed by the journal[5]. The articles that praised the CUP and sought to rally mass support for it were frequently published. This support basically stemmed from the hope for the newly emerging CUP regime to reconstitute the integrity of the empire. On the other hand, this editorial support apparently went to the extent of espousing an 'ethnic' Turkish identity instead of an imperial identity based on the faith of Islam.

There are many articles, which support Turkist theses in the journal, or there are some, which were even written by Turkist writers themselves, such as Yusuf Akçura[6]. The main idea in these articles is that the only way of building the unity of Islam as well as ensuring the integrity of the empire was the integration of all other Muslim societies under the name of Turkishness (Tunaya, 1962: 82). In one of these articles, Ispartalı Hakkı endorsed Turkists' theses saying that

> Turkishness… The troop which shakes the ground with its march and holds the sky with its flag… Today's communities, states, civilizations and humanity all were born out of that moment. We, main Turks, also

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[5] The overthrow of Abdulhamid II generated sympathy towards the CUP among the pious Muslims also because, as Selim Deringil claims, Abdulhamid II oppressed and weakened the Ottoman ulama and religious men of letters (1991).

[6] Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935) is viewed to be one of the founders of Turkism.

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created the current world. We gave nations to the world (1327/1911 : 165-166).

Further to his commendation of Turkism, Ispartalı Hakkı advocated the idea that the languages in all over the world are rooted in Turkish:

> [I]s it impossible that Turkish can be the mother of all languages, while Turkishness is the mother of all nations? Even though Adam is the father of the entire world as well as of Turks, Adam is Turkish… We should reconsider ourselves, and we should no longer say that Turks are a backward nation, or that Turkish is a rude language (1327/1911: 165-166).

The overlapping between the ideological stance of the editorial board and the Turkist ideology of the CUP regime is interesting. The heavy influence of the political support for the new regime seems to have largely impacted *Sebilü'r-Reşad*'s journalistic discourse. It is even possible to speak of xenophobic Turkist articles published in the journal in that period. As Gündüz quotes, Fahreddin Necip urged Muslims to not buy anything from foreigners and different minority groups and to use domestic goods (2007: 259).

Erol Ülker (2005: 631) and Feroz Ahmad (1982: 406) argue that it is not possible to speak of a Turkification[7] process as a nation-state

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[7] Different scholars contend the conceptualization of Turkification policies. Fatma Müge Göçek puts it as an application of cultural nationalist ideology into the imperial state policies (2002a). Those policies are claimed to relegate the non-Turkish and non-Muslim minorities to an inferior and disadvantageous position. For instance, the CUP advocated for the simplification of Ottoman Turkish eliminating Arabic elements and forced the use of Turkish language in the state institutions and public sphere (Kayalı, 1997: 91). The CUP elites are considered to carry out a large-scale Turkification policy towards the end of its reign and are sometimes accused for the forced migration of the non-Muslim subjects living in Anatolia as an outcome of their alleged 'ethnic cleansing project' (Berktay, 2007). Erol Ülker and Feroz Ahmad, however, contend this approach. For Ahmad, the CUP's national policies are an attempt to terminate the communal privileges enjoyed by the non-Muslim communities (such as being accountable only to their own religious leader and the opportunity to acquire foreign citizenship) for a more egalitarian and centralized political system (1982: 404-405).

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building project in the Second Constitutional Period. For Hanioğlu, however, despite that the CUP 'endeavored to Ottomanize its subjects, the symbols used to evoke a supranational culture were Turkish' (Hanioğlu, 2002: 86). The above-mentioned articles of *Sebilür-reşad* are a good example of the extent to which the symbols of Turkishness in Hanioğlu's terms were welcomed and even promoted. Turkishness in those articles is appropriated not as a supranational imperial identity but as an 'ethnic' one that excludes other national identities.

