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ISLAM AND COMPETING NATIONALISMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, 1876-1926

Kamal Soleimani

The Modern Muslim World

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For:
Jiwana, my daughter
&
Gil, my mentor

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Contents

1 Introduction 1

Part I Religious (Islamic) Thought, Nationalism, and the Politics of Caliphate 19

2 Nationalism and Religious Thought 21

3 The Politics of the *Khilafa*, Old and New 49

Part II Official Nationalism and Islamic Identity 71

4 Ottoman/Turkish "Official Nationalism" 73

5 Abdülhamid II's Pan-Islamism/Nationalism 93

Part III Kurdish Nationalism and Exclusionary Islams 155

6 Exclusionary Islam and Kurdish Nationalism: The Case of the Naqshbandi Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri 157

7 **Kurdish Nationalism and *Khilafa* in Nursi's Pre-exile Writing** 217

8 **"Fully-fledged Nationalism in Religious Garb": The Caliphate as the Site of Nationalist Rivalry** 241

9 **Conclusion** 277

Bibliography 285

Index 303

List of Abbreviations

A AMD	Amedi Kalemi
A MKT MHM	Sedaret Mektubi Mühimme Kalemi
A MKT MVL	Meclisi Vâlâ
A MKT NZD	Sedaret Mektubi Kalemi Nezaret ve Devair
A MKT UM	Umum Vilâyet
A MKT	Mektubi Kalemi
BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
BEO	Bâb-ı Âli Evrak Odası, Sadaret Evrakı (A)
HR MKT	Hariciye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi
HR SYS	Hariciye Siyasi
ID	İrade Dahiliye
IH	İrade Hariciye
IM	İrade Mesail
IMM	İrade Meclis-i Mahsus
MV	Meclisi Vükelâ Mazbataları
MVL	Meclis-i Vâla Evrakı Hülasa Kayıt Defterleri
PRO FO	Public Reord Office, Foreign Office
Y A HUS	Sadaret Hususi Mevzuat Evrakı
Y A RES	Sadaret Resmi Maruzat Evrakı
YEE	Yıldız Esas Evrakı
Y MTV	Yıldız Mutenevvi Mâruzat
Y PRK A	Sadaret Mâruzatı
Y PRK ASK	Askeri Mâruzatı
Y PRK BSK	Mabeyen Başkitabeti
Y PRK DH	Dahiliye Nezareti Mâruzatı
Y PRK M	Müteferrik
Y PRK MYD	Yaveran ve Maiyyeti-i Seniyye Erkâni Harbiye Dairesi

Y PRK NMH	Nâme-i Humayunlar
Y PRK PT	Posta ve Telgraf Nezareti
Y PRK TNF	Ticaret ve Nafia Nezareti
Y PRK TŞF	Teşrifat-ı Umumiye Dairesi
Y PRK UM	Umum Vilayetler Tahrirati
Y PRK	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Scholarship on late Ottoman society, including writings on the Kurds, tends to present Muslim history with a certain uniformity. It is only after World War I (WWI) and the rise of Kemalism that the history of Muslim nationalist thought is treated as a fact in the related historiography. The historical disparity among the various "Muslim people of Asia Minor" and their assumed "lack of ethnic self-consciousness"[1] is presented as an indisputable historical fact, and the idea that nationalist tendencies among Muslims existed before WWI is vehemently rejected.[2] In this discursive construct of the past, the emergence of Turkish nationalism is equated with the birth of the "modern Turkish state." The same period is also treated as the birth date of Muslim nationalisms in the Middle East.

The present work deals principally with the relationship between modern Islamic thought and nationalism, focusing particularly on certain trends in Islamic religious thought in the late Ottoman world. I shall concentrate on the reciprocal influence between nationalism and modern Islamic thought primarily by tracking their manifest reciprocities in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Kurdish and Turkish histories. I aim to demonstrate the malleability of religious interpretation that allows for the smooth ingression of nationalist discourses in religious thought and vice versa.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nationalist discourse was incorporated into newer interpretations of Islam, of which there were prominent examples in the Ottoman context. Various interpretations that

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were put forth by major Islamic religious leaders illustrate a new reality.[3] The present work attends to differences between the interpretation of Islam in the core areas of the Ottoman Empire and the understandings of Islam adopted by those living in the periphery. Different communities often linked their interpretations of "authentic" Islam to claims of "ethnic superiority." Islam became intimately intertwined with nationalism during this crucial period. However, the connection between the two appears in different forms and modes. In the late nineteenth century, the Ottoman state attempted to dictate what constituted "correct" and desirable Islam and became increasingly skeptical of peripheral Islam(s). Conversely, Muslim communities in the periphery viewed the state and centralist tendencies as degenerative and morally lax. The case of Sheikh Ubeydullah, which I will discuss in Chap. 6, exemplifies this trend. The propagation of state-sanctioned Islam became increasingly tied to official nationalist practices and policies, which were contested and resisted by dominated ethnic communities.

To explain Ottoman state vision and policies, I employ both newspaper articles from Istanbul journals and a wide variety of Ottoman and British archival materials alongside primary materials in Arabic, Persian, and Kurdish. I aim to demonstrate the systematic effort by the state to Turkify education and restrict the use of non-Turkish languages. In discussing the Turkification of the language of instruction during the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), I make extensive use of Ottoman state records and journals to emphasize that the state had no qualms about privileging Turkish and restricting other languages.

As noted at the outset, generally scholarship on Ottoman history has questioned the possibility of the existence of Muslim nationalism prior to WWI. I will later (in Chap. 4) briefly attend to the problematic nature of those approaches to nationalism in the Empire. Though some scholars do see Hamidian rule as a catalyst for the rise of nationalism, I will go a step farther and argue that belief in the latency of Turkish nationalism reflects the influence of Orientalist scholarship and of the later Kemalist/Republican historiography. Comparing the literature produced by the pre-Republican nationalists with that of the later Kemalist/Republican nationalists clearly sheds light on discrepancies in the Turkish nationalist reading of the pre-1912 Ottoman past. Additionally, a more rigorous scrutiny of the state records and Ottoman journals problematizes the common conception of Ottoman Turkish nationalism as latent.

Furthermore, the Ottoman state's discourse on Islamic identity, unity, or the caliphate should not be taken at face value, nor should it be viewed

as an inclusionary Islamic discourse. First, there is an important inconsistency in the ways in which the Ottoman state and elite—beginning with the Hamidian regime—emphasized both Islamic identity and unity. Second, such concepts have been historically interpreted in a variety of ways. The employment of common signifiers does not necessarily nullify their particular or exclusive signification, and they could be misleading if treated as timeless and isolated from their sociohistorical context. Therefore, it is essential to put the Ottoman Caliphate in its historical context to see how it was perceived by non-Turkish Muslims. It is thus not a contradiction to assert that the upswing of official Ottoman nationalism and the Hamidian state's renewed claim to the caliphate were concurrent. In fact, it was in the Hamidian era that Ottoman official nationalism significantly began to occupy cultural, bureaucratic, and educational space.

The Ottoman state records show a drastic change in the state's education and linguistic policy after Abdülhamid II's accession to power in 1876. Ottoman archival documents attest to the fact that local government officials allowed for some leeway in mandating Turkish-language education in the pre-Hamidian era. However, not long after coming to power, Sultan Abdülhamid made Turkish education mandatory throughout the Empire. This reflected both centralization and a growing Turkish nationalism. The result was a shrinking of space for the cultural and literary production of non-Turkish Muslim groups such as Albanians, Arabs, and Kurds. The state's language-based Turkification policies went hand in hand with its disdainful attitude toward peripheral or non-Turkish Islam. Such attitudes toward the peripheral region were reproduced and reflected in contemporary Ottoman works by the elite, who saw it as their mission to modernize Islam and to civilize the periphery. Their suspicions were more rooted in civilizational discourse rather than sectarian differences, as was pointedly illustrated by their discussions in Ottoman press.

It becomes evident that the Ottoman elite's effort to differentiate themselves from other Muslims was informed by their nationalism and ethnic self-perception—as the only ethnic group capable of modernizing "the rest." The literature of the time evidences their self-glorification as the vanguards of change in the Muslim world. The Ottoman elite's view of the ethnic Other became manifestly scornful as they increasingly saw themselves burdened with the mission of civilizing the rest. In the mind of the elite, the traditional *Sunni-Shi'i* divide would increasingly lose its significance. They thus adopted ethnic belonging and an affinity to "civilization" to underscore their uniqueness. The rationale given by certain

Ottoman intellectuals for opposing Iranian participation in a possible Islamic unity exemplifies this trend. The disqualification was not based on a rejection of the legitimacy of *Shi'i* beliefs. Rather, it was because of Iranian "uncivilized-ness" and their *hatred for the Turks*.[4] Such attitudes toward the Other were plainly displayed in literary works by iconic figures such as Ahmad Midhat and Şems ad-Din Sami. Ahmad Midhat, for instance, insisted that Turks possessed a greater Islamic zeal than Arabs. In his journal, *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, Midhat went so far as to claim that the Qur'an itself was not an Arabic text but instead was the language of God. This reflected a transformation of the idiom of Turkish nationalism whereby Turkish Islam was to be decoupled from Arabic, supposedly a "backward Semitic language."

Şems ad-Din Sami, the famous playwright, lexicographer, and litterateur, went even further, claiming that in comparison to other ethnic communities, Arab contributions to Islam were all too negative. In 1870s, Namik Kemal had characterized the role of Arabs, in their contributions to contemporary Islamic thought, as nothing more than their following of their Turkish brethren. Compared to Namik Kemal's remarks, in the previous decade, views expressed by intellectuals such as Sami and Midhat represented a rapid shift in the Ottoman elite's perceptions of peripheral communities. This occurrence signified the rise of cultural and official Ottoman nationalism and the Ottoman elite's attitudes toward the peripheral rest and their eagerness to dictate who was a civilized Muslim.

Numerous non-Turkish writers and thinkers also laid out their own criteria for being a true Muslim. In fact, it is only in the context of the rise of rival Muslim nationalisms that one can make sense of the nationalist utterances by Arab revivalists such as Muhammad 'Abdu and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi. It is against this background that al-Kawakibi asserts that unlike that of the other Muslim communities, the blood of the Arabs of the Peninsula remains pure and unmixed and they are therefore uniquely well suited for the leadership of the Muslim world.[5] Such emphasis on one's purity of blood, a tacit claim to the existence of real Quraishis—supposedly the rightful owners of the caliphate—signifies the rise and pervasiveness of ethno-nationalistic politics among Muslims.

It becomes clear that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nationalist discourse smoothly made its way into newer Islamic interpretations. As Ussama Makdisi rightly notes, the Ottoman elite seem to have been the pioneers of "derivative nationalism" (as defined by Chatterjee) in the Muslim Middle East.[6] (It is a type of nationalism

which, despite its modern characteristics, refuses a complete emulation of the West. Rather, it insists on the concurrent preservation and reappropriation of native culture.)[7] However, the derivative nationalism of the Ottomans did not necessarily produce Muslim unity (just as European nationalisms did not produce Christian unity). Native or, more precisely, national culture did not seem to have included that of the non-Turks. Rather, Islamic interpretations became increasingly exclusionary. That is why Ottoman Muslim modernizers such as Hamdi Bey believed that their task was "to save Ottoman heritage not just *from the West* but also from the *Oriental peoples of the Ottoman Empire*."[8]

With the progression of time, such nationalistic approaches similarly influenced the non-Turkish communities' interpretations of Islam. Some scattered texts produced by Kurdish elites and intellectuals, found in the late nineteenth-century Ottoman journals, reveal the existence of similar nationalistic tendencies.[9] The attempt to "narrate" a nation that "is endowed with a past,"[10] became the immediate concern of many Muslim figures. Kurdish intellectuals strove to introduce a "civilized Muslim Kurdish nation" with a distinct history almost completely detached from that of other Muslims.

