

PROPOSALS OFFERED BY AHMET RIZA BEY AND SAID HALİM PASHA IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNIZATION OF THE IMPERIAL STATE STRUCTURE*

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Abstract

After the Reformation movement in Europe in the 16th century, the state structure was reconsidered and with the Treaty of Westphalia signed in 1648, a new order was brought to international politics. With the French Revolution (1789), a new understanding of state structure that included the concepts of nation and citizenship began to rise throughout Europe. This modernization process, which deeply affected international politics and introduced many new terms to the agenda of states, also had its reflections on the Ottoman Empire, and Western-centered modernization activities were initiated in the state, which had a traditional administrative structure, starting from the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807). The Westernization movement, which became a state policy with the Tanzimat Edict (1839), brought about important reforms in the political structure of the Empire and the statesmen who were effective in the administration developed modernization proposals for the political structure of Ottoman Empire under the influence of this international political modernization process. In this article, the views of Ahmet Rıza Bey and Said Halim Pasha, two politicians and intellectuals who important duties in the senior levels of the state in the last years of the Empire and who were under the influence of ideologies such as Positivism and Islamism, will be discussed in terms of the basic concepts concerning the modern state, and the political structuring visions they put forward will be examined comparatively.

Keywords: Modern state, Political reform, Ottoman modernization, Ottoman bureaucrats, Westernization

*İmparatorluk Devlet Yapısının Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Ahmet Rıza
Bey ve Said Halim Paşa'nın Sundukları Öneriler*

Öz

Avrupa'da 16. yüzyılda gerçekleşen Reform hareketi sonrası, devlet yapısı tekrar ele alınmış ve 1648'de imzalanan Westphalia Antlaşması ile beraber, uluslararası siyasete yeni bir düzenin getirilmesi söz konusu olmuştur. 18. yüzyılda gerçekleşen Fransız devrimi ile, ulus ve vatandaşlık kavramlarını içeren yeni bir devlet yapısı anlayışı, tüm Avrupa'da yükselişe geçmiştir. Uluslararası siyaseti derinden etkileyen ve birçok yeni terimi devletlerin gündemine sokan bu modernleşme sürecinin, Osmanlı Devleti'ne de yansımaları olmuş ve geleneksel bir yönetim yapısına sahip olan imparatorlukta, III. Selim döneminden itibaren Batı merkezli modernleşme faaliyetleri başlatılmıştır. Tanzimat Fermanı ile bir devlet politikası haline gelen Batılılaşma hareketi, devletin siyasi yapılanmasında önemli reformları beraberinde getirmiş ve yönetimde etkin olan devlet adamları, bu uluslararası siyasi modernizasyon sürecinin etkisi altında, Osmanlı devlet yapısı için modernleşme önerileri geliştirmişlerdir. Bu makalede, İmparatorluğun son yıllarında devletin üst düzey kademelerinde rol almış olan, Pozitivizm ve İslamcılık gibi ideolojilerin etkisi altındaki iki siyaset ve fikir adamı, Ahmet Rıza Bey ve Said Halim Paşa'nın görüşleri, modern devleti ilgilendiren temel kavramlar ekseninde ele alınacak ve ortaya koydukları siyasi yapılanma tasarımları karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Modern devlet, Siyasal reform, Osmanlı modernleşmesi, Osmanlı bürokratları, Batılılaşma

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Proposals Offered by Ahmet Rıza Bey and Said Halim Pasha in the Context of Modernization of the Imperial State Structure

Introduction

The state, which refers to the political organization of a society, is a government institution that provides order and security, has laws, a certain territory and sovereignty. In the ancient Greek period, city-states emerged as small groups of units with common land and culture, and this structure became the source of the modern concept of nation, which shared a common language and history in the following centuries. The legal system called *res publica* was a political structure in which all citizens were subject to a certain law and their rights were secured in this way. After the disintegration of this system, feudalism dominated Europe (5th-15th centuries), and this complex process urged the philosophers of the period to seek an answer to the question of how political stability could be restored (Britannica, 2024). In the 16th century, thinkers such as Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Bodin (1530-96) built a framework in which concepts such as sovereignty and legitimacy were questioned again. By the 17th century, instead of the unlimited sovereignty of the king, an idea of state order with a legal structure in which the people also participated was designed. Philosophers such as Locke (1632-1704) and Rousseau (1712-78), who were the pioneers of the reform movement in this century, reconsidered the structure and goals of the state and put forward a new state order within the framework of concepts such as human nature, freedom, independence, civil society, anarchy and the social contract (Boucher & Kelly, 2009).

The French Revolution (1789) started a new perspective to the process of transforming the feudal order in Europe into a legal state structure, and this process brought about the creation of a secular and democratic state model instead of feudalism. The fact that sovereignty was attributed to the people in the social contract theory mooted by Rousseau and that Sieyès contributed to the modern philosophy of the state by presenting the concept of the nation (Feinstein, 2024) opened an important place for the concept of "nation" in political theory. Thus, the concepts of nation and nationhood took hold of Europe, and a process began in which the rise of nation-states was observed. The nation-state model,

which can be defined as a political structure that lives on a certain piece of land, has a common cultural code and shares a common fate, affected other continents after Europe. The Ottoman Empire was one of the states that could not stay away from the process. In the empire, which was governed by a monarchical state structure from the years it was founded until the 19th century and where Islamic law was dominant, it was not possible to remain indifferent to the progress in Europe in the last quarter of the century.

First, ambassadors were sent to the Western countries and the embassybooks they wrote during these visits were used as guides on the path to Westernization (Tuncer, 1987). The Tulip Era during the reign of Ahmet III, when these first observations were implemented, constitutes the first initial phase of Ottoman modernization. However, this process was a period in which only superficial aspects, such as architecture, were copied, without focusing on the intellectual dimension of Westernization. By the reign of Selim III, the sultan realized the importance of the situation and, with the support of European educators, initiated a series of reforms at various levels of the state. The innovations first made in the military units were followed by reforms covering the entire political, social, economic and cultural life. The Ottoman administrative structure, in which the administration belonged to a deep-rooted dynasty and was transferred by inheritance, underwent a serious tremor with this process. How to transition from an absolute monarchy, in which the rights of the ruler were unlimited, to a constitutional monarchy, in which the powers of the sultan were limited by a constitution, became the fundamental issue of Ottoman politics.

