The Ottoman Response to the Western Storm: Lessons for Neo-Ottomanism in Turkey

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Abstract

Neo-Ottomanism in recent decades has been among the most controversial political debates in related academies and literature. Frequent references to it by Turkish officials in recent years, multiplied its importance in international relations. The term obviously owes its significance to the Ottoman Empire Era, and accordingly, a sufficient analysis on the challenges of the Empire during its last decades stands prior to any attempts to understand Neo-Ottomanism. The paper thus, aims at analysing the precautions and countermeasures taken by Ottomans against the western political, economic and cultural impacts. According to the results of the analysis, these countermeasures compose major Identity elements, i.e. Being, Muslim, Turk and Modern, embraced and developed by Neo-Ottomanists in Turkey.

Keywords: Neo-Ottomanism, Identity elements, Ottomans, Reforms

Introduction

Turkey is experiencing great developments in its socio-political arena in recent decades, crystallized in the Islamists ruling this country beginning with the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) success in municipality elections in 1994 and parliamentary elections in 1995, continued to the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) government during the last 14 years. These changes motivated widespread discussions among people in Turkey regarding their history i.e. Ottoman Empire and its heritage for the republican era. Accordingly, Neo-Ottomanism at a time became one of the most debated topics in Turkish media, though decreased slightly in recent years.

Indeed, Neo-Ottomanism is a dramatic shift from the traditional Turkish foreign policy of the Kemalist ideology, which emphasized looking westward towards Europe in order to avoid the instability and sectarianism of the Middle East. The shift away from this concept in Turkish foreign policy under Turgut Özal's government has been described as the first step towards neo-Ottomanism. (Murinson, 2009:119) Yet, It especially has been used to describe Turkish foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party which took power in 2002 under prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. (Karpat, 2002:524) Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu spoke openly about the reorientation of Turkey's foreign policy in a November 2009 speech to members of the ruling Justice and Development Party. "The Ottoman Empire left a legacy. They call us 'neo-Ottomans.' Yes, we are 'new Ottomans.' We are forced to deal with neighbouring countries. And we even go to Africa. The great powers are dismayed by that." (see; Lombardi, 2012:10)

Moreover, trends towards reviving the glorious past went beyond Islamist currents in Turkish society. In 1999, the 700th anniversary of Formation of Ottoman Empire was vastly celebrated along with various festivals and programs. (See; Özkan, 2011: 119) Frequent references to the past in the renewed identity making process in Turkey makes it necessary to have a re-focus on the Ottoman Empire and its heritage. The foremost question regarding the subjects is; how Ottomans dealt with destructive challenges, mostly created by the West, in the last decades of their Empire and how did these measurements relate to the Identity elements of Turkish people.

A Brief History of Ottoman Empire

The geographic area which is now called "The Republic of Turkey" bears an ancient history, hosting civilizations their record goes back to the Neolithic era almost 7000 B.C. The region has witnessed many developments prior to the Ottoman Empire but we limit the focus on the Ottoman Era to give a more related and brief chronology.

As Shaw and Shaw note; "The rise of the Ottoman Dynasty to rule much of Europe and Asia is one of the most remarkable stories. In the thirteenth century the Ottomans ruled only on of a number of Turkmen principalities that ringed the Byzantine state in western Anatolia. Within two centuries they had established an empire that encompassed not only the former Byzantine lands of south-eastern Europe and Anatolia but also Hungry and the Arab world, and that empire was to endure into modern times. (Shaw and Shaw, 1977:106-113)

The Empire's name derives from its founder, the Turkish Muslim warrior, Osman/Ottoman, who established the dynasty which ruled over the empire throughout its history. In its six centuries of domination, the Ottoman Empire witnessed many vicissitudes upon which, historians have divided the long life of this empire into five periods; (Rahchamani, 2007:38)

1) Emergence and Development of Ottoman Government: This period started in 1299 and continued to 1453. Ottomans first captured Bursa and chose it as their first capital. They then moved their capital to Edirne after launching a large invasion to Europe. In 13th century, Ottomans gradually dominated all parts of Anatoly.