For many Muslim religious figures, whose main function was to lead communal religious affairs, it had become fashionable to use nationalistic language and casually redraw Islamic boundaries along ethno-nationalistic bonds. Under the increasing influence of nationalism, such figures' interpretations of Islam hardly sounded inclusive. Consequently, some prominent Muslim figures, as discussed below, would allude to their own differential ethnic characteristics rather than emphasizing "non-dissolvable Islamic links." Nowhere was this clearer than in the poetic oeuvre of the Kurdish Naqshbandi Sheikh Ubeydullah (written during 1878 and 1880).

The Sheikh's portrayal of the two communities—the Turks and the Kurds—as two distinct and rival groups is undeniable. In his poetic work and sporadic letters the "us" versus "them" dichotomy is defined in both Islamic and ethno-nationalistic terms. This type of religious thinking, revealing a Muslim ethno-nationalistic consciousness, was prevalent. The most renowned Kurdish religious scholars like Bediüzzaman Said Kurdi (or Nursi) saw the religiosity of the center as suspicious, contaminated, and inauthentic.[11] Contrasting it with the Islam in Istanbul, Bediüzzaman deemed Kurdish Islam as pure and authentic as "the clean air of the high mountains of Kurdistan." As will be shown, generally these religious figures' understanding of Islam contained claims to cultural superiority. Thus,

the "in-group's" Islam and religious devotion is the most celebrated, while that of the "out-group" is strongly questioned. It is against this background that Sheikh Ubeydullah attributes the Kurds' "superior qualities" (religious and otherwise) to their "noble ethnic origin." This condition illustrates the fusion of religious with ethno-national consciousness, which is idealized by Bediüzzaman Nursi when he asserts that whomsoever can be said to embody nationalist consciousness "mirrors (*ma'kas*) her/his own nation."[12]

I subscribe to modernist views about nationalism. Nationalism, in the present work, is understood as various attempts by which modern communities ground the legitimacy of their claim to self-rule and statehood in their very own self-perception and self-description.[13] Ethnicity, identity, and glorified national pasts are reinterpreted and reconstituted. It is through such reinterpretive processes that nationalist agents also attempt to reform and reappropriate religions. Nationalism here is thus understood as the collective religious, cultural, and linguistic attempts and processes through which communities legitimize their claims to self-determination and sovereignty.

In my study, the nation is not considered either primordial or an essential continuity of the pre-modern "ethnie." Instead, it is modern communities' struggle to legitimate their demands for self-rule by way of communal self-differentiation. Such differentiations are understood as the foundation of modern nationalism. Ethno-symbolism, as defended and expanded by theorists such as Anthony Smith and John Hutchinson, espouses some important elements in modernist thought.[14] Smith's argument concerning "*ethnie*," in which both religious and secular intelligentsia take up the project of legitimizing their claims for nationhood is in some ways useful for the present work. Smith argues that there exist two types of *ethnie*. The first is based on the myth of origin utilized by elites who advocate for a more centralized state. The second sort of *ethnie* might usefully be described as both "vertical" and "demotic" and is generated in "popular" opposition to an oppressive state.[15] The strength of Smith's argument is the emphasis he places on critical roles played by both religious and secular intelligentsia in nationalist movements.[16] It is the second type of *ethnie* that may be used in some ways to explore the connection between nationalism and religion, especially in the Kurdish case. Hutchinson also offers similar insights on how nationalists filter the past into the present. If Hutchison's reading is followed, the distinctions between nationalist and revivalist Muslim becomes much fuzzier, especially when he declares that

> revivalism faces both ways, recognising that "tradition" must be reconstituted– not destroyed – as the basis of political action and, at the same time, that societies must innovate. In this way nationalists effect change by mediating between the constituent identities of populations rather than by enforcing a vision from above. Moreover, although nationalists are able to achieve political hegemony and establish their own collective myths of legitimacy, they do so on an already layered past, which retains its potentiality for later reactivation.[17]

The ethno-symbolist theorists assign a vital importance to the role of the past and its continuity, claiming that the era of modern nationalism would not be possible without it. Therefore, Smith argues that no nation existing today could be without their "navel" in the past.[18] However, the ethno-symbolism approach is fundamentally problematic. Zubrzycki rightly notes "that there is no necessary continuity between *ethnies* and modern nations, although – and this is key – such continuity is retrospectively constructed and reinforced in nationalist discourse and narratives."[19]

The embedded supposition of the continuity of the nation makes the ethno-symbolism approach seriously flawed. This is the case since the modern form of conceptualizing the nation has no precedent in pre-modern eras. It is true that nationalism generally invokes ethnicity and the past. Nationalists claim that the nation is essentially perennial, defending a never-disrupted continuity of the nation. Nonetheless, such invocations are more a reconstruction and reappropriation of the past necessitated by the present nationalist discourse.[20] In Gellner's words, "nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and most often transforms them radically."[21] Before the age of nationalism, ethnicity, and religion have hardly been used as the bases for the legitimacy of what Anderson terms as "imagined communities."[22] The community's self-perception and imagination as one endowed with the collective right to statehood is modern. In the modern era, at least theoretically, certain collective distinctions are perceived as merely self-evident. This inherent and self-sufficient quality is assumed to engender inalienable political rights. In pre-modern eras, different communities may have regularly differentiated themselves from their Others. Such differences may have also constituted the basis of their claims to cultural or religious superiority. However, this type of collective self-referentiality could not turn into an ideological pursuit to make "the political and the national… congruent."[23]

It must also be noted that this study particularly benefits from a synthesized interpretation of works by Partha Chatterjee and Michael Billig. I have liberally employed concepts such as "derivativeness" and "the paradigmatic nature" of nationalism, since I became convinced that these concepts could offer theoretical bases for situating a possible nexus between religion and nationalism within sociohistorical contexts.[24]

When Billig defines national identity as "an identity [that] is to be found in the embodied habits of social life" and as "habits [that] include those of thinking and using language,"[25] "religion," whatever its definition, cannot be excluded from this ascription. Religion too can be considered as part and parcel of "the habits of social life." Religious identity can also function as one of the "forgotten reminders" of difference—*it is a reminder of difference*. If, in a community, the division between "us" versus "them" originates from religious difference with another, such a difference can constitute the distinguishing characteristic of those communities. Moreover, if such premises have any basis in reality, then it is sound to infer that (a) any religious utterance for demanding certain national rights is nationalistic, and by the same token can be located within the modern nationalist paradigm; and likewise, (b) whatever other identities an agent may possess (that is, religious or otherwise), such identities do not hinder the declaration of her/his "own" national identity. They will rather accommodate and become harmonious with other identities. This can be the case at both the individual as well as the collective level. Therefore, if a nationalist is religious, s/he may also attempt to either justify his/her nationalism religiously or to diminish her/his religious identity. Such an attempt does not have to be out of bad faith, to use Sartre's phrasing,[26] since nationalist paradigm, like any other paradigms, could very well be invisible to the agent living or operating within its domains. What Billig identifies as "banal nationalism" signifies the pervasiveness and the unthought aspect of nationalism, such that one "always seems to locate nationalism on the periphery."[27] This, in turn, illustrates the non-reflective aspects of the nationalist's thoughts due to the impact of the prevailing paradigm.

Of course, nationalist beliefs are not always held without self-reflection. Nationalism seems to remain effective in rendering the nation-state inevitable or even natural, which makes it something that is "taken for granted." For a religious/nationalist agent, this juncture can become reality, at least in two instances. In the first, "religion" becomes the major marker of identity, and a religious community demands its own sovereignty to delink

itself from its Other—religious or otherwise. This may be derived from a lack of common religion or from ethnic and linguistic differences. In recent history, the Irish and the Croats have striven for sovereign states, which exemplify this first case. In the second case, a religious agent may downplay her/his common religious bond by calling into question the correctness of the ethnic Other's religious views to justify her/his self-differentiation, despite the commonality of religious bonds. Furthermore, individuals may decide not to forsake their own religious faith, but may blur common religious bonds with their coreligionists, simply by highlighting other markers of their own identity. The Kurdish pursuit of a state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries falls into this second category.

Like that of Billig's, Chatterjee's works also offer ways of shedding light on the intersections of religion and nationalism. While the role of religion in nationalist discourse is not Chatterjee's main focus, he still explains how religion comes to affect the anti-colonial nationalist imagination of the nation. In his criticism of Anderson's claim that nationalism is a type of universalist "modular form" originating from Europe, Chatterjee argues that anti-colonial nationalism(s) "are posited not on an identity but on a difference with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West."[28] In Chatterjee's view, it is a misconception to see anti-colonial nationalism as mimicry of the nationalism in the West. Such a misconception, he tells us, stems from the fact that nationalism is merely reduced to a political movement.[29] It is the cultural self-reliance and rejection of the colonial spiritual culture that is the ground for anti-colonial and nationalist self-differentiation. Anti-colonial nationalism acknowledges Western material superiority—of the economy, statecraft, and science and technology—and yet it insists on preserving "the distinctness of one's spiritual culture."[30]

Like Billig, Chatterjee holds that the nation can be imagined in a variety of ways. He considers the "inner domain of national culture" to be the locus of the national imagination's birth, which takes place as a result of profound transformations within that domain. For Chatterjee, the inner domain of national culture is where the nationalist agent's creativity brings forth a project of historical significance. Such creativity unfolds when nationalists attempt "to fashion a 'modern' national culture that is nevertheless not Western."[31] Fashioning a "modern" national culture unveil the existence of myriad possibilities, rather than an historical inevitability. Whatever the scope of cultural transformation may be, is it possible to

think that it results in a complete removal of religion(s) and religiosity? If "religion" is expurgated from national culture, what does the existence of a religious minority and majority entail? What happens to a religion which provides a significant resource—perhaps along with other resources—for the "inner domain of the nationalist culture"? Is religion transformed like other components of a culture? Is it simply excluded with no resistance or no impact on national unity? How much does "religion," itself being part and parcel of the sociocultural, influence nationalist discourse? If it does, to what extent does religion contribute to the multiplicity of the "modern"? How do religious adherences affect the politico-juridical standing of citizens under the secular nation-state?[32] If the womb of the old national culture is capable of delivering many children (or forms of imagination), is the birth of a religious one impossible? The above questions are posed in light of Chatterjee's major insight. By illustrating how reinterpretations of the past shape the nationalist discourse, the role of "religion" becomes clear, as a factor within the ensuing power distributions and the structures of the nation.

There is broad agreement over the importance of the past and its reinterpretation for the nationalist project among theorists of nationalism—a past in which "religion" is present and alive.[33] If religion had an impact in shaping the nation's past, its role in informing the nation's present cannot be overlooked. There is a broad consensus among the theorists of nationalism on the fact that the cultural past significantly affects the present nationalist discourse. For instance, Homi Bhabha's "narrated nation" is, in a sense, a presently celebrated past in the making. In Bhabha's reading, the nation is both fictional and real. It is *fictional* since it did not exist as it is being narrated, and it is a *reality* since it is being narrated, functioning, and currently affecting our lives. The narrated nation is not what it was but what it is supposed to be. This type of narration resembles Chatterjee's notion of "classization," by which, as mentioned earlier, he means a form of "imagining of the nation [that is] endowed with a past." In this way, in an effort to serve current objectives, nationalist agent utilizes the past in order to filter it into the present. A past that many modernist scholars use to assume to be merely "the universe of *homo religiosus.*"[34]

The above approaches provide some important theoretical tools for making sense of the role religions play in nationalist struggles—anti-colonial and otherwise. It is important to (re)emphasize that religion is a component of national culture, and a resource to be utilized. It creates clearer boundaries between communities, especially in cases where the

religious beliefs of the Other differ from those of the nationalists. Religion can be reinterpreted to become a differential factor. It can be salient or neutral. It can also give an edge to the nationalist struggle or can be used to neutralize such struggles. This has been true in the case of Muslim relationships with Britain in the early decades of the twentieth century. The emphasis here is on the interpretability and presence of religions in nationalist movements. It is the openness and potential for reinterpretation of religions that create the means for nationalism to freely and effortlessly make its way into religious thought. Religious reforms, whether undertaken by state or non-state agents, are the results of religious reinterpretations and reflect religious adaptation to newer cultural and political environments. Reinterpretations—scale and degree notwithstanding—are also continual. Thus, if religious reinterpretations take place within the nationalist paradigm, they must carry their birthmark. As such, nationalism as the context of religious interpretations and reforms forces religious thought to ameliorate or to make it compatible with nationalist thinking.