In these processes, which included very serious transformations within the context of the political structure of the state, politicians who pondered over the basic concepts of the modern state tried to construct a new state vision. By the way, they developed various ideas on issues such as homeland and nation, constitutional system and parliament, political power and legitimacy, sovereignty and democratic state. Since the Ottoman intellectuals had a Western oriented education were familiar with these type of sources, they tried to shed light on the question of how the basic principles of the modern state structure introduced by Western intellectuals, could be applied in the Ottoman Empire. In this article, the views of Ahmet Rıza Bey and Said Halim Pasha on Ottoman modernization will be examined. These two names are chosen as they had an important place among the bureaucrats of the period with their intellectual works and held high-level bureaucratic duties.

1. Methodology of the Study

In the last century of the Ottoman Empire, under the influence of the French Revolution (1789), many reforms were implemented in the state structure. In order to try to understand the intellectual background of this political transformation, first of all, the concepts of the modern state should be understood. Subsequently, how these concepts were perceived by Ottoman politicians and with which political thought structure they were integrated into the state structure, should be examined. In this study, the concepts of state and modern state will be discussed in general and afterwards, the modernization process in the structure of Ottoman empire will be conveyed. Ahmet Rıza Efendi and Said Halim Pasha, the subjects of the study, were the statesmen who served in the imperial bureaucracy in a similar period (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası, 3920-293929, 1911*). Both of them, came from educated families who held positions in imperial bureaucracy. Added to that, as thinkers and bureaucrats, they experienced the state's most difficult times. Besides these common lines of destiny, their world of thought was nourished by two different sources, such as positivism and Islamist thought. Therefore, examining these two figures together offers a broader understanding of the plans formulated by their statesmen for the modernization of the Ottoman Empire, based on differing ideologies. Both of them, as intellectuals of the Second Constitutional Era, focused on the common issue of the intellectuals of the period: the inadequacy of the state's Westernization experience and how this could be corrected and the problems overcome. Ahmet Rıza Bey examined this issue based on the philosophy of positivism and as a continuation of the Şinasi & Namık Kemal's ideological structure. Said Halim Pasha, on the other hand, pursued the idea of modernization centered on Islamic law, as did Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, and constructed his thoughts with a similar philosophical background with the thinkers such as his contemporary Mehmet Akif Ersoy.

The intellectual worlds of these two figures have been the subject of numerous studies to date. These studies include dissertations, copyrighted works, simplified texts, and symposium books. Among the most important works examining his political life and ideas are those of Erdem Sönmez and Eminalp Malkoç. Fahri Fındıkoğlu's work examines Ahmet Rıza Bey's ideas comparatively. Furthermore, Rıza Bey's books have been translated into modern Turkish by names and organizations such as Mustafa Gündüz & Musa Bardak and Arba Publications. A much broader literature emerges when considering studies on Said Halim Pasha. The works examining his political life and thoughts, are either book versions of these dissertations or separately authored works. The texts of M. Hanefi Bostan, Vahdettin Işık, and Kudret Bülbül are the most prominent ones of these works. Ahmet Şeyhun's book, while examining late-era

Ottoman intellectuals, also stands out as a study that examines both Said Halim Pasha and Ahmet Rıza Bey under separate headings. The author conducted a detailed analysis of Said Halim Pasha's intellectual worlds, classifying him as an Islamist and Ahmed Rıza as a liberal thinker (Şeyhun, 2021). Furthermore, the Pasha's own works have been meticulously translated into contemporary Turkish by scholars such as N. Ahmet Özalp and Ertuğrul Düzdağ.

In addition to these important works, the fact that both names have not been examined in the context of their political thoughts within the scope of a single article, based on the common points mentioned, constitutes the starting point of this article. This article aims to reveal the different perspectives of two thinkers, who lived in the same period, served in similar government positions (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası, 3920-293929, 1911*) and produced ideas for the same country, concerned with the same political problems. Therefore, in this study, the four most fundamental issues that emerged in the process of modernizing the state structure of the Ottoman Empire in the late period, will be discussed: the idea of homeland and nation, the parliamentary system, political power and legitimacy, sovereignty and democratization. An original evaluation will be revealed by accessing the original copies of the writings written by these intellectuals, and the high-level bureaucratic activities of both will be supported by the records in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives. The main goal of the study is to open a new window to political science studies by interpreting the state structure perceptions of the late Ottoman bureaucrats within the framework of modern political concepts.

2. Modern State Structure and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire

In political science, the modern state structure began to emerge in Europe, drawing inspiration from the ideas put forth by philosophers of the Enlightenment. This new state model evolved into a composition with a defined territorial structure, in which the people were governed by formal legal rules and possessed independent power. The French Revolution of 1789 overthrew the old regime, paving the way for a republic and democracy, emphasizing the sovereignty of the nation rather than the king (Ağaoğulları, 2006, p. 237). For example, Rousseau (1712-78) put forward the theory of popular sovereignty in the years preceding the revolution, giving the modern state a democratic character. In this structure, the state and the people are closely identified. This theory, in the following centuries, became the basis for the nation-state model, with the concept of the people replacing the concept of the nation (Ağaoğulları, pp. 9-10). In this model, where sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the

people, there is no place for the concept of a King deriving his power from God. During this period, the kings of France recognized that the ideology of "the people embodied in the nation" was a threat to the monarchical order. Louis XIV, arguing that "the nation had dissolved into the monarch" attempted to check the rise of the concept of democracy, which continued to develop after the Enlightenment, against the concept of a King deriving his power from God (Ağaoğulları, p. 237). In the following years, the position of kings within monarchic structures was reconsidered, and a more institutional state power was achieved, with legal metaphors being incorporated into the state structure (Berman, 1983, p. vi). The end of this dominance of the aristocracy and the clergy over the state brought about the standardization of the modern state structure (Weber, E., 1976, p. x). The monarchical order, in which several nations lived together, began to be replaced by nation states in which nations existed as a single political structure (Spruyt, 2002, p. 132-3).

The Ottoman Empire, which dominated three continents with a strong monarchic structure for six hundred years, could not isolate itself from the effects of the French Revolution (1789). Simultaneously with the revolution, an inevitable modernization process began in the state structure from the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807). This serious structural change in state administration also brought about a transformation in the institutional understanding of state organization, and many new terms became the subject of the modern state structure. In the monarchic order, the sole source of power is seen as the dynasty at the head of the state. In the new order, a state structure with an administrative and legal order (Weber, 1978, p. 54) and concepts such as national homeland, citizenship, nation, and sovereignty begin to emerge. Following the Tanzimat Edict (1839), in which the state officially declared Western-centric modernization as its policy, concepts such as the homeland and nation, the constitutional system and parliament, political power and legitimacy, sovereignty, and the democratic state, which were relevant to the modern state, entered the agenda of Ottoman administrators. Bureaucrats, active in the state's political transformation, developed proposals for a new state structure under the influence of various ideologies.