In 1402, the Ottoman Empire, like all other parts of west Asia, was vastly invaded by Moguls, and Sultan Yıldırım Beyazıt was defeated. This defeat jeopardized the political unity of Turks and pushed them to the edge of destruction. This period is called the era of interregnum. After that and in one century, Ottoman Empire gradually restored its organization and power as much that Sultan Muhammad II usually known as Sultan Muhammad the Conqueror "Fatih" captured Constantinople in 1453 (later named "Islambol/Istanbul" and chosen as the capital of Ottoman Empire by Sultan).

2) Great Expansion: This period starts in 1453. In this era, the successors of Sultan Muhammad the Conqueror annexed Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Syria and Hungry to the Ottoman Empire. The most important event of this era was the capture of Egypt in 1517 and from that time to the end of 18th century, the Ottoman Empire called itself the Caliph of Muslims.

3) Stagnation: 1579 - 1683, until the second siege of Vienna and the defeat of the Ottomans. During this period, the Ottoman sultans were engaged in war with their rival neighbours and rebels and thus, they were always in a defensive position. It is coincided with Renaissance in Europe which laid the foundations for radical changes in scientific, literary and technological fields. The Ottoman's failure of the siege of Vienna in 1683 was the starting point of the decline of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, until the peace treaty of Zsitva-Torok it was not accepted by the Ottoman sultans that they were equal to their European counterparts in the agreements they concluded. (Bülent Arı, 2004: 42). This treaty dated 1606 was the first sign of the relationship emerging between the Ottoman Empire and the Europeans which would be wholly shaped with the 1699 Karlowitz Treaty. With this treaty, for the first time in its history, the Ottomans accepted to be on equal status with other states. Ahmet Reşit, 1932:87, Cited in Demirag, 2005: 141)

4) Decline: This period starts from 1683; the Ottomans failure in the second siege of Vienna (the first siege was in 1593), and continued to 1792 and signing the "Yash" treaty which was concluded during Sultan Selim III. Sultan Selim took steps towards modernizing the Empire; one of which was renovation of Army in European style. This period lasted almost a whole century. The Ottoman State suffered defeats in subsequent wars and lost a large part of its territory. One of the great crises in Ottoman Empire during this period was the long time wars with Russia from the early years of 18th century. These wars started with the

Ottoman's triumph at the beginning; however, the Russian forces eventually won superiority. Finally in 1774, Treaty of Kuçuk Kainarji was signed by the war sides and the Ottomans were forced to many concessions for Russians among them; Separation of Crimea from the Ottoman Empire, admitting the right of free navigation in Black and Mediterranean Seas and protectorship over Orthodox Christians living within the Ottoman territory by Russians.

5) Collapse: From 1792 to 1922, when the last Ottoman Sultan was overthrown and the Sultanate was collapsed. Many efforts were made in this period under many titles to restore the lost glory, yet totally failed. The last years of Ottoman Empire, witnessed the First World War (1914-1918) ended by their defeat and fragmentation of Empire. The Republic of Turkey was established in the remaining territory.

It sounds necessary to mention the term "Eastern Question" here. Youssef M. Choueiri (2008: 507) writes: "What was known in Europe as the Eastern Question (conventionally dated from 1774 to 1923) _i.e. the question of what would replace the Ottoman empire and how — was prompted by this internal enfeeblement of the Muslim empires, especially of the Ottoman domains, combined with the external pressures arising from the economic and geopolitical expansion of the European powers and their non-European empires. For as Tsar Nicholas said in 1853, Europe had a 'sick man, seriously ill - - - on its hands' (Kiernan, 1969,p.140).Or, as Lord Clarendon put it: 'the only way to improve [the Ottomans],is to improve them off the face of the earth' (quoted in Choueiri, 2008: 507).

In the same way Malcolm Yapp has pointed out that what Europeans tended to see 'as an affair of diplomacy conducted in the chancelleries of Europe' — namely, the Eastern Question — was, in the Middle East, 'a bloody battle for land' (1987: 16).

According to Efraim Karsh (2007: 99) "To many European contemporaries the question was not whether the Ottoman Empire would succeed in arresting its steady decline and fragmentation, but rather when it would actually gasp its terminal breath and what consequences this would entail for the balance of power on the continent. To latter-day historians, the story is similarly straightforward. Having long coveted the territories of the declining Ottoman Empire, the European powers exploited its entry into World War I in order to "fall upon the carcass" and carve up the defunct Muslim empire among themselves. As a veteran observer of Middle Eastern affairs put it: "So, the statesmen of Europe having decided in their wisdom that the Ottoman Empire was sick, therefore the Ottoman Empire had to die. This is the Eastern Question in a nutshell." (Karsh, Ibid)

Ottoman Reforms

The sudden defeats of 1774 and 1792 by Russia, after half a century without major wars, made Ottomans become acutely aware of their military inferiority. The disastrous defeat at the hands of Russia in 1829, led to a huge number of Muslim refugees from the Black Sea littoral entering the country. The most important question was that; "what should be done in order to save the Empire".