The persistence of the influence of religion does not just serve as a component of national cultural baggage inherited from the past. It rather shapes nationalist discourse through the composition of the national elite, their degree of religiosity, and their adherence to the religions of majority or minority groups. Even if the nationalist state strives to appear neutral to the religious composition of the nation, religion finds various vantage points for reappearance as national culture goes through transformations. The state, for its creation, requires hegemony and consent, and for this consent to become a reality, the nationalist elite will have to consider communal desire in its reform agenda. And this points to the limitations of the national state in excluding religion. Even the colonial state has recognized such limits to its power. Therefore, it has to make exceptions to its "universalist" claims, which in turn provide the ground for the possibility of "new forms of the modern state."[35] This is how the nation—both as a community and as a state—can be imagined in various and fragmentary forms.

Additionally, laws written, proposed, enacted, and interpreted by human beings with their own individuated religious beliefs may provide the opportunity for privatized and marginalized religion to exert its force on the greater population in the guise of secular law. This is not to say that, in Asad's words, "religious discourse in the political arena is seen as a disguise for political power."[36] The two cannot be effectively separated, not only because the modern secular state was built on the framework of

religious power and law but also because institutional discourse cannot be separated from the individuals on whom it exerts its power.

In reading Chatterjee's works, one can discern that religion or religions have been filtered into Indian nationalist discourse on two levels. According to Chatterjee, the Indian nationalists initially tried to downplay their religious differences in the face of colonial presence. As such, they attempted to (re)define the national (or "our" religions) by including Islam in the mix, as opposed to the religion of the colonial power.[37] However, in the second phase, as colonial power became physically absent, local religious differences once again resurfaced.[38] This politico-religious configuration inspires Chatterjee, contra Anderson, to claim that the nation can go through an existentially "heterogeneous time."[39] Similarly, Peter van der Veer contends that "Except for those of the Marxist left, Indian dreams of the nation always take religion as one of the main aspects of national identity."[40] He also asserts that "an important part of the political discourse of the Congress party depends on the Gandhian legacy, which stands…, in the Hindu discursive tradition. This political discourse is not secular… it imagines a common ethnic culture of India in terms of religious pluralism."[41]

Neither nationalism nor religion(s) can be studied in isolation. Religious interpretation, as a phenomenon, is just another human interpretation that is affected by its context. Despite the elements of continuity in religious thought, such contextual influences transform religious interpretation and mark it with the specificity of its more recent contexts. In some ways, the prominent Muslim Philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) acknowledges that the continuity of religious element owes its very existence to the adaptation to the newer paradigmatic requirements when he asserts that "the task before the modern Muslim is, therefore, immense. He has to rethink the whole system of Islam without completely breaking with the past."[42] Such a rethinking cannot be homogeneous and bears the mark of interaction with specific sociohistorical contexts. Hence, religious thought in the era of nationalism must be affected by its context as much as it affects the context itself. This dialectic manifests as reciprocity and mutual entanglement. In this study, I aim to show the entanglements and reciprocities of nationalism and religious thought as it played out in the Ottoman context in the following order.

In Chap. 2, I attempt to demonstrate the nexus between religious thought and nationalism. I argue that theorists of nationalism like Gellner and sociologist Liah Greenfeld are unpersuasive in their respective claims

that the emergence of nationalism reduces religions to mere cultural symbols or a private relation between "man and his creator." I also devote a large portion of the chapter to establishing that "Islamism" is unable to think in terms of a political system beyond the nation-state. As such, Islamists have internalized the idea of national political boundaries. Such internalization, in turn, affects Islamism's definition of *umma* and similar "universalistic" concepts.

In Chap. 3, I briefly address the historical debate over the concept of caliphate, demonstrating how crucial Islamic concepts such as caliphate can only be understood in relation to specific times and places. I then challenge the common assumption that Islam became a hindrance to the Muslim ethnic self-consciousness by showing how caliphate politics was closely linked to the rise of nationalism and anti-colonialism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Developing this argument further in Chap. 4, I question the idea of "the latency of Turkish nationalism." Such claims clearly ignore the Ottoman state's practice of Turkification of the language and bureaucracy and its official nationalism.

To back my theoretical discussion in Chap. 4, I devote a great portion of Chap. 5 to the textual analysis of the Ottoman state records and contemporary literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to the theories of nationalism, I make use of critical discourse analysis to carry out a detailed reconstruction of the historical context of the constitutional recognition of Turkish as the Ottoman official language. In parallel, I use these documents to argue that Ottoman Islam was both exclusionary and universalist, building on the work of scholars such as Ussama Makdisi and Selim Deringil as I said earlier, you must also definitely see Thomas Kuhn's insightful work. As the state concentrated on the Turkification of the language and the state bureaucracy, Ottoman Islam became increasingly exclusionary. When the Ottoman state employed Islam to induce needed loyalty to the center for combating colonialism and non-Turkish nationalist developments, its articulation of Islam in the periphery exhibited universalist tendencies. Therefore, the idea of Islamic unity, or pan-Islam, should be also understood in the context of the Ottoman state and the elite's dual approach to Islam.

I have devoted most of Chap. 6 to the unexplored writings of Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri (the leader of 1880 Kurdish uprising). His writings present one of the major sources for understanding the nexus between Islam and Kurdish nationalism. It is evident that Ubeydullah eagerly

sought an independent Kurdish state. The Sheikh's conception of the state, though, is rather vague. Nonetheless, like many modern Islamic revivalists, he viewed the state as the main agent for change. An approach such as his is one of the major characteristics differentiating the modern from the pre-modern and medieval forms of Islamic revivalism. In general, modern Muslim revivalist movements are engrossed with obtaining the state control. This obsession with the state signifies the degree in which Muslims have been influenced by the modern nationalist sociopolitical context. Typically, the state also had a central place in Sheikh Ubeydullah's religio-political project. The Sheikh ascribed great value to the role of the state in educating the populace. He did not view the state only as a guarantor of security and law and order. The Sheikh perceived the state as the instrument for the spread of his Kurdish-centered "true Islam." Yet, his interest in reviving and spreading his true Islam only occurred within the limited ethnic and geographic boundaries of Kurdistan. The Sheikh's emphasis on defining Islam within the ethno-national boundaries of his imagined Islamic state showcases the rise of nationalism in Muslim societies and the way it shaped Muslim political thought.

Chapters 7 and 8 showcase aspects of the debates over Caliphate among the Kurds and the Turks in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In Chap. 7, I analyze the pre-exile writings of Said Nursi, the spiritual father of modern Nur movements. His writing exemplifies the reciprocal influence of Islamic thought and nationalism. Such reciprocity becomes evident in Nursi's thought when he admitted that nationalism is a reality in the Muslim world. He even praised nationalism and perceived what he called "positive nationalism" as uplifting and a force for the refinement of human character and morality. To Nursi, this so-called positive nationalism raised the true spirit of collective bonds present among the members of the community and supplanted "the pre-national selfishness."

Chapter 8 offers a new reading of the removal of the Ottoman Caliphate. This chapter is partly devoted to Sheikh Sa'id uprising and addresses the contemporary debates over the abolishment of the caliphate within Turkey. The abolition of the caliphate for some major Turkish political figures and groups (religious or secular) was a national imperative. Secular groups such as Kemalists who favored the abolition argued that it was consistent with the teaching of Islam. Yet Turkish figures and groups on the opposing side argued that the abolition was a misguided policy, regardless of its consistency with Islamic teachings. For a Kurd like Sheikh Sa'id, the leader of the 1925 Revolt, the removal of the caliphate

was an event that unmasked the true face of the Turks in their historical "misuse of Islam" for political gains. Regardless of factual inaccuracy, such views present a paramount example of redrawing of religious boundaries in accordance with the growing ethno-nationalism. As such, the likes of Sheikh Sa'id deemed Turkish Islam as deficient and assumed that these "religious deficiencies" mirrored the character of the Turkish race.

Notes

1. See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, New York,: Oxford University Press, 1961).
2. Certainly there are a number of scholars such as Hamit Bozarslan and David Kushner who have shown instances of the existence of nationalism in the Ottoman context prior to WWI. See Hamit Bozarslan, "Kürd Milliyetçiliği Ve Kürd Hareketi (1898–2000)/Kurdish Nationalism and Kurdish Movement," in *Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora, *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınevi 2002). Also, David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism*, 1876–1908 (London; Totowa, N.J: Cass, 1977).
3. Cf. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura/The Mother of All Settlments* (Cairo: al-Azhar, 1931); Muhammad 'Abduh, *Al-Islam wa Al-Nasraniyye/Islam and Christianity* (Cairo: al-Manar, 1323/1905); Sheikh Ubeydullah Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*: *Mesnewi Şex Ubeydullah Nehri*, ed. Seyid Isalm Duagû (Urmia: Husseini 2000).
4. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat/The Interpreter of the Truth*. No: 595 (Jun 7, 1880).
5. al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura*, 196–97.
6. Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (Jun., 2002): 785.
7. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*: *A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
8. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 786. (Emphasis added).
9. Cf. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*. No: 586, (May 28, 1980).
10. I am borrowing Chatterjee's phrasing. See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*: *Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Oxford India Paperbacks (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75.
11. See Chap. 8.
12. Nursi, *İçtimaî Dersler*, 189.
13. See Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed. (London; New York: Verso, 1991); Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, New Perspectives on the Past (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1983).

14. Cf. Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009); John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987); *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2005).
15. David McCrone, *The Sociology of Nationalism*: *Tomorrow's Ancestors*, International Library of Sociology (London; New York: Routledge, 1998)15.
16. Cf. Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, Ethnonationalism in Comparative Perspective (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).
17. Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, 74.
18. For an extensive debate over this notion between Anthony Smith and Earnest Gellner, see Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, *When Is the Nation?: Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005).
19. Geneviève zubrzycki, "Religion and Nationalism; a Critical Re – Examination," in *The Sociology of Religion* ed. Bryan S. Turner (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 609.
20. Abbas Vali, *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, Kurdish Studies Series (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 1–13.
21. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 55.
22. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.
23. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.
24. Cf. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. Also, Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*: *A Derivative Discourse*.
25. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 8.
26. Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York,: Washington Square Press, 1971).
27. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 5.
28. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*: *Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 5.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 6.
31. Ibid.
32. The Turkish juridical system greatly exemplifies the influence of religious thought on nationalism. The Turkish state has historically known for the adaptation of a form of *laïcité*. Yet, the Turkish laws differentiate citizens based on their religious adherences. For instance, the concept of minority legally comes to be understood as a religious minority. The national education programs teach Islam in the state-sanctioned schools. Yet, these schools only teach *Sunni*, *Hanafi* version of Islam to which the Turkish

ethnic majority adheres. All the *Sunni Imam*s and clerics are trained and appointed by the nationalist "secular" state.

33. Cf. Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed*: *Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, Leonard Hastings Schoff Memorial Lectures (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 3–25.
34. CF. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*; *the Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1959).
35. Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*: *Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 13.
36. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*: *Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 29.
37. See Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*: *Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Chap.5.
38. See *The Politics of the Governed*: *Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, 3–25.
39. See the interesting debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi over the issue of the universal and unequal citizenship in ibid.
40. Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*: *Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 23.
41. Ibid.
42. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Batu Caves, Selangor Darul Ehsan: Masterpiece, 2006), 111–12.