3. Suggestions on the Modernization of the State Structure

It is known that in the Ottoman Empire, especially after the modernization period, a group of bureaucratic elite was more influential in the upper-level administration than the sultan, and this influence continued until the collapse of the state (Akkaya, 2024, p. 55). These bureaucrats, starting from the reign of

Sultan Selim III (1789-1807), played an active role in political activities and presented various proposals to the sultan of the period, developing ideas on how the state should be modernized. In this process, which began with the influence of the French Revolution, statesmen's primary proposals focused on the military. In subsequent years, this evolved into a more comprehensive structure. After the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era (1908), the question of how elements of the modern state order, such as democracy and the constitutional system, could be integrated into the Ottoman state became a matter of more detailed discussion. These discussions were based on various ideologies, including Ottomanism, Materialism, Islamic Union, Westernism and Turkism. As the Westernization of the Tanzimat period began with the need for renewal of the Empire, with the Second Constitutional Era, political, economic, military and social conditions became even more challenging. Although discussed within the scope of different ideologies, the only answer sought was how to save the Empire. This was the underlying reason for the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy by the Committee of Union and Progress and concepts such as parliament, legalization, democracy were tried to be used as tools for this political issue.

In this article, the thoughts and suggestions of two high-level bureaucrats, Ahmet Rıza Bey and Said Halim Pasha, who developed ideas about the modernization of the state through these ideologies, will be discussed within the framework of the basic principles of modern politics. Ahmet Rıza Bey (1858-1930), one of the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress Party (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Hariciye Nezareti: Siyasi, 1859-1, 1908*), was the leader of the Young Turks movement that was active during the Second Constitutional Period (1908) (Ebüzziya, 1989, p. 124). He served in positions such as the head of the Chamber of the Senate (*Heyet-i ayan reisi*) (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, İrade, Dosya Usulü, 10-101, 1909*) and led opposition movements defending the constitutional system in Paris and Egypt (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası, 715-53563, 1895*) before the Second Constitutional Period (1908). He had bureaucratic duties such as being a member of parliament after 1908 (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, İrade, Dosya Usulü, 11-92, 1908*) and put forward various ideas in the light of the positivist understanding of progress for the salvation and development of the political structure of Ottoman Empire. When Ahmet Rıza's education and the development of his intellectual world are examined, it is possible to consider him the person who transmitted Auguste Comte's positivist philosophy to the Ottoman Empire (Kabakçı, 2008, p. 45). It is known that Rıza Bey, who went to Paris in 1889, took lessons from the Frenchman Pierre Laffitte, one of the leading positivists of the period, and was influenced by him (Ebüzziya, 1989, p. 124).

Moreover, another important aspect of his intellectual background is that he was a carrier of the thought structure of Şinasi and Namık Kemal, who were the founders of the New Ottomans movement and the generation before him (Edmondson, 1957, p. 90). Şinasi was the first to use the concepts of "reason" and "thought" in classical Divan poetry. He broke the centuries-old tradition of praising only the Prophet and the Sultan by referring to Mustafa Reşit Pasha, a pioneer and constructive bureaucrat of Western-centric reforms, as the "messenger of civilization." Namık Kemal, to whom he entrusted his newspaper, *Tasvir-i Efkar*, when he left for Paris (Parlatır, 2004, p. 25), placed the concept of "*Terakki*" (progress) at the forefront of all his writings ("*Terakki (Progress) İbret*, no. 45, November 4, 1872) and was at the forefront of the opposition movement for the implementation of a parliamentary system that would limit the Sultan's authority.

It can be argued that the centralization of reason, the concept of "progress" (*terakki*), and the emphasis on law emphasized by these two figures were enriched by Rıza's intellectual structure, based on positivist philosophy, and passed on to subsequent generations. In this respect, Ahmet Rıza served as the chief ideologist of the Committee of Union and Progress, which governed the Empire from 1908 until its collapse, during the period in which the ideas proposed by the Young Ottomans for the state were transformed into a political movement in the following generation. Prior to this date, in 1895, Rıza Bey, who supported Mithad Pasha in the drafting of the Constitution, acted as a politician in the modernization of the state structure, and in the solutions he proposed, he employed the "grounded and logical" approach offered by the positivist philosophy that emerged after the French Revolution, as a framework for political thought. Furthermore, Rıza, who published the *Meşveret* newspaper, the official publication of the Young Turk movement, with Halil Ganem, also used it as a tool to convey his political ideas. He also personally wrote the newspaper's article titled "Mukaddeme (Introduction)". Rıza Bey emphasized the concept of education by stating, "A people subject to the freest law is no different from a slave if they are ignorant" (*Meşveret*, n. 1, December 1st, 1895, Paris, p. 1). Thus, similar to Namık Kemal's approach during the publication of *Hürriyet*, he defined *Meşveret*'s motto as "progress and the education of the public" (Sönmez, 2012, p. 73). Based on this information, Rıza Bey stands out as a politician who deserves careful examination, both for his active political role in the Empire and for his application of Western political philosophy to Ottoman politics.

The second name discussed in the study is Said Halim Pasha (1864-1921), a politician and intellectual. A member of the Kavalalı family, Pasha completed his university education in Switzerland and later served as the Head of the Council of State (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, İrade, Dosya Usulü*, 8-51,

1912) and the Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası: 4138-310295, 1913*). Said Halim Pasha is a politician whose importance as a thinker, as well as his family history, deserves careful examination. Egypt, occupied nine years after the French Revolution (1789) within the context of Western colonialism, was ruled by Said Pasha's grandfather. While the first modernization movements in the Ottoman Empire began in Egypt, the Egyptian khedive who initiated these moves was Said Halim Pasha's grandfather, Mehmet Ali Pasha (Işık, 2021, pp. 17-8). Having a strong education, being both a thinker and an active bureaucrat, Pasha's high-level services during the difficult times of the state and his efforts to produce solutions to problems with his ideas have brought him to be known as "a man of double-winged balance" (Ottoman Turkish: zü'l-cenaheyn) (Işık, p. 14). The Empire entered The World War I during the Pasha's duty as Grand Vizier (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Hariciye Nezareti: Paris Sefareti, 878-60, 1914*) and he conducted many critical negotiations in the difficult conditions the state was in (*Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Hariciye Nezareti: Londra Sefareti, 689-21, 1913*).