Akif Efendi (later Paşa, 1787-1845) wrote a memorandum in 1822 examining different ways the empire could address the threats facing it,

particularly from Russia. The first option he gave was defense of the empire through Holy War; the second was "slavery," or coming under colonial rule; while the third was withdrawal to Anatolia. (B. Lewis, 2002: 325)

Obviously, the Ottomans understood that their current political, military, and economic positions were not as good as those of Europe, and began to attempt at solving these problems. The Ottoman bureaucracy began to search for the meaning of being European in political and social terms. It was thought that the decline might be stopped by adopting the military techniques of the West which managed to beat the Ottoman army which was thought once unbeatable. The ambassadors sent to the West at the end of the 18th century focused mainly on this issue. For instance, Ahmet Resmi Efendi who was sent to Prussia in 1763 mentioned with commendation the discipline of the Prussian Army in his Sefaretname (Consulate reports). (Resmi, 1303:33, Cited in Demirag, Ibid)

The reforms in this era are known as "Tanzimat". The Tanzimat (literally "re-orderings") officially began on November 3, 1839 with the promulgation of the Tanzimat Charter, the Hatt i Şerif (Noble Rescript) of Gülhane, just a few months after Mahmud died and was succeeded by his son Abdülmecid I (1839-1861).

Zurker believes that "Modernizing the army remained the driving force behind the whole complex of reforms, at least until 1856. The transition to an army dressed, equipped and commanded in the European manner was made from 1826 with the founding of the "Well-trained Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad" (Muallem Asakeri Mensureyi Muhammediye). Conscription on the Prussian model, with a standing army, an active reserve and a militia, was introduced in 1844. Conscription was by drawing of lots among age classes, as in Europe. (See; Zurker, 1998: 437_449)

Bernard Lewis states that the Ottomans have not adopted the new military technologies not because they were unaware of the developments, but because of the troubles that the Ottoman economy faced (Lewis, 2002), as they had previously adopted such technologies. As the value of the Ottoman currency devalued while the prices of the raw material imported from Europe rose, some modern developments in the military industry could not be traced, and that served to the decline of the Ottoman army against the West. (Berkes 2002: 76). In the meantime, another point the Ottomans missed were the developments that were at the foundation of the technical developments in the West. The scientific developments had begun in Europe at the 14th and l5th centuries including the Renaissance, and from the 7th century these theoretical developments were applied to technology. (İhsanoğlu, 1991: 5, Cited in Demirag, Ibid: 142).

Thereupon, Shaw and Shaw note that Even if the initial impetus was military and modernization of the army and establishment of a monopoly of legitimate violence always remained one of the top priorities, in their efforts to achieve these goals the reformers were forced to cast the net of modernization ever more widely. The building of an army entailed a need for a census, for efficient recruitment, for the construction of barracks and the improvement of roads and bridges. Enhancing state control was dependent on communications, which translated into the building of an extended network of telegraph cables from the 1850s onwards and of trunk railways from the 1880s. The reforms created their own need for

modern educational establishments (and a market for their graduates). (Shaw and Shaw, 1997: 106)

The utilitarian drive behind the creation of the new schools is shown by the fact that a university on the European model was founded only at the very end of the century remarkable, considering the enormous development of the Humboldtian university in the European countries, which the Ottomans took for their model, in this very period. Instead of universities, the Ottomans created professional colleges to turn out engineers and architects, (military) doctors and veterinaries, accountants and administrators. (Zürcher, 1998: 2)