The editorial choice of *Sebilür-reşad* in favor of the Turkist theses can be taken as an outcome of the real politics. The journal's political discourse was heavily influenced by the large support for the new regime to save the 'Muslim' empire. The praise of Turkism indicates a political alignment between the journal and the CUP, which actually reflected on the changing identity politics. In 1912, Mehmed Fahreddin even asserted Islam and Turkishness to be the same two things (Gündüz, 2007). Although the CUP had not applied its Turkist policies yet in that period, the editorial board seemingly did not hesitate to exhibit an ideological overlapping between its own journalistic and the Turkist political discourse.

The implications of the Turkist ideas in the journal may subvert the notion of transnational Islamic identity and undermine the discourse of the unity of Ottoman Empire. In this equation, however, Haldun Gülalp points out that the rises of Islamist and Turkist-nationalist ideas were not separated processes (1995). If this is correct, it would then be plausible to look for an 'external other,' against which both identities were constructed. It was the hope for the success of the CUP against the Western encroachment and separatist movements, which brought *Sebilür-reşad* closer to the CUP. This convergence rendered Islam 'an

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Along a similar line, Erol Ülker also conceptualizes Turkification process as part of the nation-state building process, through which the CUP elites sought to centralize the state rule in the specific regions of the empire rather than to assimilate Arabs and non-Muslim subjects (2005: 631).

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ideology closer to nationalism and anti-colonialism than to religion' (Özdalga, 2006: 553). The emergence of both Islamic and nationalist perspectives as a reaction to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the rising European imperialism notably blurred the significant difference between the Turkist and transnational Islamic identities.

b) 1913-1919: The Failure of the CUP and the End of Alliance

In this period, the rise of Arab nationalism and Arab communities' fighting against the Ottoman army in WWI had profound impact over the CUP administration, which was under the pressure of maintaining the integrity of the empire. Against these developments, despite its pro-secular orientation inherited from Young Turks, the CUP began to promote Islamic identity at the end of 1913 in order to hinder the demands of Arab societies for autonomy (Kayalı, 1997: 141-142). The territory loss in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) had already transformed the multi-religious empire to a Turkish-Arab state (1997: 116). All these events paved the way to the rise of Islamic sensibilities. Meanwhile, the idea of an Islamic rule appeared as a political ideology in the journalistic discourse of *Sebilür-reşad*. It was expected to ensure the loyalty of non-Turkish Muslim subjects to the empire. Given that the CUP elites may have felt a similar expectation in the public, they appealed to the idea of Islamic unity under the Caliph as a political remedy.

The CUP's recourse to the cause of establishment of political unity of Islam did not receive any appraisal or negative reaction from *Sebilür-reşad*. The journal mainly accused the government of not putting the country onto the 'true Islamic path'. The CUP was claimed to fail to protect the integrity of the Ottoman state and society. In an editorial article, the most urgent remedy proposed for the political deterioration was the re-arrangement of political and cultural life on the basis of Islam (No title specified, 1919: 441-442). The regime,

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however, was charged with abandoning Islamic politics and switching to Turkist politics.

The attempts to invigorate Islamic identity did not save the CUP elites from the journal's criticism. The perceived failure of the regime in saving the empire and the growth of Islamic sensibilities against Turkism rendered the CUP vulnerable to criticism in the journal. The authors and editors' negative reaction to nationalism even became more aggressive with the uprisings of non-Turkish Muslim subjects such as the Albanian revolt[8] and the disintegration of the Arab provinces.

In that period, religious bonding acquired a more significant function in the conceptualization of the nation in the journalistic discourse of *Sebilür-reşad*. The idea of Muslim brotherhood became the determining factor in the demarcation of the boundaries of the Ottoman society, whereas the emphasis on national identity was viewed to be harmful. Ömer Rıza, for instance, endorsed this political discourse by stating in his article that if a Muslim says 'I am Turkish,' 'I am Arab' or 'I am Kurdish, the idea of Muslim brotherhood would severely be damaged (1335/1919a: 68-70). The Islamic sensibilities and aspirations became more evident in the journal's political discourse.