When Said Halim Pasha's education and intellectual world are examined, it is clear that the solutions he offered were significantly influenced by both the specialized training he had from childhood, such as the Masnavi, fiqh, Arabic and the political science education he received in Europe (Işık, 2021, p. 15). Said Halim Pasha, who studied Islamist ideology in Paris (Bostan, 2008, p. 557) and strived to develop ideas in light of this ideology for the construction of a modern state structure, can be traced back to Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, one of the legislators of the Westernization process that began with the Tanzimat Edict. Cevdet Pasha, who served in the reformation process of the state in the 1850s in a wide range of areas from writing the *Kavâid-i Osmâniyye* (Ottoman Laws) to creating the regulations of *Şirket-i Hayriyye* (The Ferry Company) (Köprülü, 1996, p. 202), always based his view on Islamic law and his more cautious approach to Western modernity, unlike his contemporaries such as Reşit Pasha, are the points that connect him with Said Halim Pasha. Mehmet Akif, the carrier of Islamist thought in the later generations of the Tanzimat era, was a contemporary thinker and bureaucrat of Pasha, considered him as one of the most important thinkers of his time. Akif's vision of a modern, moral, and national society based on Islamic ideology (Okay, 2003, pp. 433-6) is very similarly evident in Said Halim Pasha's intellectual world. Indeed, Said Halim Pasha was one of the most prominent figures who conveyed his ideas in the newspaper *Sebilürreşad*, which Akif published as one of the most important publications of the Islamist ideology of the period. While both figures were open to the state's Western-centric modernity, they advocated for this process to be based on structural reality Ottoman society and Islamic legal structures. The saying, "If for the West, all roads lead to Rome, for the Islamic world, all roads lead to Mecca" (Said Halim

Pasha, 1991, p. 227) summarizes the fundamental starting point of Pasha and the path they sought to follow.

3.1. The Idea of Nation and Homeland

One of the important dynamics of the modern state structure is the concepts of homeland and citizenship, which are the basic values of the nation-state system. Classical nation states, which date back to the Peace of Westphalia (1648) in Europe, emerged with the sovereignty and independence of different nations affiliated with the European state system on a certain territory (Griffiths, 2008, pp. 213-4). The concept of citizenship, which became popular after the (1789), can be explained as a *public person* who shares the sovereign power of the state, in Rousseau's words (Rousseau, 1968, p. 61). This new ideological structure that developed after the revolution also affected the Ottoman Empire, and Western political thought began to transform Islamic societies. While terms such as equality and freedom were conveyed to the public through newspapers in the Ottoman Empire, the most important of these, the concept of homeland, was instilled in the public mind through intensive writing activities. In the following period, following the Tanzimat (1839) and Islahat Edicts (1877), the idea of homeland and citizenship among Ottoman politicians acquired a conceptual structure along the axis of Ottomanism and Westernism ideologies.

The concept of homeland and nation in Ahmet Rıza Bey, developed within the framework of Ottomanism. Rıza, who wrote an article in *Meşveret*, the Union and Progress movement's publication organ, outlining the group's goals, also used this text as a platform for reflection of his own ideas. He conveyed his thoughts on the concepts of homeland and nation by stating that the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress called for all Ottomans to unite, "making no distinction between religion and nation." According to him, the survival of the homeland was possible through the unity of power and ideas of all Ottomans of different religions and nations (*Notre Programme, Meşveret, n. 1 December 1895, p. 1*). His statements, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, are a continuation of the line of thought of his predecessor, Namık Kemal. This line, on the one hand, aims to limit the sultan's authority through the application of law, while on the other, it stands against the nationalist ideas that spread throughout the world after the French Revolution, advocating that all nations live under the Ottoman Empire and with the sense of Ottoman identity. Rıza Bey, who also offers a solution on how to develop this in society and make it permanent, emphasizes the importance of building the feeling of Ottoman patriotism (A. Rıza, 1904, p. 40-1). He states that those who will defend the rights of the nation are the Ottomans who are devoted to their homeland and nation with

a love coming from the heart. He also expresses that these national feelings are only possible with “education and training” (*Meşveret*, n. 1, December 1st, 1895, Paris). The importance of social education is the most fundamental emphasis not only of Rıza Bey, but also in the construction of Ottoman modernization, which became state policy after the Tanzimat Edict.

Rıza Bey, who has an Ottoman understanding, also exhibited a predominant understanding of Turkishness in his writings and works. In fact, this constitutes a significant example of the transition from Ottomanism to Turkism-Nationalism among late-Ottoman politicians. During this transition, Ziya Gökalp (Gökalp, 1966) was the one who established the theoretical framework of Turkist ideology. Many Ottoman intellectuals, such as Ahmet Rıza Bey, wrote articles emphasizing Turkishness, furthering the public's internalization of this concept. Despite openly stating his opposition to the concept of Turkism, Rıza concluded his introduction to *Meşveret* with the statement, “*Meşveret* is a Turkish newspaper. It will always speak the 'Turkish', that is, the correct answer to every matter” (*Meşveret*, n. 1, December 1st, 1895, Paris), thus emphasizing the positive qualities of the Turkish nation over all nations. In the final years of the Ottoman Empire, with the impact of the significant disintegration of the imperial structure, the idea of Ottomanism evolved towards the idea of Turkism among a significant portion of Ottoman bureaucrats, and in the context of the construction of the nation-state, the newly established republic was built upon this ideology. It's difficult to include Rıza Bey in this transformation. It should be noted that he never participated in institutions advocating Turkism (Sönmez, 2012, p. 101) and that in his first speech as Parliament speaker after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era, he placed particular emphasis on strengthening Ottoman unity (*Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (Parliamentary Journal), 1, 1, 1, 5, 1908, p. 51).

On the other hand, Said Halim Pasha's idea of nation and homeland is based on the understanding of Islamic Unity as Ottoman political unity. Pasha, one of the last important representatives of this understanding, did not embrace the concept of nationalization, which became known especially after the French Revolution (1789) and became an element that threatened the state's integrity in the last years of the empire. He advocated that different nations should live under the roof of the Ottoman Empire and this should be continued with the understanding of Islamic unity. He also emphasized that all Muslim peoples should be under the roof of a single state (S. H. Pasha, 1921, p. 23). According to Pasha, social bonds can be established not by existing as a single nation, but by having a common belief and a common spiritual heritage (S. H. Pasha, 1914, p. 76). Pointing to the founding principles of the Ottoman Empire, Pasha argued that the Empire had a character structure founded on the principle of Islamic

brotherhood and that the understanding of nationality of Western states was not suitable for the political structure of Ottoman Empire (S. H. Pasha, 1913, p. 21). According to him, the nationalist movement, with its negative characteristics, will find no response within the modern state structure and will soon come to an end (S. H. Pasha, 1921, p. 23). Pasha's emphasis here relates to his belief that, rather than a single nation existing alone, different nations should live under the same state, which would foster solidarity. However, it should also be noted that Said Halim Pasha opposed the concept of racism rather than a nationalist approach. He also included in his thoughts the formation of different national-Muslim states as long as solidarity was maintained among them.