In short, unfortunately for Ottomans, attempts at reform remained insufficient to keep the empire intact. Nationalist uprisings, continuous wars, and loss of territory forced the imperial center to defend the remaining lands. Moreover, the center attempted to deal with all these changes through strengthening its autocratic hold over the subject population. Zurker concludes; "The reasons for the Ottoman Empire's ultimate failure to sustain its viability thus are manifold. It lacked the manpower, the money and the industrial base to compete successfully with European powers. The prerogatives of the European states under the system of Capitulations severely limited its room for maneuver in the economic sphere. The religiously over determined division of labor between a vastly increased state apparatus, dominated by Muslims and a modern industrial and commercial sector completely dominated by Christians under foreign protection meant that economic growth could hardly be tapped by the state to increase its resources. At the same time the explosive growth of the number of protected Christians and of their wealth created the social and cultural space in which separatist nationalisms could blossom. By the time the Ottoman elite tried to counter these with emotional appeals to a shared Ottoman citizenship and patriotism in the 1860s, it was already too late. The Young Turk movement, which emerged in the 1890s and held power between 1908 and 1918, was born out of a Muslim reaction against the perceived failure of the sultan's regime to stop the weakening of the Ottoman state and the encroachments of foreigners and local Christians. When external circumstances gave them the opportunity to act independently, identity politics, or solving the ethnic issue, took priority over increasing the financial and human resources of the state. (Zurker, Ibid: 10)

As discussed, these efforts neither prevented the decline of the Empire nor provided a sound base for identity in its communities. Instead, the reforms destroyed the traditional order, but never replaced them with a new and workable one. Under these circumstances, the 19th century witnessed many debates among the Ottoman intelligentsia for the political orientation of the Empire. (Çalış, 2001: 59)

Regardless to the small and insignificant movements, the most important and widespread socio-political currents gaining dominance in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire were; Pan Ottomanism, Pan Islamism, Westernizm, Pan Turkism, and Turkish Nationalism.

Pan-Ottomanism

The idea of nationalism released and spread by French Revolution proved its effects on the Ottoman society too and caused the 1821 Greek Rebellion. The Ottoman elite began to search for a new collective identity to deter nationalist feelings awakening in the Ottoman society that was previously organized under the "millet" system and believed they could only be successful against the nationalist current by a version of nationalism which would give everyone an overall identity.

In fact, the idea of creating an Ottoman nation marks back to the reign of Mahmut II. (1808-1839) in which the idea of an Ottoman state began to emerge, a state "composed of peoples of diverse nationalities and religions, based on secular principles of sovereignty as contrasted with the medieval concept of an Islamic empire."(Berkes, 1998: 90) Mahmut II stated: "I identify my Muslim subjects in the mosque, Christian subjects in the church, and my Jewish subjects at the synagogue. There is no difference between them. For all my justice is equal and all of them are my true children". (Doğan, 2013: 176)

As it is obvious in these words, the doctrine of Ottomanism (Osmancılık) stressed the equality of all Ottoman subjects in an attempt to undermine the various national movements that threatened the empire. (Davison, 1977: 39-40) In other words, Ottomans tried to create an identity of Ottomanism which would shove the national identities emerging in the minorities of the Empire. Pan-Ottomanism is a current of thought which aims at creating, over all the nationalities of the Ottoman Empire, awe-feeling of being Ottoman and an "Ottoman nation" in parallel with this feeling. The main idea was the principle of ittihad-i anasır (the unity of components) taking each millet as an equal part of a greater Ottoman nation. It was based on two main assumptions: First; the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire could no longer be gathered under the umbrella of the ancient regime allowing a dominant position to Muslims. Second; introducing more Islamic or nationalist policies was a more divisive approach, which would lead to further secessionist demands. (Çalış, 1982: 126).

These were all done according to Tanzimat reforms and based on The 1839 Gülhane Hattı Hümayunu which accepted his arguments by defending the equality of all Ottoman subjects before the law regardless of their religious beliefs. (Karal, 1983, Vol. V: 171)Shaw and Shaw assert that "The provisions of the Hatt-ı Hümayun "were mostly directed to the non-Muslim millets and aimed at ending their desire for autonomy or independence." (Shaw and Shaw, 1977:129)

Yet, as far as Muslim subjects of the empire were concerned, this represented a "radical breach with ancient Islamic tradition", and many Muslims could not easily accept the idea that the infidel Ottoman subjects were their equals. (B. Lewis, 2002:107). Still, it was hoped that such guarantees "would strengthen the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire by increasing the loyalty of its subjects, Christian as well as Muslim, and by diminishing separatist tendencies. (Davison 1973: 40)