In reality, interestingly, the CUP pursued Islamic identity politics to some extent during that period in accord with the changing political circumstances. Islamic identity was, for example, elevated by the regime to secure Arabs' loyalty to the state (especially at the beginning of WWI). However, it would not be correct to speak of stagnant identity politics on the side of the CUP. While Islamic identity and solidarity was promoted as a remedy for the 'salvation of the state', the ongoing war conditions and separatist movements across the empire

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[8] Nesim Şeker claims that the Albanian revolt (1910) was a remarkable cornerstone in the ideological transformation of the CUP cadres towards Turkish nationalism (2007: 464). The revolt marks a separatist nationalist movement within the Muslim population in a critical period when the CUP was appealing to the idea of Ottomanism in Islamic colour.

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led Turkish nationalism to become powerful in the government politics. The separatist movements in the Arab societies, coupled with the rise of the Armenian and Kurdish questions in the course of the war continuously reshaped the CUP's nationalist approach. The mere symbolic emphasis on Turkish culture was replaced by a nationalist *realpolitik*. As Çağlar Keyder recounts, the use of French and English signs on the street was forbidden, and using all languages except Turkish in business correspondence and official accounting was prohibited through a 'language reform' in 1915 (1987: 62). It is not certain how these linguistic attempts reverberated among the authors and editors of *Sebilür-reşad*. What we know that the journal encouraged greater attention to Arabic rather than French due to the political and religious benefits for the dissemination of Arabic (Kayalı, 1997: 93). Given that it frequently emphasized the importance of Arabic, the forced use of Turkish language in the state institutions in the Arab regions may have caused resentment among the editors.

In the context of the Arab provinces, the Turkish linguistic reform seems to have engendered serious grievances among the Arab elites. For instance, the Arab associations such as *al-Hizb al-lamrkaziya al-Idariya al-Uthmani* [the Ottoman Decentralization Party] began to advocate the wider administrative authority and ask for Arabic as the official language of the province and as one of the official languages of the Ottoman Parliament (Göçek, 2002b: 29-30, 54). This example may provide insight into the understanding of the impact of the CUP's nationalist policies over the rise of Arab separatism. Kayalı (1997: 90-91) and Ülker (2005: 619-620) contend that the impact of the nationalist politics should not be exaggerated. Nevertheless, the CUP's language policy seems to have been perceived by many Arabs as an imposition of Turkish national culture in order to Turkify Arabs.

Faced with the Arab separatism and the nationalist policies of the CUP, the journal advocated the idea of Ottomanism with a strong Islamic emphasis. In his article on nationalism, Ömer Rıza asserted that the Ottoman Empire must turn into a political body in which everybody

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can live freely without any nationalist discrimination (1335/1919a). In another article, he also clearly stated that 'the Ottoman government was not a Turkish government, but it was the government of the Ottoman motherland' (1335/1919b).

On the other hand, I argue that the journalistic approach of *Sebilür-reşad* to the issues of Turkism and nationalism in the period of 1913-1919 deserves a deeper scrutiny. In an editorial article titled *Türkçülerin Siyasi Mefkûreleri* [The Political Aims of Turkists], Turkism was accused of paving the way to the collapse of the empire and sowing the seeds of dispute (*fitne*) among Muslim societies:

> The political aims of Turkists:
>
> 1) To divide Turkey into two parts: defining Anatolia, the part which is resided by Turks, as Turkish Motherland; separating the part which is resided by Arabs as Arabic Motherland by recognizing their political autonomy, even independence.
>
> 2) To provide minority groups which live in the territory of Turkish Motherland such as Armenians, Greeks and Jewish, with political autonomy to some extent… to grant them equal rights with Turks (1334/1918: 211).

At first glance, in the article, it is apparent that the 'Turkists' were condemned for underpinning the emergence and recognition of different nationalities. The first point in the article, however, is worth examining with a greater depth because while the author was criticizing 'Turkists' for dividing the country up between Turks and Arabs, he defined the motherland as 'Turkey,' not as 'the Ottoman Empire,' where Arabs and Turks were supposed to live together.