Observing the political realities of the period, Pasha recognized that the principle of Islamic unity could not be established under current conditions. In his work, "*İnhitat-ı İslam Hakkında Bir Tecrübe-i Kalemiye* (A Text About the Decline of Islam)" he examines the reasons for the decline of the Islamic world from different perspectives and discusses which corrections could be made to revitalize this core principle. Expressing his profound sorrow at the fall of Muslim peoples under the rule of Christian states, Pasha, having become a bureaucrat actively involved in the Ottoman Empire during this period, could be said to have been deeply aware of the profound impact of the heavy territorial losses of the final years of the Ottoman Empire on the Islamic world. (S. H. Pasha, 1918, p. 118-9). His advocacy of Islamic unity policy is related to his finding a systematic that is based on the understanding of Islamic brotherhood, not a single nation, appropriate for the organic structure of the state. In this context, Turkism, which began to spread after the Second Constitutional Monarchy and developed in the final years of the Empire as the fundamental ideology to be inherited by the Republic, was, according to Pasha, not a supreme national value, but an understanding that would disrupt the unity of the state. According to him, Ottomanism, which expressed the Ottoman social structure that encompassed many nations under its roof, was not merely an ideology; it was also a unique sociological reality reflecting the specific character of the existing community. Pasha positioned the idea of nationalism, which stood in opposition to this, as a pernicious idea that put this particular structure in danger of collapse (Said Halim Pasha, Özalp, 2015, p. 29).

3.2. The Constitutional System

In the modern state structure, the constitution and political order have an important place. Thus, the right to speak that belonged to the head of state in traditional forms of government is replaced by documents set forth with basic political regulations and a parliamentary structure that controls this (Pierson,

2004, p. 14). In the transformation of the political structure of Ottoman Empire, one of the most debated concepts has been *the constitutional system*. Indeed, the state governed by a sultan with the title of caliphate, the establishment of a constitution and the transition to a parliamentary system that restricted the sultan's powers brought with it many political problems. Indeed, until the Constitutional Period (1908), politicians, especially those who follow the Young Ottoman movement, defended the constitutional system and this situation caused them to face various consequences, including being exiled. However, during this period, this group, led by names such as Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha, fled to Europe and continued their opposition movements, and the integration of the constitutional system into the Ottoman Empire's political structure became a subject of debate both within and outside the Empire.

The consultative system, which advocates reaching a more democratic structure through a consultative assembly within the monarchic order, rather than a structure in which the sole authority is the sultan, is one of the most fundamental defenses of Ahmet Rıza and the Union and Progress movement. The fact that the newspaper published by Rıza Bey and founded in 1895 as a publication organ of the Union and Progress Party (*Meşveret*, n. 1, December 1st, 1895, Paris) was named as "*Meşveret*" (the *consultative system*) is an important reference to this fundamental ideal. In fact, according to Rıza's memoirs, he himself gave this name to the newspaper (*Cumhuriyet*, n. 9146, January 26th, 1950). Rıza, who clarified the details of this system through various articles and people in the newspaper in question, began his words by stating that the homeland was in a miserable state and emphasized that the Ottoman society should be reformed as soon as possible. He added that the first step to save the state from this negative situation, should be, advancing it to the stage of salvation with the Ottoman Constitution of 1876 (*Kanun-i Esasi*). According to Rıza, the consultative system was the only method that could ensure the continuation of the Ottoman Empire and solve the current problems (*Meşveret*, n. 23, October 23rd, 1896, Paris).

At this point, it should be noted that Rıza Bey's profound belief in the implementation of the concept of constitutionalism also deeply influenced his own life and political activities. During his time as a civil servant, he traveled to Paris under the guise of visiting an exhibition, believing that the systemic irregularities would remain unchanged, and did not return to the Empire until the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era (Demirbaş, 1988, p. 9). This position, as mentioned at the beginning of this study, can be seen as a continuation of the line of his predecessors, Şinasi and Namık Kemal (Sönmez, 2012, p. 132). Both of these names emphasized the concept of law and a system with a consultative council, placing the limitation of the sultan's power at the center of their defense, and continued their activities in Europe at certain points

in their lives. In this context, Namık Kemal's writings defending the consultative system (Kemal, 1911, p. 176) can be seen as a starting point for Ahmet Rıza Bey's writings on this subject. In addition, like Namık Kemal, Ahmet Rıza Bey also conveyed his ideas to the sultan of the period through intermediaries such as a memorandum, but when he could not reach an agreement, he chose to publish them (Kuran, 1945, p. 27).

The Constitution, which is one of the most important parts of the constitutional system in the Ottoman Empire, is another issue that Rıza Bey frequently mentions. In his article titled “*Lack of Government*”, he states that there is no security left in the country and that the only way to prevent serious internal problems such as the Armenian issue is to put the Ottoman Constitution into practice. Indeed, this legal order that would protect the dignity of the sultanate, would also be powerful enough to prevent revolutionary minorities from openly attacking the state (*Meşveret*, n. 17, August 21st, 1896, Paris). In other words, the unity and survival of the Ottoman Empire depends on the implementation of correct laws (*Meşveret*, n. 29, September 20th, 1896, Paris). Rıza, who argued that a parliament that would work in accordance with these laws should be convened and that this parliament should be formed with representatives from all nations in the Ottoman Empire. He also stated that the unity of the nation could only be achieved in this way, but a great mistake was being made by separating Muslims and Christians with the policy of Islamic unity (*Meşveret*, n. 23, October 23rd, 1896, Paris). While the continuation of the Ottoman social structure was his only option, he pursued a system in which not only the Muslim community but all nations were actively involved in governance (*Meşveret*, n. 13, June 23rd, 1896, Paris).

Fully supporting the concepts of the constitutional system and parliament, Said Halim Pasha addressed the issue within the context of the Islamic state system. He opposed a system in which only the ruler had a word within the state structure, viewing this as an obstacle to the state's progress. He emphasized that the state's fate should not be determined by an arbitrary administrative structure and that there must be a countervailing yet balancing force against this system (S. H. Pasha, 1913, p. 3). In this context, he considered the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908 as "one of the praiseworthy events in Ottoman history." Despite his strong support for the Constitutional Monarchy, Pasha frequently emphasized the 1876 Constitution to ensure proper progress, examining what he perceived as structural flaws. This approach was not unique to this issue; it pertained to his understanding of political solutions. Indeed, he evaluated every issue based on historical reality, addressing the mistakes made during the processes and proposing solutions. Pasha, who found the Constitution made in 1876 unsuccessful, argued that this constitution only laid the foundations

for political freedoms (S. H. Pasha, 1909, p. 32) and that it later deviated from its purpose and hindered the progress of the state.