Prior to the Tanzimat, the millets had been "little theocracies within an empire," each under its own spiritual leader. (Berkes, 1998:158). With the Hatt-ı Humayun of 1856, they "underwent secularizing constitutional changes" and became "little non-territorial republics and incipient nations". (Berkes, Ibid) At the same time, the demographic situation was

made even more complicated by the number, diversity and geographic distribution of the various nationalities in the Ottoman Empire. They had gone through centuries of racial mixing, and the various "religious combinations, syncretisms of all kinds, and different varieties of crypto-Muslims" didn't simplify matters. (Davison, 1973:30) The Ottoman Empire was in effect "a body politic entirely made up of ethnic minorities." (ibid)

With the spread of western-style nationalism based on language and ethnicity in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Christian minority groups began placing more emphasis on their respective vernacular languages." (Davison, 1973:62) For instance, in the 1840s, a growing Armenian press began to use the vernacular in place of the old church language, gradually bringing written Armenian closer to the spoken language."(Davison, 1973: 121)

Kemal Karpat points out that for the Serbs and the Bulgarians, religion was only of secondary importance in the formation of national identity. Instead, "language, ethnic culture, and the memory of their historical states prior to the Turkish conquest in the fourteenth century served as the fountainhead of national identity."(Karpat, 1973:82)

Facing nationalist agitation in the 1860s, official Ottoman documents continued to refer to groups within the empire by religious affiliation, avoiding even the mention of the concept of nationalism or of designations such as "Greek" or "Romanian."(Davison, 1977: 51)

In 1869, new laws on nationality were introduced. The first of these laws "substituted modem political definitions of nationality and naturalization for the old criterion of conversion to Islam. (Davison, 1977: 262) Everyone living in Ottoman territory would now he considered an Ottoman subject barring proof to the contrary, and Ottoman subjects were henceforth required to obtain official permission before becoming a citizen of another state. This was aimed at curbing the practice where Ottoman Christians gained special privileges by adopting foreign nationality. (Davison, 1973: 267)

Despite all measures, these ideals of equality and freedom provided non-Muslim communities with inspiration (and also justification) to form their own clubs, publish newspapers, and open up schools. Thus, ironically, Ottomanism contributed to, rather than hindered, the development of nationalist ideas among non–Muslim populations of the empire (Mardin, 1962: 89).

The Empire administration saw the impossibility of holding on to its power through establishing Ottomanism as an (imperial) identity, or through the establishment of a body of "Ottoman citizens". It also started to realize the danger of losing its legitimacy, thus "started to create a common series of reference markers. Their formulation took place in the space where the state power and society confronted one another, leading to a process of implicit negotiation between power holders and subjects" (Deringil 1999:45), with the expectation that Islam would provide the ideological ties which would bind together what remained of the Empire (Andac, 2007: 18). Now, there was a turn to Pan-Islamism.

Pan-Islamism

The movement of "Unity of Islam" in 19th century continued to the early decades of 20th century. It was both an ideological and pragmatic movement aiming at a vast Islamic revivalism in the Islamic World.

Considering the fact that the Ottoman Empire was in the pioneer line of facing the West, The Idea of unifying Muslims around a powerful center i.e. Pan-Islamism found its adequate ground among many prominent Muslim personalities as well as Ottoman Sultans.

"Under Abdulhamit (1876- 1909), Islamism became the "most widespread ideological force in the Ottoman Empire. It was used as "an ideological weapon ... to counter the imperialism of the Western powers as well as the minority nationalist movements. (Shaw and Shaw, 1997: 259) In fact, this emphasis on Islamism and on the Caliphate had begun under Abdulaziz (1861-1876), but it was more fully realized under Abdulhamit and is often closely associated with his long reign. (See; Lewis, 2002: 123)