This linguistic nuance in the article may reveal a different journalistic stance towards nationalism because the editorial line in general does not seem to be sympathetic to the recognition of national differences and diversity particularly during that period. Ömer Rıza, for instance, defines Turkish, Kurdish and Arab people as three Muslim societies (*ümmet-i İslam*) which have the same culture, religion and common interests in politics and economy (1335/1919b: 111). Yet, the

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elevation of Turkish culture at the expense of others and the definition of homeland as 'Turkey' in the quote above implicitly indicate the extent to which the geographical and even cultural nationalism imbued with Turkishness infused into the Islamic discourse of *Sebilür-reşad*.

Additionally, the second point of the article controversially charges Turkists with the accusation of giving political autonomy to minority groups. In the time of the writing of the article, not to mention the political autonomy, Armenians had already been evacuated and forced to migrate from the Eastern Anatolia by the CUP. The forced migration can be seen as part of Turkification process orchestrated by the CUP during the war time. Although it was not intended to assimilate all subjects of the empire from different regions, it would not be incorrect to claim that this process paved the way to the re-settlement and evacuation of Greeks and Armenians living in Anatolia. Regardless of whether it was believed to be the outcome of war measures or of an 'ethnic' cleansing project, the CUP's political nationalist policy of expelling them from Anatolia seems not to have received much criticism from *Sebilür-reşad*.

Seemingly, towards the end of the second period, *Sebilür-reşad* adopted an unfavorable attitude towards non-Muslims –especially Armenians and Greeks. It did not regard them as the subjects of the Ottoman Empire in a full sense, despite that the journal's editors and authors mostly appeared to advocate Ottomanism. The religious identity of these minorities coupled with their parochial nationalisms was perceived to jeopardize the survival of the state. In many articles on the missionaries operating in Anatolia, the Christian church communities, foundations and schools were harshly condemned for conducting missionary activities on the grounds of 'westernizing the Ottoman society'. Greeks and Armenians who attended those community meetings and their schools (such as American high schools in İstanbul and Tarsus) were accused of collaborating with the missionaries in order to undermine the Islamic culture, identity and unity of the empire. In this context, the evacuation of non-Muslim subjects and the

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settlement of Muslims in the regions vacated by non-Muslim communities in Anatolia may have even been viewed in favor of Islamization of the empire.

The criticism levelled at Turkists and the CUP elites in the journal is not only from anti-nationalist but also from anti-secular moral perspective. It is not only about that Turkism should not have a priority over Islam. As Ahmed Naim claimed, societies should also be evaluated according to their Islamic character and belief, not their nationality (Gündüz, 2007: 263). Not a single identity but the whole cultural and moral order seems to have been at stake. Ömer Rıza argued that it is 'Muhammadanism', which constitutes the spirit of the existence of the Ottoman society covering all political, social and moral spheres; 'everything that is non-Islamized is alien to us' (1335/1919a: 68-70). By posing such critiques, the reaction of the journal to Turkish nationalists targeted both the nationalist policies and the secular outlook of the CUP government.

It appears that the secular tendency among the Young Turks became more conspicuous in the eyes of the editors. In the editorial article titled '*Türk Ocağındaki Münasebetsizlikler Hakkında*' [Regarding Inappropriateness in Turkish Organization] (1335/1919: 119), the anti-secular reaction about *Türk Ocağı*, which was a major association of the Young Turks, was presented. For instance, the balls and concerts in *Türk Ocağı* modern dressing of Turkish women without headscarf and their hanging out with men freely in these events were viewed to be inimical to Islam. The pro-western and nationalist group of people identified with the CUP was accused of imitating the West, contaminating the Islamic morality and culture of Turkish society. Instead of 'serving the Turkish nation and Islam', this group associated with *Türk Ocağı* was deemed to be harmful and fall into 'moral decadence'.