PART I

Religious (Islamic) Thought, Nationalism, and the Politics of Caliphate

CHAPTER 2

Nationalism and Religious Thought

National consciousness, as a "type" of consciousness, is articulated through the use of a unique idiom that was absent in pre-national political language. Life within the nationalist paradigm imposes a modern mode of conceiving of the nation and that enables nationalist agents to employ nationalist idiom to explain their affiliation with the nation.[1] In modern religious thinking, the nation is perceived to be self-evident: Since the religious agent operates within the paradigm of nationalism, s/he is inclined to unite her/his religious idiom with that of nationalism. Therefore, the paradigm imposes its requirements on religious interpretations, and it functions as a context for rethinking religion and affects its scopes and limits.

Such paradigmatic requirements should be thought of as a major ground for the fusion of religions and nationalism. Thus, modern Muslims' eagerness to find examples of democratic forms of governing in the golden age of Islam should be seen in this context. In turn, their attempts to reconstruct the religious past may be more inclined to make the past compatible with the modern state rather than an enthusiasm for the re-introduction of "the original Islam."[2] Therefore, in modern era, in many instances neither nationalism nor religion (more specifically Islam) can be studied in isolation.

A significant body of scholarship on nationalism tends to overlook the complex and reciprocal relationship[3] between religion and nationalism—informing us that if there has been any direct relationship between the

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two, it has been ephemeral. In fact, if any connection between religion and nationalism is to be made, *it is only when religions are no longer religions.*[4] It has to be at "The point of transition [of religion] from faith to culture."[5] Major theorists of nationalism have tended to assume that modern nationalism is secular by necessity. Ernest Gellner informs us that "In the industrialized world high cultures prevail, but they need a state not a church, and they need a state each. That is one way of summing up the emergence of the nationalist age."[6] Resistance to assertions that nationalist discourses could spill into the domains of religious thought (or vice versa) stems from the belief that religion was/is unable to penetrate the confines of modern nationalism.

According to Steven Grosby, however, the relation between the two "is historically and conceptually complicated. Religion has both been integral to, and at odds with, the formation and continuation of nations. An understanding of this relation requires a determination of how it varies from one religion to another, thereby entailing a comparative analysis."[7] In many nationalist movements, some sort of religious influence or presence is palpable, yet the functions and the role of religion or religious interpretation in shaping nationalist discourse (or vice versa) seldom becomes the focus of scholarly investigations of nationalist movements. This is partly because of the prevalence of some type of teleological approach to the emergence of nationalism that is usually viewed as an "order creating system" that replaced or supplanted religion from the public space. In such approaches to religion, the presence of nationalism is generally equated with the absence of religion, and in many instances, such an "absenting" of religion derives from a definition of religion that removes it from sociohistorical contexts. If some scholars, such as Talal Asad and Katherine Ewing, have questioned "transhistorical" and "translocal" definitions of religion,[8] the dominant trend in nationalism studies relies on static conceptions of religion and defines nationalism as being entirely bereft of religiosity. In the words of Clifford Geertz, "the religious perspective…is everywhere the same."[9] Thus, the dominant (and separate) approaches to the study of religion(s) and nationalism make an examination of the reciprocal influences of nationalism and religion an elusive one. As Asad, in his criticism of Geertz, has shown us, at the core of the dominant modern conceptualization of religion lies "privatized" Christianity.[10]

This being said, an examination of the existing literature on religion and on nationalism suggests that the ways in which modern Christianity has come to be understood affects the conceptualization of the relationship

between religion and nationalism. Scholarship positing secularism's Western, Christian origins, for example, implies that nationalism (like secularism) erupted from the salvational bosom of a dying (or already dead) Christianity.[11] Furthermore, the "nationalist ethos" is linked directly to Protestantism.[12] At the same time, the "academic study of religion has drawn heavily on the Western traditions of scholarship. This tradition has been influenced by the post-Enlightenment separation between church and state."[13] Ostensibly, the modern understanding of Western Christianity informs the general conception of religion, wherein religion is understood as a timeless phenomenon with no cultural context. Within the academy, this translated into the influential nineteenth- and twentieth-century discipline of comparative religion, wherein religiosity was seen as wholly "other," while personal religious experience constituted "the essence of 'religion' and the common core of the world's 'religions.'"[14] Such approaches to the study of religion(s) increasingly "privileged what was supposedly the higher mystical essence of the religion in question over and above the exoteric tradition."[15] However, this hierarchy is beginning to teeter, with recent scholarship's questioning of the unitary and universalist understanding of religion(s).

This emergent body of critical scholarship locates the genesis of previous literature within the context of European identity formation,[16] where the effort to define religion with universalistic traits is understood as manifesting a European self-perception "as a prototype of unity amidst plurality, Europe as a marker for the subject position of universal history."[17] And the idea of religion that emerges from this European sense of self is marked (perhaps indelibly) by Christianity. As Gil Anidjar puts it, Christianity granted this name to others, "the name [that] it had only ever attributed to itself, the very name of 'religion.'"[18]

In addition to its Eurocentric origin, the concept of religion is exclusionary and epistemically disruptive, such that the application of the term in studies of non-European religions has had a long-lasting impact on how they came to be understood. As Chin Hong Chung argues, the introduction of the term has resulted in a cognitive disruption in the study of non-European religions, and with the straitjacket of "religion" in place, one can refer to "religion-before religion and religion-after religion."[19]

In the twentieth century, celebrated Western scholars of religion—such as Mircea Eliade and Huston Smith—defined "religion" as possessing an immutable essence. In many instances, it was asserted that the universe of religious people remains static, with oral traditions being given the

attribute of immutability. Religions were conceived as existing along a continuum, with "advanced" religions with sacred texts being contrasted with religions devoid of scriptures, and being considered to be closer to nature—that is, they were more attuned to natural religion.

Speaking to this effect, Smith contends that if his "God does not evolve, neither, it seems, does *homo religiosus*, not in any important respect."[20] In more recent scholarship on religion, such hierarchical views are being reversed. It is now argued that the traditional hermeneutic, with its fixation on unchanging texts, is flawed. The major inadequacy of standard hermeneutics, argues Sylvia Marcos, derives from its fixed views and its inability to capture the constant change in "oral traditions."[21] The "methods used for systematizing religions rooted in the sacred' and other texts will lead to distortions and misinterpretations,"[22] since "oral traditions are essentially fluid, flexible and malleable."[23]

Eurocentric Context of the Study of Nationalism

It is not an overstatement to say that the modern understanding of religion—vis-à-vis Christianity, as described above—has fundamentally affected studies of nationalism. Greenfeld's assertion "that the nature of nationalism is never determined by the religious context in which it may grow"[24] is a pertinent illustration, as she essentially characterizes religion as mere "exigencies of salvation and the responsibility [of man] before his Creator that each man must meet alone."[25] Beyond that, we are told, all "the tensions in men's social relations, which agitate peculiarly social passions and anxieties – status-anxiety, the concern for dignity, recognition, and one's place among others – all that, in short, [is what] religion dismisses as vanity."[26] Such remarks, perhaps unintentionally, deny the possibility of multiple interpretations of the Christian Bible or of the idea of salvation. Further, religion becomes utterly ineffective and irrelevant to modern life, if the social "secular consciousness" is considered as the only determining factor in human relations. The assumed universality of religion and its immutable essence relegates it to a place *outside of modern daily life*. And it does this because of the assumption that the emergence of *homo nationalis*[27] signifies the disappearance of religious since nationalism, Greenfeld claims, is "the framework of the modern social consciousness,"[28] or, in Taylor's words, it is a product of "a purely secular time"[29]—whatever that might mean. Religion is thus understood as a phenomenon that contains, attracts, and includes only itself within itself,

and is necessarily devoid of any element of nationalist thought, as it would contaminate it.

If "religion" takes the form of nationalist expression, some prominent theorists tell us that it is no longer "religion"—it loses its essence. Gellner, for instance, claims that in the age of nationalism religion fades into culture, which he claims to be "undefinable."[30] However, Gellner's apparent refusal to define culture should not be interpreted as his belief in the further continuity of religion in a different form. He informs us that nationalists want "a state not a church." Additionally, Gellner lacks consistency in his refusal. For instance, he refers to culture as a "language"—albeit "provisionally"[31]—as a "shared system of communication and norms." Also, he considers culture as the distinguishing characteristic of the nation, when he stresses that "Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture." So, the compelling question is, if we ignore religion, what is it exactly that differentiates Irish nationalist Protestants from Catholics or Croats from Serbs?[32]

Greenfeld contends that those who invoke religion within the confines of their nationalist discourse are ignorant to the otherworldly nature of "true religion." It is for this reason that she claims that "Most religious nationalisms are ethnic nationalisms" and they "are more often than not predicated on the essential worldliness of this complex of sentiments[of the fusion of nationalism and religion], *expressed most tellingly in the inattention to*, *even ignorance*, *and disregard of basic religious* (*transcendental*) *principles.*"[33] And so, yet again, religion is presented as being an ahistorical phenomenon that is uniform in its functionality—even though, to point to another seemingly obvious fact, religions have served, and continue to serve, all sorts of functions.

Among such functions, religions have provided the *conditions* of difference. It is thus a considerable generalization to assert, as John Coakley does, that "Unlike nationalism, the great religions are universalistic and transethnic."[34] Such a reading decontextualizes religious meanings and religious interpretations. Greenfeld is correct in claiming that injustice, humiliation, and discrimination are the immediate causes for the saliency of religious identities and for self-differentiation from a religious or ethnic Other. Nonetheless, this indicates that religions are susceptible to different readings in different contexts and become entangled in or influenced by newer sociopolitical context, which necessities newer reading or reinterpretations. That is why that to assume religion is limited to the exigency of the relation between individual human being and God is problematic

and this in and of itself is only one kind of modern interpretation of religion. In a similar vein, as René Rémond notes, “For a people who have been conquered, oppressed, subjected to foreign domination, especially if their faith is different from that of their oppressor, religion ensures the preservation of their personality and encourages awareness of their identity.”[35] From a slightly different angle, but still within the domain of “difference,” religious differences can also be a significant factor for collective conversions *to* or rejections *of* emerging religious beliefs. For, the very claim to absolute “truth,” which is not uncommon in religious discourses, provides sufficient ground for engendering difference.

To characterize modern consciousness or “imagination” as secular in its essence is to be as *fundamentalist* as it is to be essentialist—as such a characterization is to foreground a perspective and a history of a certain (Christian) religion that cannot be universalized. Moreover, such a take on religion–secularism itself a particular interpretation of religion, represents a categorical denial of the existence of more than one type of modern interpretation of religion.

In her reading of the pre-modern world, Greenfeld—who understands religion according to a particular religious prism—claims that, since religion was the only framework of social consciousness in medieval Europe, language never became a condition for difference.[36] However, it must be pointed out that the absence of a “linguistic identity” does not *prove* that religion was the only framework of social consciousness.[37] The seemingly apolitical approach to language in Medieval Europe could, quite conceivably, have been related to the ways in which language was regarded, rather than religion. Thus, we should not presume that blood ties or ethnicity had no impact on socio-political relations in Medieval Europe. Muslims, for instance, in a short period of time after the Prophet Muhammad’s death, became involved in one of the longest disputes between Arabs and non-Arabs in Muslim history. In these intra-Muslim contestations, in-group claims to ethnic and language superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs (or vice versa), were reflected even in the supposedly sacrosanct realms of Islamic jurisprudence and *hadith* literature (sayings attributed to the Prophet).[38]

Religions, either in their fusion with the general culture or in their existence as mere “sacred texts,” have never produced a universally uniform interpretation. Therefore, even if by religions only meant canonical religious texts, they would nevertheless *continually affect* and *be affected by* their context. That is why the decision to ignore a possible (and continual) reciprocal impact between religion and nationalism cannot be tenable.