Mümtazer Türköne too, asserts that Islamism and the idea of being against the West were discussed before Abdülhamit II came into power, but what he did was to adopt it as an official ideology. Islamists believed that the main cause of the decline was the denial of the basic teachings and values of Islam. it aimed to keep all Muslim people united politically, through giving them a sense of Islamic socio-political identity.(Türköne 2003: 25) According to Şerif Mardin; the Pan-Islamism of Abdülhamit can be seen as a counter-thesis against the pan-ideologies that emerged in the West, a means of defense in the times when imperialism gathered strength. (Mardin, 1985: 348) In other words, the ideology of Pan- Islamism emerged as a reaction to the nationalist, rationalist and positivist ideas of Western civilization and to the expansionist nature of all kinds of imperialism. (Çalış: 80, See also; Davison: 274) Although, some observers believe that "the Pan-Islamism of Abdulhamit II was not a policy to confront Pan-Slavism, or an ideal for uniting all the Muslims of the World. Instead, his Pan-Islamism was a response to the movements of Arab sheiks, Mahdis, the Governors of Egypt, and the separatist Arabs in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen". (Berkes, 1978: 364) However, Abdulhamit simply took advantage of the Pan-Islamic sentiments that already existed among his Muslim subjects, using it to "strengthen his hand against enemies both at home and abroad." (Shaw and Shaw, Ibid: 259)

Hence, it seems reasonable to say that Anti-Westernism came to the fore during the reign of Abdulhamit II, as western culture was considered to be harmful and negative; traditional values were given greater emphasis, yet they were not averse to the use of the western technology. The Islamists also accepted that the West was more developed than the Ottoman State. Therefore, they supported the adoption of the Western technology, but opposed the imitation of the West for they believed Europe was weak in terms of ethics and morality. In this context, Şemsettin Günaltay writes "Europe only thinks of itself; its aim is to exploit other countries. We should not expect help from Europe and we have to awaken ourselves". Mehmet Akif as well accepts Western technical superiority but refuses to imitate the West: "By imitating the religion, by imitating the customary practices, the clothes, by imitating the way people greet each other, in short by imitating every single thing, a real social community cannot emerge and live." They thought that the only way to prevent the policies adopted by the West on Ottoman Empire and other Muslim countries was a "Union of Islam". (Demirag, Ibid: 148) Among the prominent intellectuals of the Islamic unity movement, "Pan-Islamism", two are more outstanding; Sayyid Jamal Ad-Din Asadabadi/Afghani and Namik Kemal. Hamid Enayat (2005: 47)

believes that Sayyid was the most significant religious intellect in Iran and Namik Kemal, the most significant intellectual figure in Ottoman Empire.

Now, same question raised as for Pan-Ottomanism; Could Pan-Islamism save The Empire? Davison argues that; Pan-Islamism at this point developed in response to Pan-Slavism and European imperialism, and on an international scale it represented merely "a futile search for military aid and a sentimental attachment to the concept of the caliphate."(Davison, Ibid: 257) However, within the Ottoman Empire it contributed to "a sort of Islamic patriotism" coupled with rising anti-European sentiment, and Ottoman diplomacy grew "more unyielding than it had previously been."(Ibid: 277) The loss of almost all of the Ottoman territories in Europe as a result of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 dealt a mortal blow to Ottomanistm (Heyd,1950:34) and the Arab revolt of 1916 signalled the collapse of pan-Islamism.(Berkes, Ibid: 428)

Westernism

Realizing technical superiority of the west, the Islamic world tried to quickly recover by making necessary changes in the administrative methods within Islamic communities since the 19th century. However, the Islamists, while adhering to a notion of historical clash between the cross and the crescent, have always maintained a kind of messianic hope about the future of the clash between Islam and the west. In a mood of escapism despite the apparent superiority of the west the Islamists believed that the west was destined to fall down because of its 'inherent illness'. Moreover theories of rise and fall of great civilizations have always attracted the Islamists with the hope that "the circle of history" will one day bring down the western civilization even if the west escapes from its inherent deficits and the challenges of the Muslims. So, divers approaches towards the western hegemony might be distinguished within the Islamic World at that time, especially among Ottomans.

Bernard Lewis holds that last two hundred years of Turkey is the history of westernization. Once the late Ottomans realized the decline of their state vis-à-vis the rising power of the Europeans they embarked on a process of adopting 'western' ways that made the west 'great'.(B. Lewis 1968:45-73) It started with westernization of the army, then the state/government and finally daily lives. This history in essence was a history of the search for the ways to respond to western pressures in military, political, economic and cultural/civilizational realms. At the very inception the quest for westernization was defensive in nature, it was the attempt of a declining power to revive and catch up with the rising western civilization.(See also; Rustow, 1973: 94-95, cited in Daghi, 2002: 4)