Despite the introduction of Western educators to the Empire and the implementation of modernization efforts in many areas, by the 1900s the country had not reached its desired level. While the failure to fully establish an educated population capable of supporting the state's rise and the failure to implement a robust Westernization process among the public were the most significant realities of the Empire's final period, the Pasha addressed these issues with the awareness that all these were the result of political maneuvers. He argued that a modern Muslim state could be achieved through an improved legal system unique to the Ottoman Empire and through learning from past mistakes. In this context, Pasha stated that a constitution must strengthen the political unity of the society that adopts it. He argued that imitating a Western-centric constitutional model and the political institutions of Western states would mean ignoring the subjective qualities of our own political structure. This, in turn, would inevitably lead to the disintegration of Ottoman political unity (S. H. Pasha, 1913, pp. 23-4). His most important emphasis in this regard was the construction of a constitution compatible with the Ottoman state structure. Indeed, he argued that just as it would be impossible for French statesmen to apply the laws of the British state to themselves, a constitution imported from the West should not be installed in the Ottoman state (S. H. Pasha, 1913, p. 11).

The Pasha's proposal for modernization and legalization appropriate to the structure is also reflected in his understanding of democracy. According to the Pasha, electing political leaders with the participation of all members of the empire was inappropriate for the Ottoman state structure. In this connection, he criticized the existing constitution for having a more "democratic" character than it deserved (S. H. Pasha, 1909, p. 33). According to the Pasha, since the Ottoman Empire was not governed by an aristocratic system and the people were not familiar with it, it was impossible to directly transition society to a system with democratic characteristics (S. H. Pasha, 1913, p. 20). It should also be noted that the Pasha did not oppose the logic of democracy, emphasizing the establishment of a justice system, but rather emphasized the need to proceed on the correct structural path.

3.3. Political Power and Legitimacy

The concepts of authority and legitimacy, which are of vital importance in maintaining social order, are important elements for the modern state. In his work *Economy and Society*, Weber explains the concept of authority as the possibility of a certain group of people obeying a certain command. Legitimacy, on the other

hand, is related to the acceptance of this authority. In other words, a legitimate political power means an authority that people agree to obey (Weber, 1978, p. 31). In the Ottoman Empire, which was governed by a monarchical system, one of the most important issues questioned in the transition to the modern world order was the question of who owned the political power. While Ottoman statesmen, influenced by Western thought, argued that political power should not belong only to the sultan and that it should be transformed into a democratic structure, it is seen that the bureaucrats who provided the Islamic understanding of society stated that this structure already existed in the political structure of Ottoman Empire.

Trying to produce solutions for the Ottoman political system in the light of positivist philosophy, Ahmet Rıza sees the continuity of the state's political power in the continuation of the Ottoman ideology, taking into account the current conditions. The fact that Augusto Comte, the founder of positivist philosophy, proposed to reconcile order and progress without leaving room for anarchy (Comte, 1855, p. viii) caused him to form the ideas he presented for Ottoman politics in a structure that would be free of chaos and would not disrupt the current order. According to Rıza, the permanence of this order was possible through the establishment of a consultative assembly where all nations were represented, in other words, through the ideology of Ottomanism. Indeed, the program of the Committee of Union and Progress, of which Rıza Bey was a member, published in the consultative assembly he owned, explicitly emphasized "cooperation, order, and progress." The fundamental element for the existence of political power and the continued legitimacy of the state was the survival of Ottoman political ideology and the unification of the country. In this article, while emphasizing "progress and order," he explicitly stated that rights gained through violence were negative in nature (*Notre Programme, Meşveret, n. 1 December 1895: 1*).

Rıza, who stated that he sought the solution to social peace and order in the unification of the peoples living under the Ottoman Empire, also opposed Sultan Abdulhamid II's policy of Islamic unity in this context. He criticized the policy of Islamic unity, claiming it would create a religiously based division within society (*Meşveret, n. 23, October 23rd, 1896, Paris*). Such a division would harm the political ideology of Ottomanism (*Meşveret, n. 1, December 1st, 1895, Paris*), which was essential for the salvation of the homeland, and would lead to the state of revolution and anarchy (*Meşveret, n. 6, February 16th, 1896, Paris*), which he saw as harmful. In addition, he does not oppose the caliphal identity of the Ottoman Sultan and defends that this is an absolute and legitimate right of the Ottoman dynasty. According to Rıza, the caliphate provides a very serious political power and keeps the Ottoman Empire in the category of the great

state, not a small one (Ebüzziya, 1989, p. 126). Another issue that disrupts the current order for in the allocation of political power for Ali Rıza Bey, was minority rebellions. Stating that the British government sent a large fleet to the coast of the Dardanelles, he pointed out that the minority issue will provoke external forces to interfere in Ottoman domestic politics. He saw the solution to stand against such an intervention, which would disrupt the political power and absolute legitimacy of the Ottoman state, as not making any distinction between religion and nationality (*Meşveret*, n. 18, September 8th, 1896, Paris).

The source of Said Halim Pasha's ideas about political power and legitimacy is the ideology of Islamic unity, which is the cornerstone of all his thoughts. In this context, he states that the political principles built by Islamic civilization emerge from natural social principles and, in this respect, are purified from negative emotions that would cause anarchy. Stating that political institutions in the Islamic state structure are built under the leadership of these principles and with the aim of constantly implementing the Islamic moral understanding in a more perfect manner, Pasha considered the concept of political sovereignty as the supporter and protector of these institutions. The head of state, who holds all political power, must remain loyal to Islamic law and submit, thus ensuring the eternal happiness of the society (S. H. Pasha, 1921, pp. 12-3). This leader has not only rights but also various responsibilities, it is also his duty to protect and uphold moral & spiritual principles. While emphasizing the superiority of the duty of preserving political sovereignty, it is actually related to the Pasha's effort to indicate that the office of the sultan is the highest and in some aspects an untouchable office in the state, even if it is controlled by a parliament (S. H. Pasha, 1914, p. 82). It should also be added that Pasha, who stated that there should be a council of scholars with the authority to monitor the sultan, proposed a system that would function as checks and balances between the powers. In this respect, he did not actually define the head of state as a leader having immunity.