The CUP elites pursued varying identity politics ranging from the promotion of Islamic unity to the forced migration of Armenians in

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the period of 1913-1919. Yet, *Sebilür-reşad*'s criticism of nationalist policies focused on the perceived failure of the CUP elites in saving: the unity of the Ottoman Empire and Islamic social order. Within the political conjuncture of the disintegration of the empire, Turkist ideology associated with the CUP became the scapegoat. It is also the same conjuncture which triggered the transition of the state's identity politics from Ottomanism to Turkish nationalism. This transition also transformed the notion of Turkishness from a symbolic cultural form to a political objective of taking actions against non-Muslim communities in Anatolia –such as the forced migration of Armenians (1915-1917). Such actions did not suffice to keep the empire from disintegration. Nor did it save the CUP from being charged by the journal with the pursuit of divisive nationalist policies. Yet, it is important not to forget that the journal did not touch upon the CUP's nationalist policies towards the non-Muslims communities as a way to criticize the notion of nationalism. On the contrary, the Islamic discourse as represented in the journal did not recognize Armenians and Greeks as the full partners of the Ottoman society and even presented them as an internal threat to the unity of the empire. Their political and geographical exclusion from the Ottoman and newly emerging Turkish society did not seem to generate dissenting views in the journal.

The close association between the two political entities –the Ottoman Empire and a transnational Islamic community– in the journalistic discourse of *Sebilür-reşad* became more apparent and salient in the second period. On the one hand, Turkism began to be considered a harmful ideology damaging the Ottoman society on the ground of the CUP members' secular lifestyle. Nationalism was accused of causing 'moral decadence' that undermined not only the Ottoman society but also the Islamic community. On the other hand, in addressing the non-Muslim members of the imperial society, the 'hidden Turk' seems to have infused into the Islamic discourse in the journal. Despite the harsh critique of nationalism, the journal's Islamic

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discourse on the non-Muslims, Greeks and Armenians[9] overlap with the Turkist discourse. The integrity of the Ottoman society was related to the 'salvation of Islam' to the extent that the effects of the excluding practices of Turkist ideology on the non-Muslims may not have been perceived as harmful by the authors and the editors of *Sebilür-reşad.* One may even argue that the excluding practices of Turkish nationalist elites empowered by the real politics may have insinuated into the 'us vs. them' paradigm in the Islamic thought at the time.

c) 1919-1924: the Liberation War in Anatolia and the new alliance between the journal and the nationalists

In this period, *de facto* disintegration of the Ottoman Empire entered its final stage in the aftermath of the defeat in WWI. The winning powers (France, England, Russian and Italy) started to divvy the Ottoman territories among themselves. It was against this political situation that some high-ranking officers of the disbanded Ottoman army (most of them were the ex-members of the CUP) commenced an armed struggle under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with the ultimate aim of 'creating a Turkish nation' and founding a new Turkish state in Anatolia. In the eyes of the writers of *Sebilür-reşad*, what was happening in Anatolia was the encroachment of Western colonialism going on against Islam. Although some articles praising the US or British mandate were published at the beginning of the period, the journal generally sided with the officers and vigorously supported the Liberation War.

During the war, the leading cadre of the Turkish liberation movement devoted all their attention and energy to the Anatolian

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[9] In an editorial article published later in 1920, the Armenians, who were in an attempt to separate from the Ottoman Empire, were claimed to provoke Kurdish people to rebel against the empire (1336/1920: 224-225). This perception depicted the Armenian society as an internal threat –a threat which played a key role in a political plot against the integrity of the country. On the other hand, Kurds were viewed as the victims deluded by Armenians to start a revolt and separate from the Ottoman state.

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region. Meanwhile, the journal articulated the necessity of uniting allied Muslims in Anatolia and supported the leadership of Atatürk (Arabacı, 2004: 107). In this last period, Anatolia was represented in the journal as 'the last independent castle' of the Muslim world. In an editorial article titled '*Türk Milletine Hür Yaşamak Hakkı Verilmedir* [The Right to Live Free Must Be Given to the Turkish nation]' (1335/1919), it is stated that

> [a]ll the nations in the Ottoman Empire have right to live free altogether… the right to live free must be given to Turkish nation [too]. The winning Allied powers are trying to shatter the Ottoman Empire on the pretext of solving the empire's internal conflicts. This is a murder committed against God.