Like nationalism, religions are understood and adopted by living agents who are in constant interaction with their sociopolitical environment.

Similar to ethnicity and nationalism, "religion can [and must] be understood as a mode of social organization, a way of framing, channeling, and organizing social relations."[39] It is perhaps for this reason that, in spite of her ardent declaration that "the nature of a nationalism is never determined by the religious context," Greenfeld admits that nationalism is "often affected by [the religious] context to an extent, it is ultimately defined by the constraints of the immediate situations faced *by the social groups actively involved in the formation of the national consciousness.*"[40] And it is with this *ultimately definitive* aspect of nationalism that we must agree—for it always already includes religion.

Secularization, Religion, and Nationalism

"The sacred" is not synonymous with "religion,"[41] nor is nationalism simply encapsulated within "the profane." Any thesis which requires a stark distinction between the sacred and the profane is unable to account for the complex relation between nationalism and religion. The assertion that the profane and sacred are mutually exclusive is the root of the problem, and one that gives rise to paradoxes. For instance, Greenfeld, a theorist who engages in this distinction, exemplifies such unresolvable paradoxes. She states that "Nationalism is an essentially secular form of consciousness, one that, indeed, sacralizes the secular."[42] As indicated above, Greenfeld concedes that as a result of religious agents' participation in the nationalist enterprise, religion to some extent influences nationalism. In turn, one is propelled to ask whether the religious agent loses her/his religious consciousness as s/he attains nationalist consciousness. Greenfeld asserts that nationalism, as a secular consciousness, is able to sacralize the secular. These remarks are worthy of attention for two reasons: First, despite the assumed immobility and clarity of the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, nationalism (read "the secular" here) is still endowed with a "religious" or sacred power—that is, it has the ability to sacralize. In her words, nationalism makes "the sacred emanate from the mundane."[43] If this is the case, it shows "how nationalism can take on the mantle of religion even in the most consciously modern of nation-states."[44] Thus, it validates a contention that considers nationalism a modern religion or an "iconography pervading the public and private sphere"[45] (notwithstanding such views' inherent inadequacies and contradictions). Basically, the

implication is that nationalism "is a religion – if not indeed the religion – of modern times."[46]

Second, staying with Greenfeld's remarks that nationalism sacralizes the secular: At least in one type of post-Enlightenment perspective religion is perceived as nothing more than the beliefs and practices that revolve around the sacred. In the words of Durkheim, religion is "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to *sacred things*,[47] that is to say, things set apart and forbidden."[48] Durkheim expands his definition by describing religion as "beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."[49] Thus, to define religion as "a unified system of beliefs" that sets apart sacred things could just as easily be applied to nationalism. The nation could also be a "sacred" thing that is set apart; for, in keeping with Durkheim's definition of "religion," the nation contains bonds that unite a community. The protection of the nation, as the source of values, engenders rituals and prohibitions through, what Billig calls, the daily flagging. This daily flagging or "narration" that takes place banally recreates the nation daily. In this way, its transcendental aspect is reasserted and becomes symbolic. And the nation's "origin" is linked to its goal: statehood and its continuity.

A national community may also be considered a moral community. It can be so because it imposes all types of "shalls" and "shall nots" on those who become affiliated under its banner. When an American calls an act "un-American," the act is considered unpatriotic and in turn unethical. A patriot is expected and obliged to act otherwise. An un-American act is not necessarily illegal, but it is certainly immoral from the American nationalist perspective. Like other ethical obligations, nationalist or patriotic obligations appear to supersede the law and juridical boundaries. Nationalist obligations connote sacrifice and selflessness when the laws fall short, that is held to be based on a social contract. Of course, this would be all there is to the nation, even if we ignore Hegel when he asserts that "the state rests on the ethical sentiment, and that on the religious."[50]

However, despite its wide acceptance, Durkheim's definition of religion remains rather vague. It is unable to separate any other sets of beliefs that sacralize things from the "generic religion." It is also unable to define what is sacred, since there exists no universal understanding of the sacred. Based on Durkheim's definition of religion, nationalism that "sacralizes the secular" or "any set of beliefs that focuses on the [arbitrarily designated] sacred, is a religion."[51] Such a definition cannot distinguish *homo nationalis* from *homo religiosus*, which, supposedly, "always believes that

there is…the sacred, which transcends this world but manifests itself in this world, thereby sanctifying it and making it real."[52] Not to mention the embedded assumption that "the secular" is self-evident, as whatever is non-religious.

It must be emphasized that religious views regarding the forbidden or the permissible are in constant flux. Even smaller religious denominations within the larger sets of religions are unable to keep their boundaries intact. The conception of the sacred is similarly time bound and contextual. What is sacred at one point in history could be profane in another. What might be sacred for one denomination could be profane for another. "The sacred is simply what is *deemed* sacred by any group"[53] For Twelver *Shi'i* Muslims, the tombs of their Imams are among the holiest sites of Islam. *Salafi* Muslims, however, view the same sites as manifestly "idols," the embodiment of the utmost profanity and the *only* unforgivable sin.[54] Thus, the scopes and limits of secular objects and subjects are open to interpretation. Within these interpretations, there are constant shrinkages and expansions. Some religious interpretations might not leave any room for distinctions between the two. For instance, a Muslim could claim that "In Islam the *spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains*, and *the nature of an act*, *however secular in its import*, is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it."[55] Hence, it is one's "attitude of mind" or the intent of the agent that determines what may be considered sacred or secular.

At the same time, there is no reason to believe that every religion will subscribe to the sacred–profane binary. Sacred and profane binaries occur in marked variability, but they can also be entirely absent. For instance, in the case of pantheism the entire universe is considered to be synonymous with "God" or the "Supreme Principle." Hence, no distinctions between the sacred and profane occur. In fact, the arbitrariness or the indeterminability of the secular and the sacred divide seems scandalously obvious. The sacred and the profane (or the secular) can be one and the same. The "soul" itself exemplifies one instance of an indiscriminable coexistence of the sacred and the profane in a religious text, such as the Qur'an. It has been described as follows: "The soul and Him who created it. And its inspirations to its evil and its good."[56]

For some Buddhists, "religion doesn't require God."[57] Thus, if the "absence of a personal Creator-God is atheism, Buddhism is atheistic."[58] For a religious person, whose religion lacks God, the conception of the sacred is in no way commensurable with that of one who believes religion

is essentially an otherworldly enterprise. This concern is quite prevalent in Confucianism. "Whenever he was questioned about other-worldly matters, Confucius drew the focus back to human beings."[59] What about death and meeting the Creator, and so forth? Confucius would reply, "'you do not understand even life. How can you understand death?' In short: one world at a time."[60]

The instability of the sacred and the profane is reflected even in modern law. Many aspects of modern laws, especially with respect to marriage (e.g., monogamy and polygamy), reflect substantial religious input. If it were not for their religious roots, some of these laws would not make much sense. This is why, despite his assumption about the inherent non-religiosity of the modern, Eliade could not deny "that a drastically non-religious experience of the whole of life is seldom found in the pure state, even in the most secularized societies.".[61]

Furthermore, and quite significantly, religious agents are also conscious of the instability present in the boundaries of their religions. As Talal Asad recounts, "The medieval Church was always clear about why there was a continuous need to distinguish knowledge from falsehood (religion from what sought to subvert it), as well as the sacred from the profane (religion from what was outside it)."[62] Similarly, in Islamic history there have been frequent attempts to "purify Islam" from the constant incursions from the sociohistorical context. Such efforts often were concurrent strive to make religious thought more applicable and attuned to the newer contexts. If one were to make use of such terms, if only to illustrate the instability of such binaries, the Qur'an itself is understood by Muslims to have "desacralized" things that were "sacred" at some point, and "sacralized" those things that were not at another. It did so as it abrogated (*manasukh*) some previous provisions, and declared their annulment with the introduction of newer ones (*nasikh*).

Muslims scholars—notwithstanding their divergences—have historically devised a number of theoretical tools which allow for the constancy of revival (*ihya*'), renewal (*tajdid*), and the reinterpretation or re-adjudication (*ijtihad*) of religious thought—all of which, in one way or another, problematizes the assumed stability of religious meaning. *Ijtihad*, for instance, is indicative of the unavailability of the precedent (in its juridical sense), or the lack of prior and pertinent interpretation. *Ijtihad* is seen to be a continuous interpretive attempt to make the "original" meaning(s) applicable to newer contexts. In other words, it offers newer readings of *nas* (canonical texts), to make them functional and relevant to

their newer cultural and sociohistorical environments. *Tajdid*, however, is an interpretive challenge that aims at the revival of the "original or primal" meaning—a meaning that is lost due to the constant interpretive departures and deviations from the "original."[63]

In a sense, these concepts are complementary, even though, *tajdid* is less general and less frequent when compared with *ijtihad*. Nonetheless, their existence testifies to Muslims' inadvertent admission of the mutating nature of religious meaning. It also illustrates their cognizance of the constant changes that occur between "religious" and "non-religious" spaces. Thus, such instabilities not only make the constancy of the assumed boundary between the sacred and profane untenable but they also show that religious agents are aware of the extent and unpredictability of religious meanings.

Setting aside the problematic nature of efforts at arbitrary universalization, such attempts could practically confuse religion and nationalism, rather than explain them. As some scholars have noted, there is a constant "process of sacralization,"[64] by which it is claimed that "the secular becomes sacred or other new forms of the sacred appear.'"[65] If both religion and nationalism are "a set of beliefs" that sacralize and profanize, what is the difference between them? If nationalism is capable of sacralization (read "irrationalization"), then how does it replace religion for its supposed "irrational" and "premodern" essence?[66]

Nationalism, then, itself becomes both "religious" and "irrational," and espouses elements of what Eliade assumes to belong to "the primitive and oriental cultures;"[67] and because the sacred, we are told, "is the prime obstacle" to the freedom of modern man, it requires a God.[68] It is said that man "will not be truly free until he has killed the last god."[69] Also, "the most striking trait of premodern, pre-rational visions," contends Gellner, was, of course, "the co-existence within them of multiple, not properly united, but hierarchically related sub-worlds, and the existence of special privileged facts, sacralized and exempt from ordinary treatment."[70] Hence, nationalism as a modern phenomenon is supposed to be one manifestation of the disappearance of "the sacred." Jeffery K. Hadden summarizes this teleological process as:

> Once the world was filled with the sacred—in thought, practice, and institutional form. After the Reformation and the Renaissance, the forces of modernization swept across the globe and secularization, a corollary historical process, loosened the dominance of the sacred. In due course, the sacred shall disappear altogether except, possibly, in the private realm.[71]

The secular is no longer secular if it sacralizes and possesses what it supposed to inherently lacking. It loses all attributes of the secular. Hence, how can nationalism replace religion if *it is itself religious and secular all at once*? Moreover, how can nationalism only exist within the realm of the secular even if it functions like Buddhism, as an “atheistic” religion?

Such confusions stem from perceiving either religion or nationalism as phenomena with universal essences, in which the latter is presumed to supplant the first all too naturally, where nationalism is seen to emerge with the demise or evaporation of religion. “Mainstream scholarship on nations and nationalism often points out that the emergence and rise of nationalism as an ideology is linked to the general trend of the secularization of society. [S]ome scholars have concluded that religion’s demise is responsible for the extent of nationalism’s success.”[72] Such views ignore the possibility of local interpretations of both religion and nationalism, and instead emphasize sociohistorical contexts and the “derivative”[73] nature of a “local” (that is, non-Western) nationalism. In other words, “the functional equivalence of nationalism and religion is dubiously premised upon a historical narrative of the secularization of the West.”[74] Therefore, it is assumed that modernity and related phenomena everywhere have a standard and similar impact on all religions. Peter Berger speaks to this reality when he declares that “The big mistake, which I shared with everyone who worked in this area in the 1950s and 60s, was to believe that modernity necessarily leads to a decline in religion.”[75] So, the very expression of “the resurgence or the return of religion” signifies the dismay of witnessing the resurrection of religion by those who prematurely declared its death.