In this period, when Western-centered modernization became a state policy and the interaction of Ottoman bureaucrats with the West continued at a high level, Pasha's focus on a religion-centered political understanding was greatly influenced by the fact that the Ottoman sultans had the institution of caliphate, which means "the institution of head of state in Islamic history" (Özcan, 1988, p. 546) since the reign of Murat I (1362-89). In Islamic law, the caliphate is a political power structure in which the ruler elected by the Muslim people has the authority to be the head of state (Ülgener, 1913, p. 5), and a two-front state system in which the concepts of religion and state coexist is in question (Tunaya, 1988, p. 62). Emphasizing the structural differences between arbitrary administrations in Eastern and Western societies, he argued that the most suitable

model for the Ottoman political structure was an Islam-centered form of administration where despotism was not dominant and moral values were prioritized (S. H. Pasha, 1913, p. 18-20). According to Pasha, the despotism inherent in Western states led to massacres under the guise of religious wars. The head of state, the source of political power in the Ottoman state, would avoid this despotic understanding of domination because of to the political sovereignty he has, guided by the high moral principles of Islamic civilization. As a solution to this despotic political structure, Pasha proposed a state model for the Ottoman state centered on Islam and with a monarchical structure of political power. Muslims within the governed segment of the state should also adhere to this established structure and never challenge the state's legitimacy (*Sebilürreşad*, n. 494, March 11th, 1922).

3.4. Sovereignty and the Democratic State

The concept of sovereignty, whose use in the context of modern state structure dates back to the French philosopher Jean Bodin (1530-96), means absolute authority within a political community (Hinsley, 1986, p. 26). Bodin's concept of a king deriving his power from God and possessing unlimited rights not only provided a system based on legal principles, but also formulated the new form of government as the "power of the prince" in Machiavelli (Ağaoğulları, Köker, 2004, p. 9). Neither thinker distinguished between the state and the prince, constructing an understanding in which the king possessed a public persona, that is, represented the state through his existence (Ağaoğulları, Köker, p. 31). Hobbes, on the other hand, explained the concept of sovereignty in his work *Leviathan* as meaning that when a nation gathers and elects a ruler, that sovereign possesses unlimited authority (Hobbes, 1968, pp. 230-2). In such a situation, the sovereign of the state has unlimited authority within its own territory, and no other actor can interfere. Hobbes, who granted the sovereign unlimited authority, also stated that this person must be limited by legal authority. This will ensure that the sovereign with authority governs the society in a just, democratic manner. Indeed, the sovereign who rules within the framework of law must also be personally subject to this constitutional order (Pierson, pp. 11-5).

In the Ottoman Empire, which was attempting to adapt to the modern state order after the 19th century, the relationship or conflict between monarchy and sovereignty became a significant topic of debate. The revision of the Western imperial structure and the King's authority following the French Revolution led Ottoman statesmen to focus on limiting the sultan's authority through law, similar to examples in Europe. In this period of shifting dominant political power and restructuring the king's unlimited authority in favor of the people and the nation,

Bodin's solution for strengthening central authority was the model of "the king who has lost his individuality and transformed into a true institution" (Ağaoğulları, Köker, 2004, p. 34). Relatedly, Ottoman bureaucrats attempted to envision a modern Ottoman state structure in which the monarchy would continue with the concept of a sultan, while the concept of sovereignty would be limited by law and the sultan's decisions would be controlled through parliament.

When Ahmet Rıza's ideas about sovereignty are examined, it is seen that there is an anti-imperialist stance and the preservation of the sovereignty of the empire against the colonial policies of Western states, has a very important place. He frequently discussed this issue both in *Meşveret* and his own books (*Meşveret*, n. 18, September 8th, 1896, Paris). Rıza also emphasized the need to oppose capitulations given to European states. When addressing the political issues of the period that could be an occasion for internal intervention, he examined issues such as the Armenian issue (*Meşveret*, n. 11, May 23rd, 1896, Paris) and the Cretan issue as internal problems used by European states to legitimize their intervention in the Ottoman Empire. In this context, he made an open call to the state administration and emphasized that the ambassadors of the European States serving in the Ottoman Empire also played an important role in the establishment of these plans (*Meşveret*, n. 4, January 26th, 1896, Paris) and that Greek elements were used as pawns in the intervention against Ottoman sovereignty (*Meşveret*, n. 15, July 23rd, 1896, Paris). Rıza Bey's clear warning on this issue, which concerns foreign affairs, is closely related to his long years living in Europe and the observations he made there. His opposition to foreign state intervention also distinguished him within the Young Turk movement.

Rıza, who addresses the establishment of state sovereignty not only in the context of the Ottoman Empire but also within the scope of the colonialist perspective of Western states towards the East, discussed this issue in detail at his book called *The Moral Corruption of the West's Eastern Policy* at a very early stage. He frequently emphasized the relationship between colonialism and modernization in the policies of imperialist countries, which he considered as Russia and Western states. He also argued that the West, which is advanced in terms of science and technology, had preserved the orientalist spirit of the Crusades period and developed its current policies in this direction (A. Rıza, 1982, p. 24). He also emphasized the constructed social roles in order to achieve this political domination, and states that European merchants, industrialists or clergymen entered other communities by hiding behind these missions. The characteristics of colonial domination, which are today discussed within the framework of approaches such as colonialism and postcolonialism, were clearly expressed in Rıza's writings more than a century ago. His focus on this area is, in fact, related to Rıza's desire to implement the concept of development within a

society. Indeed, after examining the hegemonic framework he calls the West's Eastern policy, he argued that the colonial activities of European states not only served their material interests but also that assimilation within the target society led to that population rejecting the concept of development (A. Rıza, 1990, pp. 19-29) and remaining entirely dependent on the developmental trajectory of Western civilization.

Discussing the concepts of sovereignty and democracy within the state structure, in relation with the Islamic state system, Said Halim Pasha points out the connection between the existence of a constitutional monarchy and the establishment of political equality. The crucial point here is that he opposed the Western state system as the role model adopted since the Tanzimat period and the understanding of democracy already present in the Islamic state system. In this structure, which has a deep-rooted past compared to the modern state system in Europe (M. Şeref, 1914, p. 82), the first cadre of the Islamic government emerged as a constitutional system and this structure called theocratic constitutionalism (Tunaya, 1988, p. 63), was built on the concepts of consultation and justice (S. H. Pasha, 1909, p. 43). In the Islamic legal system, the freedom of the individual is not a right that can be granted or restricted later, but a natural state that everyone finds himself in. In this context, instead of adapting Western democracy, which is contrary to the political structure of Ottoman Empire and has a recent past, the Islamic democracy understanding, which contains a deep-rooted past, should be adopted (S. H. Paşa, 1913, p. 10) and this structure should be preserved in the modernization process of the empire. He states that only with such a justice system based on faith can an egalitarian environment be achieved and a democratic parliament that will work for a common ideal of all nations can be formed (*Sebilürreşad*, n. 499, March 11th, 1922). Because the progress of the political structure of a state is possible with the progress of the people within their natural conditions, by benefiting from their own experiences and by having the right to free political participation (S. H. Paşa, 1909, pp. 43-44).