The intervention of Western powers into Anatolia was here presented as an onslaught aiming to destroy not only the Turkish nation but also the religion of Islam thoroughly. In another editorial article titled '*Arazi-i Mukaddese Manda Altına Alınamaz* [The Sacred Land Cannot Be Put under Mandate]' (1336/1920), the occupation of Istanbul and many other Ottoman territories was considered to be a threat not only towards the political independence of Turks, but also towards their religious purpose. The leading military cadres of the Liberation War, consequently, were presented to be the representative of not only 'the Turkish nation' but also Islam. Meanwhile, the nationalist perspective of the journal shifted to the idea of a Turkish Muslim society which was born in 'Anatolia' and the idea of a 'Turkish-Islamic state' which was expected to be founded in Anatolia in future. Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Eşref Edip moved the publication center of journal to Anatolia in order to support the Liberation War. Subsequently, the journal was published in Ankara, Kastamonu and Kayseri and distributed to people in Anatolia in order to rally mass support for the army and officers.

However, it is debatable whether the shifting focus and the journalistic representation of the Liberation War was the result of a rising territorial nationalist consciousness among the Muslim intellectuals who were writing for *Sebilür-reşad*. In this regard, Kayalı

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argues that the Anatolian resistance had not crystallized as a nationalist movement until the formal adoption of the National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*) by the Ottoman Parliament in 1920 and by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 1921 (Kayalı, 1997: 204). Even after the Pact was formally accepted, as Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw put it, the Pact 'did not posit a clear articulation of a Turkish homeland thus leaving the door open for the expression of the Arab will in favor of cooperation with the Anatolian movement' (1977: 344-350).

Nonetheless, the end of the Ottomanist ideology and the separation of Arab provinces may have reshaped the journal's Islamic discourse in accord with a territorial nation-state ideology based on the political geography of Anatolia. In effect, the journal started to publish articles about the problems and complaints of Anatolian people instead of the Muslims living in the other parts of the world. It delivered the news on the Liberation War to people in Anatolia and Muslims all over the world.

The shift of the territorial focus from the Muslim world to the Anatolian region is also obvious in the journalistic concern about the Kurdish separatist movement in southeast Turkey. The movement received journalistic coverage and the editorial article titled '*Kürtler ve İslamiyet* [Kurds and Islam]' (1336/1920) depicted the movement as 'pointless' because Kurds were taken-for-granted Muslims. The Kurdish revolts were criticized as a rebellion not only against 'the Turkish nation' but also the caliphate and Islam. In the journalistic discourse, Kurds were urged to not follow the non-Muslim communities which allegedly collaborated with the Western powers to damage the society but remain loyal to the newly emerging Turkish state.

After the war, despite its support for the nation-state building process of Turkey led by a pro-Western military elites with the CUP origin, *Sebilür-reşad* usually had considerable reservations about the newly emerging Republic of Turkey. As a result of the disagreement with the CUP policies between the years of 1913-1919, the editors

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seemed to be wary of expressing their sympathy to this new leading military cadre. Linking nationalism to fanaticism, Necmeddin Sadık (1340/1924) argued that 'national fanaticism' created by blind and ebullient emotions turns out to be harmful and devastating for the society:

> [w]hat was done here with the aim of Turkification only damaged what we have had. Everything and every place in which we want to apply Turkicification are merely perishing. We should work for instilling sounder and healthier thoughts to minds and souls, or more accurately, for putting the sense of nation in its correct channel… Many political, historical and economic causes gave a threatening form to our national sentiments… After the years of wars and revolutions, it will be only us shattered by the destruction of this envious spirit which destroys everything except itself.

In an editorial article (No title specified, 1340/1924: 106-107), which addresses Sadık's article, it is stated that

> [t]he sense of nation in human beings is natural and innate… [However] It is a ridiculous, unnecessary and deleterious attempt to boost this sense. As long as it maintains its naturalness, it can provide temperance. Otherwise, it results in extremism or inadequacy.

Being reshaped by the changing political circumstances, a primordial understanding of the nation found supporters in the journal. Despite the naturalization of nationality, however, the journal distinguished Turkism from Turkish nationalism. The underlying idea in this significant differentiation is that the former is extreme, unnecessary and devastating, in other words, 'unnatural'. Turkism is claimed to have proven its ill-effects by clashing with Islam. However, if nationalism maintains its 'naturalness' without having an excessive Turkist form, Turkish nationalism can be compatible with Islam. Otherwise, zealous nationalist and Turkist sentiments allegedly send the society back in the past and cause the total alienation of Muslims from their religion (1340/1924: 106-107).