Modern Islamic Political Thought, “Islamism” and Nationalism

Islamic revivalism, notwithstanding its diverse historical forms, has generally possessed antithetical attitudes toward contemporary conceptualizations of Islam. Critiquing contemporary Muslims for their assumed distance from “the original Islam” has constituted the core of Islamic revivalist claims. Such claims unintentionally validate the fact that religious interpretations are part of human endeavors that are always relative and contextual. Revivalist interpretations are not an exception to this rule. Nevertheless, modern forms of revivalism or “Islamism” claim that the original message, in its pure sense, is restorable. Hence, the claim to an exclusive access to the original meaning is embedded in Islamism.[76]

Even the term fundamentalism—notwithstanding its essentialist and pejorative identification—ironically takes the claim of returning to the original understanding of "the fundamentals" seriously. Overall, such approaches indicate the subtlety and pervasiveness of the belief in the non-contextual nature of religion(s).

Historically, religions have always been understood or interpreted in a variety of ways. The claim of different ethnic groups to being favored by God, or being His chosen people, is only one among a multitude of ways of interpreting religion. Islamic religious thought is not an exception to this rule. Therefore, it is justified to claim that "There are as many Islams as there are situations that sustain it."[77] Talal Asad is right to contend that religion cannot be defined universally and "we [should] focus instead on how our subjects define religion."[78] However, it is hard to agree with Asad when he claims that "although Islamism has virtually always succeeded Arab nationalism in the contemporary history of the Middle East, and addressed itself directly to the nation-state, it should not be regarded as a form of nationalism."[79] While Asad is correct in claiming that Islamism is not secular,[80] his inadvertent suggestion that "nationalism is essentially secular" is problematic.[81]

Asad partly bases his argument on his own definition of the term *umma*, whose revival is assumed to be the ultimate goal of Islamism.[82] For Asad, the way in which the *umma* is conceived differentiates Islamism from a nationalist trend such as Arabism. Asad argues that Arabism imagines the *umma* as the Arab *umma* (*al-'Arabiyye*)—a political community. He also states that this imagined political community is distinct from a "theologically defined space enabling Muslims to practice the disciplines of *di̱n* in the world,"[83] in the Medieval era. Asad's reading, however, overlooks the historical impact of Arab nationalism and the nationalist tendencies present in the Arabo-Islamic revivalist reinterpretation of *umma*. It is true that Islamism has connections to "the tradition." The tradition, however, to borrow Katherine Ewing's phrasing, has passed through "the gaze of modernity."[84] In a way, it is justifiable to describe revivalist groups as those demanding "reinterpretation of the present through a *reevaluation and recreation of the past* that it fits within the modern context."[85] Hence, the modern context in which these connections are made to "the tradition," should not go unattended.

More importantly, ethnic self-differentiation has been largely embedded in Muslim Arab revivalism. Historically, Arab revivalist trends have perceived non-Arab Muslims as one of these causes for "decadence" or

"degeneration" (*inhitat*) of Islam.[86] The non-Arab role in Islam is mostly explained in negative terms. The ethnic overtone of such explanations is evident as they attempt to tie the "impurity" of non-Arab Islamic comprehension to their ethnic character and to their history. For example, Muhammad 'Abduh, the renowned Arab–Islamic revivalist had no qualms in stating that "since the Turks were late converts, they remained unable to grasp the spirit of Islam."[87] He wrote that the Ottoman Turks' rule "polluted the purity (*khulus*) of Arabic languages, which in turn led to discord and sectarianism amongst Muslims."[88]

In 'Abduh's mind, there is an organic tie between the Arabic language and Islam. The "degeneration" of the first, for 'Abduh, caused "the decline" of the second. In his 1902 work, *al-Islam wa al-Nasraniyye*, 'Abduh also claimed that "Islam [originally] was a religion of the Arabs." However, an Abbasid Caliph's decision "to create a foreign (*ajnabi*) army comprised of Turks, Dailamites and other [non-Arab] people… alienated – or made foreign – Islam… transforming it into a non-Arab (*'ajami*) [religion]."[89] 'Abduh was not the only person to hold such views. Similar remarks are often made by other iconic revivalist figures, including Rashid Rida and Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi.[90] Even Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949), the founder of Muslim Brotherhood, states that "we are not denying that the various nations have their own distinct qualities and particular moral characters…. We believe that *in these respects Arabism possesses the fullest and most abundant share*."[91]

Asad also admits that *umma* can mean "a people."[92] However, the term has more to it than what Asad calls "the sense of 'a people'—'a community' in the Qur'an."[93] In the Qur'an, while the Muslim community is regarded as an *umma*, so is Ibrahim—a single human being also considered an *umma*.[94] Likewise, a small group of Muslims,[95] of Jews,[96] and of Christians[97] (as opposed to their respective communities at large), are also designated by the term *umma*. The Qur'an sometimes uses the term to describe a religious tradition,[98] and sometimes for a community consisting of the *deniers* as well as the *endorsers* of a newly introduced divine message.[99] An initial stage of the life of humanity, supposedly a collective homogeneity, is also described as a unified *umma* (*umma wahida*).[100]

The intent in enumerating the above examples is to indicate that *umma* could be conceived in various ways. More importantly, the definition of *umma* by the revivalists does not seem to be very different from the one put forth by Arab nationalists. It must be noted here that the redefinition of *umma* was heavily informed by the Muslim anti-colonial struggle in

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a struggle that shaped modern Muslim self-perception and enabled the revivalists to perceive the entire Muslim world as a unified a religio-political community vis-à-vis the colonial West, with its ties to Christendom. In addition, Muslim Arabs' exclusive, and inherently ethno-religious, claim to the caliphate increased the chance of imagining *umma* in ethnic and political terms.[101]

In fact, Muslim revivalist writings, such as that of al-Kawakibi, *exemplify* the inseparability of Arab nationalist and Islamist claims to the caliphate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Al-Kawakibi claimed that all Muslims will fall behind an Arab Caliph as in the beginning of Islam. For him, this was true because he believed that "of all ethnic groups, Arabs are the most qualified (*ansab*) to be viewed as [the authentic] source of the religion (*marja'an fi al-dini*), and as providing the role model (*qudwa*) for all Muslims."[102] The ethnic perception of *umma* becomes abundantly clear in al-Kawakibi's writings when he classifies Muslims as ethnic *umam* (plural).[103] So, he declares that "no Muslim *umma* (*umam al-Islamiya*), is as eager in preserving its own independence and freedom as the Arabs of the Peninsula."[104] al-Kawakibi claims that Arabic is not only the first language (*khusus*) of one third of the world's Muslim population, it is also their common (*'umum*) and richest language.[105] In defense of Arabs' exclusive right to the caliphate, al-Kawakibi enumerates various "superior" Arab national traits, and contends that they were "the first *umma* to follow the principle of consultation."[106] Furthermore, Arabs, he stresses, are "the best guided *umma* in observing *al-ishtrakiya*[107] (egalitarianism)"[108] and "the most eager *umma* in honoring their pacts."[109]

The discourse of the caliphate in the rest of the *Sunni* world was mostly informed by the colonial presence, and therefore generated degrees of solidarity with the Ottomans. However, the caliphate remained an exclusionary concept for Arabs.[110] Thus, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the invocation of concepts such as *umma* and *khilafa* among Arabs had a much greater bearing on ethnicity than it did in the rest of *Sunni* world. Such an approach to the revival of the institution, under the leadership of an Arab Caliphate, could shed some light on the mixed reactions against European colonialism on the part of people such as 'Abduh, Qasim Amin, and even Rashid Rida and the Wahhabis. Fearing that it could undermine their own claim—even when they sided with the Ottomans against European colonialism—both nationalist and revivalist Arabs remained reluctant to ascribe any legitimacy to the Ottoman Caliphate.[111]

It is true that in medieval times Muslims did not imagine their community at large as a political community,[112] perhaps because it took only a few decades following the death of the Prophet for Muslims to fall under two rival political rules—one centered in Medina and the other in Damascus. This was the beginning of a never-ending Muslim disunity—a disunity which in the ensuing centuries gained newer dimensions, and in greater scales. More importantly, Muslim discord came to be interpreted differently by those who were part of the experience. Even *ahadith* (plural; singular: *hadith*, the Prophet's sayings) were fabricated, and disagreements (*ikhtilaf*) within the *umma*, at least theoretically, were regarded as a blessing (*rahmahtun*) from God.[113] Such interpretations[114] were disparate in nature, ranging from denial of the overall necessity of the state to the legitimation of concurrent rival political domains within the community at large. The majority of *Sunni*s had readily accepted the *hadith* that categorically negates the legitimacy of any state coming after the first four caliphs (the so-called *Khulafa*' *al-Rashidun*, or the "Rightly Guided Caliphs").[115] Thereafter, according to the same *hadith*, the Muslim community will be ruled over by usurping or unjust ('*a͟du͟d*)[116] kings.[117]

It cannot be emphasized enough that the ideas of reviving the *umma* and the true *khilafa* coincides with the rise of nationalism and anti-colonialism in the Muslim world, which in turn reveals the shared historical context of Arab nationalism and Islamic revivalism. In the last two centuries, Islamic revivalism has been one way in which modern Muslims have formulated their concerns. Of course, the diversity in Islamic revivalism itself has been informed by different types of ethno-nationalism, geography, and other contextual factors. From early on, Islamic revivalism has concerned itself with a strong and authentic Islamic governance, especially in the face of colonial threat. However, this has not generally prevented a blithe insertion of nationalism into Islamic revivalist discourse.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Arabs more than other Muslims "ethnicized" the discourse of the caliphate. It is worth noting, however, that throughout the Muslim world the idea of the caliphate was becoming increasingly imbued with nationalism. The abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 uncovered this common tendency among Muslims. While different Muslim groups have tried to keep a nostalgic-sounding caliphate discourse alive, they have also simultaneously prioritized their own national boundaries for any possibility of an Islamic Caliphate.[118] Such a nationalistic prioritization resulted in the very first conference for the revival of the caliphate in 1926. In the

conference, "each participating delegation wanted to make its own ruler caliph... Abdülhamid, the last true Ottoman Caliph to freely exercise its prerogatives, politicized it beyond the permissible."[119] Thus, the establishment of the caliphate is not essentially universalistic. It should be kept in mind that even if it is perceived as the embodiment of a true Islamic state, Islamist groups imagine the creation of a possible caliphate within their current and local national space. It is important to bear in mind that whether such groups are labeled as fundamentalist or Islamist, they have also internalized the boundaries of the nation-state.

Islamists' operation within the confines of the nation-state and their strategic goal to control the state structure forces them to deal with nationalism at various levels. Of course, Islamism is *not* nationalism, if nationalism is perceived as essentially *secular*. However, if nationalism can be derivative, as argued by Partha Chatterjee, and if it is susceptible to taking various forms in order to incorporate local cultural mores, its connection with nationalism is more complex.

Islamist attempts to work through the nation-state are in and of themselves grounds for the fusion of religion and politics, which is informed by "national interest." Also, the modern state has neither entirely removed religion from the public space nor has it expurgated it from politics. Nor is the nation-state indifferent or neutral toward religions. The modern nation-state constantly manages, rethinks, redefines, and selectively incorporates or discards aspects of religion. The state's treatment of religion(s), however, takes place within the confines of a legal regime (that of secularism), and therefore the state's reinterpretation of religion is legally binding. The scale of religious presence and the degree of its utterances notwithstanding, both Islamist and non-Islamist states adopt similar strategies in their management of religions. The state generally, be it Islamist or nationalist, monopolizes religious interpretation. This is carried out by either ignoring or outright penalizing non-state actors' interpretations of religion. The state practice in Iran,[120] Egypt,[121] Saudi Arabia, and Turkey[122] in the last three decades provides us with ample evidence of this.