At this point, as mentioned in previous chapters, his primary emphasis was always on building a political system appropriate to the unique structure of Ottoman society. His central focus was a sovereign state model centered on Islamic law. Unlike other bureaucrats of his time, the Pasha left no room for a Western-centric justice system. His focus was on integrating concepts such as sovereignty and democracy into the Ottoman state system in a modern and appropriate manner, based on their inherent existence in the Islamic state system. According to him, the political system that could best meet the needs of the Ottoman social system was based on this understanding. If this were achieved, a democratic system, unlike the Western system, would emerge in an Ottoman parliament composed of Muslims, where representatives of nations would not

work solely for their own nations but would strive for a common ideal (*Sebilürreşad*, n. 499, March 11th, 1922). Indeed, an individual living within a nation is obliged to obey natural laws and is never completely free. For this reason, the understanding of sovereignty determined by Islamic law should prevail and national sovereignty should be kept in a secondary position. If this model is implemented correctly, according to Pasha, class conflicts will end and a society centered on solidarity and Islamic brotherhood will emerge. This ideal is the most correct approach that evolves according to the development of society (*Sebilürreşad*, n. 494, March 11th, 1922).

4. Conclusion

This study examines the solutions proposed by statesmen in the context of the political modernization of the Ottoman Empire, focusing on the views of Ahmet Rıza Bey and Said Halim Pasha. Drawing on their writings, the ideas they offered on the concepts of homeland and nation, the constitutional system and parliament, political power and legitimacy, sovereignty, and the democratic state are comprehensively examined. These ideas, which can be seen as final political solutions to save the state from collapse rather than efforts to modernize it, are primarily rooted in Ahmet Rıza Bey's positivism, while Said Halim Pasha's is Islamic philosophy.

The first part of the study focuses on the ideas of homeland and nation. In Ahmet Rıza Bey, these concepts developed within the framework of Ottomanism. He saw the need for those living under the Ottoman umbrella as a path to the salvation of the state. Rıza Bey, whose political thought stemmed from positivism, emphasized social education even in the construction of a sense of nationhood, influenced by the rational aspect of this philosophy. His emphasis on education is also similar to the early intellectuals of the Tanzimat period, which constituted the first line of his thought. Said Halim Pasha approached the concepts of homeland and nation within the framework of Ottoman political unity and viewed the ideology of Ottomanism as a unique sociological reality reflecting the unique character of society. He distanced himself from nationalism and envisioned an Islamic state encompassing all Muslim peoples under a single state. While Ali Rıza Bey had no religious distinctions, Said Halim Pasha's primary focus was Islamic unity.

The idea of a parliamentary system, which limits the Sultan's authority and includes the people in government, discussed in the second section, is a concept defended by both figures. The importance Rıza Bey put on this term can be seen in his naming of the Committee of Union and Progress's newspaper as "Meşveret" meaning *consultation*. He argues that a constitution that the people

would embrace and that was popularly created, would both keep Ottoman society united and prevent minority intervention. He envisions a constitution and parliamentary system that would empower not only the Muslim community but all peoples in government. Said Halim Pasha also viewed the establishment of a constitutional system and parliament as essential to the state's progress. His focus, however, was on drafting laws in a realistic manner, consistent with the Ottoman state structure, rather than importing them from the West. While supporting the constitutional system, influenced by his work as an active bureaucrat in the field, he frequently emphasized the 1876 constitution, examining what he saw as structural flaws, and advocated for a legalization process that could truly address the problems of the Ottoman people.

The third section discusses the concepts of political power and legitimacy. Ahmet Rıza Bey appears to improved his ideas from the positivist philosophy's emphasis on order and progress, approaching the issue with also keeping mind the continuity of the state's political power. For this continued dominance, he emphasized the maintenance of the Ottoman ideology, which united all nations under a single umbrella. According to Rıza Bey, the caliphate, the political power that ensures the Ottoman sultan's dominance over the world's Muslims, is a right of the Ottoman dynasty. However, he opposes the idea of Islamic unity, derived from this political power and a key proponent of Said Halim Pasha, claiming it would create a religiously based division within society and lead to anarchy. Unlike Rıza Bey, Said Halim Pasha espoused the ideal of a head of state committed to Islamic law. He argued that political sovereignty could only be established if the principle of Islamic unity was established within state institutions.

The issues of sovereignty and the democratic state are discussed in the final section, and it becomes clear that these concepts were highly contested elements within the evolving structure of the Ottoman monarchy. Ahmet Rıza Bey, in discussing the concept of sovereignty, focuses on the protection of the Empire's territories from foreign intervention, a reflection of the political reality of the period. Rıza Bey, who also wrote works that examined colonial policy in detail, strived to raise awareness of anti-imperialism quite early on. On the subject of the limits of the sultan's sovereignty and democracy, Said Halim Pasha emphasized the unique structure of Ottoman society, pointing to the already existing understanding of democracy within the Islamic state system. Relatedly, he found the use of Western state institutions as role models, starting with the Tanzimat period, to be problematic. His focus was on the proper integration of these concepts into the Ottoman state system, taking into account structural realities and utilizing Islamic law.

Ultimately, both figures appear to have presented quite detailed ideas regarding the structural transformation of the state and fundamental political concepts. While their goal was the salvation of the state, the proposals proposed by Rıza Bey and Said Halim Paşa, informed by different ideologies, clearly demonstrate that they attempted to act in accordance with the realities of the period. Indeed, the proposals for a modern state structure, based on positivist and Islamist perspectives, offered by these two prominent statesmen, who most concretely experienced the collapse of the state as citizens, offer an opportunity to interpret the late Ottoman social structure realistically, as they contain statements addressing numerous problems at different levels of the empire. Both figures appear to have received a strong theoretical education and developed their visions through active political engagements in later stages of their lives. Therefore, while developing ideas for the Ottoman state structure based on the ideas they embraced as ideologies, they offered practical and understandable solutions.

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