In the same way, Binnaz Toprak writes that Ottoman intellectual history of the 19th century is the history of two conflicting viewpoints, one of which saw Western superiority only in technical terms while the other saw a necessity to embrace Western culture as well, He believes that Modernization in the Turkish context has always been synonymous with westernization. (Binnaz Toprak, 1981: 58)

A good example to show different approaches regarding the West is; The Port Arthur victory of the Japanese in 1905 against Russia was seen differently by different groups of thought. The pro-Western people linked the Japanese victory against a European power to its Westernization

efforts, while the traditionalists have seen the victory related to Japanese adoption of Western technology without losing their identity. (Renee Worringer, 2004: 207) However, the discussions went on among Ottoman elites regarding the issue of westernization and possibility of borrowing sciences and European technologies while maintaining the Islamic value system.

As a result the Turks were both threatened and attracted by the west. It was both a source of threat and admiration. Thus the relations of the Turks to the west right from the beginning of the modern times had a double edge of love and hate; admiration and fear. The challenge and penetration of the west in the 19th century was central to formation of the early modern Islamic identity too.

Western ideas entered the Ottoman Empire via different ways. The most important routes were; Students dispatched by the Ottoman Government to study in the European Universities were receiving teachings covered fully with Western concepts and values. They naturally transformed same perceptions when they were back home and worked as teachers, Paper Editors or administrative staff. Translated books and articles specially by increasing circulation of press had a decisive role in spreading western ideas across the State. Foreigners working in the country as embassy staff or as contractors in Government projects were the other route to acquaint the Ottoman elites and subsequently ordinary people with the western norms and values.

For a long time, the reluctance of Muslim subjects of Ottoman Empire in learning western languages prevented them from taking western accounts. Muslims did not yield to learning foreign languages. Establishment of Royal Department of Translation "Tercüme Odası" was the first step in establishing communication with west. Until the Greek Revolution of 1821, all royal translators of the Ottoman Empire were the Greeks. Since 1821, in a change at the administration, Muslims too started working at the Department. Yet, the government suffered from the lack of eligible translators from western languages upon dismissing Greek trsnlators. In 1840, there were only few educated Turks who knew foreign languages and a few number of them read western books. Although Some Ottoman elites secretly studied western languages; even Ahmed Cevdet Paşa learned French in secret to save himself from criticism of people. But after a while and gradually, The Ottoman Empire witnessed a time that noble families of Istanbul competed with each other in sending their children to learn European languages at the new and modern schools. (Agoston & Masters, 2009: 224 & 557. See also; Landau, 2004: 87)

The main supporters of Westernization managed to make their voices heard at Abdullah Cevdet's journal "içtihat". Their main point was that the Western superiority had an unquestionable basis which was science, and there was no logic in confronting it. However, they can be analyzed in two groups. According to the moderate modernizers, technique may be transferred from one country to another but civilization could not. (Tunaya, 1985:594) Those moderate modernizers as Celal Nuri advocated that what is good for the society's development should be taken from the West and developed within the traditional values, and accused Tanzimat reformers to blindly imitating Europe. On the other hand, for extreme Westernizers, the solution was more, not less, Westernization. At this point, they were criticizing the reformers before them for not going as far as necessary. For the latter, Westernization was

not an issue of choice, but was a matter of survival. Abdullah Cevdet states on the subject "There is no alternative civilization; civilization means European civilization; and we have to accept it with its roses and its thorns". (içtihat, no,89, 1890: 594)

As mentioned before, between 1845 and 1868 "education was almost completely secularized," according to Tanzimat reforms. (Mardin, 1962: 163) The new Tanzimat educational system also led to the creation of new elites Who"adopted European tastes in dress and in social intercourse, in literature and in thought." (Rustow, 1973:100) This new elite soon developed a sense of group identity, became "the bearers of public opinion," and "proceeded to form political associations to give expression to such opinions."(Rustow, 1973:100) There was a great deal of interdependence between political and literary life, where the major writers were also at the forefront in the "movement of ideas."(Rustow, 1956: 422) In the end, the establishment of the new educational system was an extremely important development, since Turkey's future leaders would receive their educations in the schools founded during the tanzimat. (Rustow, 1973:108)