Islamism reinterprets Islam and operates through the confines of the *paradigm* of nationalism. The impact of such paradigmatic requirements on religious thinking must not be taken lightly. If Islamism remains, as has been the case so far, incapable of rethinking the nation-state—as the "ideal type" of modern governing system—it is none other than another hostage of what Billig astutely calls "banal nationalism." Banal nationalism can be conceived as being an inadvertent endorsement and glorification of

the nation-state. In other words, the nation-state is "taken for granted." Whatever the Islamists' motives may be in their engagement of modern politics is a secondary question. What is at issue here is the inseparability of the Islamists' vision(s) of the political from that of other types of *homo nationalis*. As with other modes of modern thought, in Islamism, the boundaries of the state similarly coincide with those of the nation. An Islamist is content with her/his legal and national "de-affiliation" or "delinking" from the rest of the "*umma*" of Islam.

The normalcy of such contentions is modern and nationalistic. If such a description is correct, then Islamists are neither living in a different universe nor imagining or advocating a way of life that could be situated outside the confines of the modern nation-state. For Islamists, as citizens, the acceptance of the national boundaries does not seem to constitute a dilemma. That is why Persian *Shi'i* Muslims in Iran proudly made it a constitutional requirement for their president to be, among other things, an Iranian born citizen and a *Shi'i* with Iranian ancestry (*Irani ul-asl*).[123] Such a reality signifies that an Islamist ought to be considered a "*homo nationalis*" just like his/her Christian or Jewish counterparts. After all, in Balibar's words, "the 'external frontier of the state' has to become 'the internal frontier'" of the citizen,[124] as necessitated by the sheer fact of life within the nationalist paradigm.

As indicated earlier, Islamists are content with the nation-states' boundaries. Generally, except for some rhetoric about the role of colonialism in imposing current geographic boundaries, there is no significant Islamist literature indicating that the internalization of the national boundaries may constitute a problem to Muslim religious devotion. The blithe endorsement of the existing ethno-national boundaries and repeated nationalist utterances showcases this reality.[125] What needs to be emphasized here is that a Muslim, be s/he traditionalist or Islamist, will not necessarily see her/himself as irreligious when s/he internalizes the boundaries of the nation-state. Such individuals do not imagine themselves as being part of a community of the faithful torn apart by the unwanted ethno-national frontiers.[126]

The past few decades have offered Islamists the control of state power. This opportunity has provided, in a few cases, the potential to demonstrate an alternative to the nation-state. However, Islamism not only has not presented any alternative forms of governing; it has been manifestly incapable of showing any fundamental difference in modern modes of governance. For instance, while Islamists in power have attempted to make the laws

of the nation more religious, they have exhibited an utter failure even to overcome the limitations put in place by the dominant ethnic groups within their national context. For example, the Iranian regime or the pro-Islamist Turkish government not only function respectively as a Persian or Turkish state, but they also remain inherently intolerant to political, cultural and linguistic representation of the ethnic Other.

When in power, Islamists, in many ways reproduces conservative nationalist politics and policies. Nonetheless, despite their universalist religious and anti-Western slogans, the political stances of Islamists are nationalistic. Like any other nation-state, the foreign policy of Islamist states is determined by what is usually defined as the "national interest." For instance, both the Iranian regime and Arab Islamist groups have maintained contradictory stances over many catastrophic issues, which have been informed by their regional politics rather than greater Islamic bonds. For example, the massacre of members of The Muslim Brotherhood and defenseless civilians in Hama[127] did not reduce friendly relations between Iran and Syria; rather, it strengthened them. The genocidal wars in the Balkans and outright Russian support for Slobodan Milošević regime in 1990s did not induce any Iranian criticism of Russian foreign policy. Neither did China's violent repression of its Muslim population become significant enough to receive any coverage by state media in Iran.[128] When it comes to the Muslims outside their own national boundaries, these states either remain indifferent or address such issues in relation to the banal requirements of their own national interests.

The basic point is that the overall Muslim understanding of their religion is as affected by their attempts to control the modern state as it is by nationalism. The attempt here is not to accuse Islamists of lacking sincerity. What is at issue is to point out that they too have internalized the nation-state as the "ideal type." It is only in this context that one could possibly make sense of Hassan al-Banna's statement when he utters that "if they mean by 'patriotism' to reinforce the bonds which unite individuals within a given country, and to show them a way of utilizing this reinforcement for their best interests, then we are also in agreement with them on this. For Islam regards this as a necessary religious duty."[129]

To regard patriotism as an Islamic duty in and of itself signifies a great degree of the fusion between Arab nationalism and Islamism in the reconstruction of the modern Islamic thought. Perhaps even more significant is the unintended adaptation of modern ways of describing the nation by the likes of al-Banna, for it indicates that "Islamists" too embrace national

identity. The degree of influence that nationalism had on Islamists such as al-Banna can be understood when his views are compared with that of Iqbal's.[130] Iqbal contends that "the feeling of patriotism which the national idea evokes, is a kind of deification of a material object, diametrically opposed to the essence of Islam which appears as a protest against all the subtle and coarse forms of idolatry."[131]

In summation, national identity is a particular way of referencing or imagining one's nation. "To have a national identity," in the words of Billig, "is to possess ways of talking about nationhood."[132] To have ways of talking about nationhood is a modern phenomenon. As indicated in the outset, the modern religious agent is also inclined to perceive the nation as a self-evident phenomenon; since the religious agent operates within the paradigm of modern nationalism, s/he tends to unite her/his religious consciousness with that of nationalism. As such, the paradigm of nationalism shapes her/his modes of religious interpretations, and it works as a context for rethinking religion and in some ways delimits her/his thoughts.

It is important to note that the modern conception of the state in the Muslim world coincides with the emergence of the religious reform movements and other enormous sociopolitical changes. The prevalence of religious reform and the emergence of modern forms of Islamic revivalism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is more than a mere coincidence. In the third decade of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state embarked on an epoch-making project, which indicates an epistemic shift in the statesmen's approach to Islam, state, and society. The Sultan took apart the old army, which had strong ties with the old religious establishment. He created a new army that, unlike the previous one, was a part of the state, not a parallel force to it. He attempted to centralize the religious establishment in order to manage it and turn it into a state apparatus. It was then that for the first time the highest religious post in *Sunni* religion, *Sheikh al-Islam*, entered the cabinet as an appointee by the Sultan. Moreover, the state adopted a new policy toward the periphery as it attempted to eliminate local powers and ethnic differences. It is also in this era that the state felt the need to educate its subjects in "*the sublime language of the state*,"[133] in places as far as its North African domains. These transformations in the state's policy and its administrative culture coincide with various religious reforms in different domains of the Empire.

The point is that the state began to rethink Islam and the religious establishment, just as it began to rethink itself and its relation with the

periphery. Therefore, given these enormous shifts in the Ottoman state and its approach to Islam in the nineteenth century, both official Ottoman nationalism and Kurdish nationalism (addressed in the following chapters) must be examined in a different light. Moreover, rather than considering concepts such as caliphate, *umma*, and *Sunni*-ness as givens, they should be treated as empty signifiers. They must be studied in their sociocultural contexts, rather than as abstract concepts that generate the same religious loyalty and sentiment regardless of time, place, and culture.

Notes

1. For an insightful discussion on this, see Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.
2. A great illustration of this tendency is the following passage by al-Ṣa'īdī':

   When we consult the present, the historical past and the age of the four righteous caliphs, it becomes clear to us after careful study that *the prevailing political system at that time observed – to a large degree – the principle of the separation of powers* (emphasis added).

   Quoted in *Al-Tashrī' wa-Sann al-Qawānīn fī al-Ddawla al-Islāmīya, Dirāsa Taḥlīlīya* [Legislation and the Enactment of Laws in the Islamic State: An Analytical Study], (Cleveland: Dār al-nahḍa al-Islāmīya, 1992) 46–55.

3. It must be pointed out that there is a growing interest in the nexus between nationalism and religion. However, the literature seldom attends to the impact of nationalism on religious thought. Cf. Philip W. Barker, *Religious Nationalism in Modern Europe*: *If God Be for Us* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009)., Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation*: *Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).; Steven Merritt Miner, *Stalin's Holy War*: *Religion*, *Nationalism*, *and Alliance Politics*, *1941–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Jason Nice, *Sacred History and National Identity*: *Comparisons between Early Modern Wales and Brittany*, Religious Cultures in the Early Modern World (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009). Veer, *Religious Nationalism*: *Hindus and Muslims in India*.
4. Cf. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 42.
5. Ibid., 72.
6. Ibid., 72–3.
7. Steven Elliott Grosby, *Nationalism*: *A Very Short Introductions* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 80.
8. See Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*: *Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 27–54; Katherine Pratt Ewing, *Arguing*

Sainthood: *Modernity*, *Psychoanalysis*, *and Islam* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

9. Quoted in Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*: *Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 47.
10. Ibid.
11. Liah Greenfeld writes, "secularization must be traced back to that last heroic burst of religious energy in the history of Christianity."

    Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind*: *Essays on Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 100.

12. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 42.
13. Gerrie ter Haar and Yoshio Tsuruoka, eds., *Religion and Society*: *An Agenda for the 21st Century*, International Studies in Religion and Society, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), xiii.
14. Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered*: *A Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.
15. Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, *or*, *How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 91n.
16. Cf. Ibid. Also, Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof, *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
17. Tomoko Masuzawa, "Theory without Method: Situating a Discourse Analysis on Religion," in *Religion and Society*: *An Agenda for the 21st Century*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar and Yoshio Tsuruoka (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 182.
18. Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race*, *Religion*, *Literature*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), 46.
19. Cf. Chin Hong Chung, "Religion-before Religion and Religion-after Religion: Reshuffled Rest," in *Religion and Society*: *An Agenda for the 21st Century*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar and Yoshio Tsuruoka (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007).
20. Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*: *Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 307.
21. Sylvia Marcos, "Theory and Method in the Study of Religions," in *Religion and Society an Agenda for the 21st Century*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar and Yoshio Tsuruoka (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 217.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind*: *Essays on Modern Culture*, 105.
25. Ibid.

26. Ibid. Greenfeld's characterization of religion as fundamentally against man's "dignity" is a gross generalization that has little bearing on religious traditions. For example, the Qur'an (translated by Khalifa) informs the believers that "(they should know that) all dignity belongs to GOD and His messenger, and the believers" (63/8).
27. The terms are borrowed from Balibar in: Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Race*, *Nation*, *Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London England; New York: Verso, 1991), 93. Also, Ruth Wodak and others, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Critical Discourse Analysis Series (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
28. Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind*: *Essays on Modern Culture*, 105.
29. Charles Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity," in *Theorizing Nationalism*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 227.
30. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 43.
31. "Culture," Gellner states, is "an elusive concept [and] was deliberately left undefined. But an at least provisionally acceptable criterion of culture might be language, as at least a sufficient, if not a necessary touchstone of it." Ibid., 43–44.
32. Gellner define nationalism as "the general imposition of a *high* culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality, of the population." Ibid., 57.
33. Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind*: *Essays on Modern Culture*, 111. (Emphasis added).
34. John Coakley, "Religion and Nationalism in the First World," in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World*: *Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism* ed. Daniele Conversi (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 213.
35. Quoted in Barker, *Religious Nationalism in Modern Europe*: *If God Be for Us*, 20.
36. Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind*: *Essays on Modern Culture*, 98.
37. E. H. Carr's great insight needs to be heeded here as he cautions us that the "picture of medieval man as devoutly religious, whether true or not, is indestructible, because nearly all the known facts about him were preselected for us by people who believed it, and wanted others to believe it." Also, the "history we read" Barraclough writes (quoted in Carr) "though based on facts, is, strictly speaking, not factual at all, but a series of accepted judgments."