In the journal's discourse at the end of the third period, there is a notable quest to forge a state ideology for the very recently established

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Turkish republic (1923). The journal witnessed the regeneration of a national culture transforming to the state ideology of the new republic. While the 'new nation' was founded with a new state, the journal debated on what nationalism would make this 'new nation' better suited for the conditions of the modern world, as well as for Islamic culture. Above all, *Sebilür-reşad* welcomed the new Republic of Turkey as an Islamic state and endorsed its foundation in 1923. The constitution of the new state initially promoted Islam as the religion of the state. However, this did not prevent the journal from discussing about the further intentions of Mustafa Kemal and other ruling elites: was this new state going to turn into a secular state like the one in France? Adopting a skeptical stance, the journal insisted on the new Turkish government to be the government of Islam (1339/1923). Yet, after the abolition of caliphate by the National Assembly in 1924, *Sebilür-reşad* started to level harsh criticism at the ruling elites of the new Turkish state. Later on, the criticism ended up with the closing down of the journal by the government due to the allegations of treason. The journal was charged with taking part in Sheikh Said Rebellion (*Şeyh Sait İsyanı*)[10] against the state authority in 1925.

Conclusion

In the pursuit of an ideal Islamic political unity between 1908 and 1924, the journalistic discourse of *Sebilür-reşad* indicates the varying modes of national attachment: symbolic or realpolitik, transnational or territorial. In the first period (1908-1913), the support for the propagation of a supranational symbolic Turkishness in the journal is discernible. Turkishness was privileged perhaps not as an ethno-national identity but as the cultural core of 'us' who were believed to be the protector and the leader of the Muslim world.

However, the second period (1913-1919) was marked by the strong opposition to the CUP regime along with the Turkish

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[10] It was a rebellion to revive the Islamic Caliphate System and used elements of Kurdish nationalism to recruit.

nationalists. Turkification process and Turkism became the target of the criticism. The journal began to condemn the CUP regime for its identity politics detrimental to the non-Turkish subjects of the empire. Yet, the journal's critiques of ethno-nationalism, or more precisely Turkism, targeted not the Turkification process towards the non-Muslim subjects in Anatolia but the process towards the non-Turkish Muslims in the Arab world. Clinging to the idea of a Muslim empire under the name of the Ottomans, the journal showed a major concern about the total alienation and disintegration of the Arab societies. On the other hand, Armenians and Greeks were not recognized as the equal and full members of the society in the journalistic discourse. Rather, they were excluded as 'the others inside', whereas Arabs were presented to be an indispensible element of 'us' and their Turkification was considered a national discrimination.

In the last period (1919-1924), the Islamic thought in *Sebilür-reşad* seems to have sided with the nationalists but the territorial focus at this time is noteworthy. Turkist sentiments were still subjected to criticism due to its alleged devastating effect after all. Nonetheless, the journal's support for the Liberation War and the military officers brought them again into the closer position to Turkish nationalists.

On the whole, the investigation of these three periods are suggestive of how Islamic discourse can become intertwined with varying notions of state, subject and nation in the face with different 'others' under changing political circumstances; and in the journalistic discourse, *Sebilür-reşad* mediated the relationship between the transformation of Turkish identity politics and Islamic sense of belonging during these periods. Particularly in the second and third periods, Islamic stance was notably characterized with the opposition to the West as a 'destructive other' (this form of anti-Westernism passed on to the post-colonial states as a political legacy). Against the West, Islamic unity was presented as a political solidarity and moral order which must be protected. The presentation of the West as an 'enemy' brought the Islamic thought into the close relationship with nationalism.

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The reason for this is not only the perception of threat but also the mode of imagining the self in solidarity with the state authority. This sense of solidarity gives the state a patrimonial character, and assigns it the status of the protector of Islam. In this perspective, the salvation of Islam is believed to be dependent on the state.

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