Şerif Mardin and Şükrü Hanioğlu in their studies showed that most intellectuals of the Ottoman period (who were in government's staff) in the mid 19th century believed that westernization was the only way to develop the society and consolidate the political power of the country. There was not a vast dissatisfaction among people in the society on westernization of the society to give direction to the protests. However, Hanioğlu argues that the idea of Westernization becomes systematic and is seen as the primary problem of the nation from 1908 onwards. (See; Hanioğlu, 1985: 138)

Daghi advocates that it was not only the west itself but the wider western question, as confronted by the Muslims, was an identity generating issue. The western question, as explained, was about how to respond to the western challenge. The dominant currency was westernization, adopting western civilization in whole as a means of catching up and coping with the west. Westernization pursued by Turkish state elites therefore was bound to influence the form of government and the traditional way of life. As such westernization also meant secularization by which the traditional Islamic sectors were pushed aside from the governmental affairs and even from their social leadership in the community. Westernization process and policies along a secularist direction resulted in the exclusion of Islamic leaders, groups and thought from the centers of the power making Islam in practice irrelevant for Turkish state and society. (See; Daghi, 2004: 7)

Almost contrary to this view point, some scholars hold that Europe never became the "other" in the construction of the Turkish identity because there was no colonial legacy or long period of occupation. In the construction of Turkish identity, the "other" was "Imperial and communist" Russia. (Yavuz, 2005: 273)

Metin Heper writes: Although from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century the Ottoman Empire experienced a virtually constant decline it never became a colony. Consequently the Turks never harbored a deep resentment toward the Europeans. (Heper, 2004: 268) He adds; Turkey *has* been one of those exceptional countries that started to transform its identity from an Eastern to a Western, from the end of the eighteenth century onward, by its own volition. (Heper, 2004: 267) He explains;

"the fact that as compared to the contemporary Islamic states the Ottoman Empire was the least Islamic was also a contributory factor to the ease with which the Turks turned their face to the West. Islam played a relatively less significant role in the Ottoman statecraft because it was recognized that Islam regulated basically the personal life and interpersonal relations of the Muslims, and that as such it had little to contribute to public affairs. (Heper, 2004: 267)

Eventually it is worthy to mention that the west and westernization have emerged as central concept, a key to understand Turkish politics in modern times. As references to the 'Eastern Question' of European powers help understand the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire at the dawn of the 20th century the concepts of the west and westernization, the latter being a response to the former at domestic front, is a key to analyse the late Ottoman and recent Turkish history. The western question, that is the way to look at, relate to and imitate the west, became a central debate in the attempt of the late Ottomans to "save the state" against disintegrative pressures of the European powers. The debate addressed to the grand question of the 19th and early 20th centuries; how to cope with the challenge of the west, and thus how to save the country. It, in practice, turned to be a debate about how to westernize. Westernization as a concept and program to "renew" the state and society also became an identity constituting orientation during the Kemalist Era influencing all aspects of social life in the country.

Conclusion

The word neo-Ottomanism has rarely been used at the official level. Yet, it is acquiring widespread usage and hence altered the basic tone of the Turkish internal and foreign policy in recent years. The new image that we see greatly resembles the outline of the long-lost Ottoman Empire. The moment that the AKP government pointed the Middle East as its number-one area of interest, cooperation, and action, Turkish foreign policy has inevitably taken on connotations of an Ottomanist revival. Neo-Ottomanism, as this revival is popularly known, is not peculiar to the AKP government, since the term was first deployed to assess the nature of the foreign missions of the Turgut Özal era in the early 1990s. What did not gain currency back then, however, has stuck strong in 2009 and neo-Ottomanism has come to be understood by an increasing number of scholars and journalists as the backbone of Turkey's ambitious novel design for relaunching itself as a regional power. The idea however, emerged as a consequence of a realization by Turkish intellectuals, a realization about an increasing gap and crisis in Turkish national identity due to a willing negligence of some important elements of Turkish Identity during Kemalist Era.

Indeed, it became quite obvious for many Turkish intellectuals that the unique way to have a stable and effective socio-political development in the country owes to the establishment of a comprehensive Turkish national identity comprising of the major elements resembling its real personage. Appreciating the glorious Ottoman history, almost contrary to the Kemalist approach, Neo-Ottomanists tried to develop and propagate their perception about religion and Ottoman heritage as the two of the most profound and effective elements of the Turkish National Identity along with Modernism. Apparently, the notion derives its routs from

countermeasures applied by Ottomans during the last decades of their Empire, Namely; Pan-Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism.

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