    E. H. Carr, *What Is History*? (New York: Random House, 1961), 13–14.

38. Cf. Ahmad Amin, *Duha al-Islam/the Sunrise of Islam*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Al-Qahirah: Jam'iya al-Ri'aya al-Mutakamilah, 2003), 93–100.

39. Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches," in *Nation/Religion* (Konstanz2011http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/brubaker/Publications/religion_and_nationalism_forthcoming.pdf), 4.
40. Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on Modern Culture*, 105. (Emphasis added)
41. Durkheim contends when "a certain number of sacred things sustain relations … to form a system having a certain unity… and their corresponding rites constitutes a religion." Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 39.
42. Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on Modern Culture*, 93.
43. Ibid., 96–8.
44. Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities*, Zones of Religion (New York: Routledge, 1999), 43.
45. Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, 135.
46. Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 95.
47. Emphasis added.
48. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 44.
49. Ibid.
50. Quoted in Claude Lefort, "The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?," in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, ed. Hent de Vries and Lawrence Eugene Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 149.
51. Philip W. Barker, *Religious Nationalism in Modern Europe: If God Be for Us*, Routledge Studies in Nationalism and Ethnicity (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 10.
52. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion*, 202.
53. William Paden, "Before "the Sacred" Became Theological: Durkheim and Reductionism," in *Religion and Reductionism: Essays on Eliade, Segal, and the Challenge of the Social Sciences for the Study of Religion*, ed. Thomas A. Idinopulos and Edward A. Yonan (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 203. (Emphasis in the original)
54. The Qur'an 4/48 (translated by Khalifa): "God does not forgive idolatry, but He forgives lesser offenses for whomever He wills."
55. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 181. (Emphases added).
56. The Qur'an. 91/7&8
57. Smith, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions*, 114.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 185.
60. Ibid.
61. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion*, 186.

62. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 39.
63. Concepts such as *ihya*' and *tajdid* have long roots in Muslim history. Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni (1028–1085) and Abū Ḥāmed al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) are considered the precursors in introducing those concepts. However, it was Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti (1445–1505) became the major exponent of these concepts. For Al-Suyuti's discussion on this subject, see Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, *Kitab Al-Tahadduth Bini*'*Matillah/To Acknowledge the* Blessing *of God*, ed. Elizabeth Marry Sarton (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Arabiyah al-Haditha, 1972), 202–28.
64. Barker, *Religious Nationalism in Modern Europe: If God Be for Us*, 24.
65. Ibid.
66. According to Durkheim, the profane is conceptualized in opposition to the sacred, "just as the irrational is to the rational, or the intelligible is to the mysterious, [this is] one of the forms under which this opposition is expressed." Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 39n.
67. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion*, 178.
68. Ibid., 203.
69. Ibid.
70. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 21.
71. Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," *Social Forces* 3, no. 65 (1987): 598.
72. zubrzycki, "Religion and Nationalism; a Critical Re – Examination," 606–07.
73. I am using Chatterjee's phrase here. See Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse.*
74. Zubrzycki, "Religion and Nationalism; a Critical Re – Examination," 609.
75. Quoted in Barker, *Religious Nationalism in Modern Europe: If God Be for Us*, 5.
76. Cf. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, 1st ed. (Karachi: International Islamic Publishers, 1981). Also, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics* (Indianapolis IN, USA: American Trust Publications, 1991).
77. Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, Phronesis (London; New York: Verso, 1993), 1.
78. Quoted in Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things*, 23.
79. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 199.
80. Ibid., 195.
81. See ibid.
82. Ibid., 196–98.

83. Ibid., 197.
84. Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam.*
85. Andrew Rippin and Jan Knappert, *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*, Textual Sources for the Study of Religion (Manchester Greater Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 30. (Emphasis added).
86. Even Muhammad Iqbal accepts the decadence (inhitat) of the Muslim World. In one of his poems titled "in the time of *inhitat*, conformity (*taqlid*) is better than *ijtihad*" states, "The present age has many tumults hid/…/Stability in strict conformity./Go thou thy father's road, for therein lies/Tranquility; conformity connotes" (Muhammad Iqbal, *Rumuz-I Bekhudi* trans. Iqbal Academy Pakistan http://www.allamaiqbal.com/). It should be noted that Iqbal writes the above poem in 1918. In his later works, Iqbal does not seem to have much regard for conformity. In his 1930 work, for instance, Iqbal states that "a false reverence for past history and its artificial resurrection constitute no remedy for a people's *decay*" (emphasis added). See *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 203.
87. Hamid 'Enayat, *Seyri Dar Andishay-E Siyasi-Ye Arab/a Alimpse at Arabic Polticial Thought* (Tehran: Sherkat-e Sohami-ye Kitabha-ye Jibi, 2536), 149.
88. Ibid.
89. Muhammad 'Abduh, *Al-Islam Wa Al-Nasraniyye/Islam and Christianity* (Cairo: al-Manar, 1323/1905), 123.
90. Cf. Mahmoud Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate "*Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, no. 2 (Apr–Jun., 1997). Also, al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura*.
91. Hasan al-Banna, "Our Message," http://www.ymsite.com/books/our_message/index.htm.
92. Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, 197.
93. Ibid.
94. The Qur'an 2/143; 21/92; 23/52 and …
95. 3/104.
96. 7/159.
97. 3/113.
98. 43/22 & 23.
99. 17/36;.
100. 2/213.
101. For more on this see Chap. 4.
102. al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura*, 196–97.
103. *Umam* (plural; singular: *umma*)
104. al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura*, 195.

105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., 196.
107. The term *al-ishtrakiya* is generally used as to mean socialism. Here, however, egalitarianism seems to be what al-Kawakibi is referring to.
108. al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura*, 196.
109. Ibid.
110. Cf. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, *'Abd Al-Rahman Al-Kawakibi* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1969).
111. Ibid., 75.
112. See Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, 197.
113. There are still ongoing discussions among Muslim clerics over this *hadith*. See http://www.ebnmaryam.com/vb/t32140.html/2014.
114. See the next chapter
115. See the next chapter.
116. *'Adud*, from the root-word *'adda*; literally means biting or holding something with the force of teeth.
117. Major *Sunni hadith* authorities such as Termidhy, Nisaei have transmitted this *hadith*. See http://www.dd-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=5679.
118. For the question that how nationalism might fit in Caliphate movement among the Muslims in South Asia, see Adeeb Khalid, "Pan-Islamism in Practice: The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and Its Uses," in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).
119. Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, Studies in Middle Eastern History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 257.
120. The Iranian state's constant pressure on various religious actors, chief among them *Shi'i Maraji'* (or grand Ayatullahs), evidences this undeniable reality of the state's will to monopolize religious interpretation of religion.
121. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayed and Nawal El Saadawi's stories exemplify the secular state's treatment of the undesirable interpretation of Islam.
122. Probably the politics of veiling in Turkey more than anything else unveils the "secular" state's non-neutrality toward Islam. Over the enduring debates regarding the headscarf, the Turkish state was constantly questioning the Islamic-ness of veiling.
123. See Article 115 of The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, http://www.roshd.ir/Portals/0/KarAfarini/PDFs/rules/ghanoone_asasy.pdf.(4/1/2014).
124. Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 95.

125. With the exception of the Muslim Brotherhood and Ba'th party in Iraq, no Arab state refers to the Arab region in Iran as occupied Arab land. In The Muslim Brotherhood's political literature, this region is described as "occupied Arabistan" or '*Arabstan al-muh*tallah. (The term *al-muhtall* is usually used by the nationalist Arabs in their reference to Palestine.) See http://www.ikhwanwiki.com/index.php. Of course, The Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikwan al-Muslimin*) has had a very complicated relationship with Iranian regime over the past few decades. This example is cited to highlight that how ethnic and religious boundaries can casually coincide in the literature produced by Islamist groups. The embodied nationalism in these references becomes clearer when the (Sunni) Muslim Brotherhood's support for *Shi'i* Arabs in Iran is contrasted with their complete disregard to the fate of Kurdish *Sunni* majority.
126. For an interesting discussion on the coincidence of religious and national frontiers, see Barker, *Religious Nationalism in Modern Europe*: *If God Be for Us.*
127. The Hama massacre occurred in February 1982, when the Syrian Army under the orders of the country's president, Hafez al-Assad, conducted a scorched earth operation against the town.
128. In 2009, Ibrahim Nabavi, the renowned Iranian satirist, tried to unmask the inconstancies in the Iranian state politics on Muslim affairs around the world. In a piece on the Iranian regime's salience against China's oppression of its Muslim minority, Nabavi satirically wrote that it would fall under religious obligation for Iran to defend Muslims in Western European countries as those Muslim fled totalitarian states; this obligation wouldn't extend to Muslims in Russia or China but under internal affairs as those had not yet migrated. (Ibrahim Nabavi, "Chinese, Germen and Palestinian Muslims?" *Rooz Online* July 12th, 2009; http://www.roozonline.com/persian/tanssatire/tans-satire-article/archive/2009/july/12/article/-bc1127ea53.html).
129. Hassan al-Banna, "Our Message".
130. For an interesting book on Muslim nationalism in the early 20th century India see Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion*: *Pakistan as a Political Idea*, First Harvard University Press edition. ed., text.
131. Iqbal, *Stray Reflections* 35.
132. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 8.
133. *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi* (BOA): Dosya No: 91 Gömlek No: 52 Fon Kodu: A.}MKT. Tarih: 14/Ş/1263 (Hicrî) [28.07.1847].

CHAPTER 3

The Politics of the *Khilafa*, Old and New

In this chapter, I shall briefly attend to some aspects of the historical debates surrounding the concept of the *khilafa*, or the caliphate. I shall touch upon some approaches to the caliphate in pre-Ottoman and Ottoman times, in order to illustrate the heterogeneous nature of its conceptualization among *Sunni* Muslim thinkers. The political discourse surrounding the *khilafa* deserves some attention, as I make repeated references to the caliphate both as a concept and institution throughout this work. Also, there is a prevalent generalization about Muslims' approaches to the *khilafa* in Ottoman studies in general and Kurdish studies in particular. Under this narrow conception, the *khilafa* is typically understood as a religious concept or as an institution that has been little affected by sociopolitical change. It is not rare to come across works in which the author claims that for their reliance "on the Qur'an, the *Sunnis* believe that every Muslim should pay allegiance to the head of the Muslim community, the Caliph or Imam."[1] Such a degree of generalization is problematic. In this chapter, by way of attending to various historical examples, I will demonstrate that despite some elements of continuity, the interpretation of the concept of caliphate has been continually affected by different sociohistorical contexts.

Moreover, due to the aforementioned supposition that the caliphate generated universal Muslim obedience, many scholars have overlooked the connection between debates over the caliphate and rising Muslim communities' nationalist sentiments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the goal is not to portray the caliphate as invariant

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over time or locale, it should be noted that this study is not a chronological account of the history of the caliphate. It provides but a few snapshots of the long-standing, yet ever-changing historical debates on several key questions: How did the caliphate emerge? How did the rise of non-Arab claimants to the institution affect the reinterpretation of the qualifications of the caliph? How did similar processes of reinterpretation help the nationalist imaginations of Muslim communities to figure into the debate over the caliphate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

The Emergence of the Caliphate (632) and Ensuing Debates

The events after the Prophet Mohammad's death demonstrate that he had not instructed his followers about how the community should be led. Therefore, the emergence of the caliphate, as a form of leadership, can be considered as an accident in Muslim history. As a defense against their theological rivals, *Sunni* Muslim historiography and some parts of their theological literature, declared that this institution was a kind of natural outgrowth of the dogma.[2] However, the same literature is too contradictory to validate dominant *Sunni* Muslims' own claim in this regard. Montgomery Watt is right in asserting that *khilafa* as a system of governing is not rooted in the Qur'an.[3] The term is used *in the Qur'an* in the sense of the Arabic root from which it derives, (cf. *khalaf*), which signifies successorship or stewardship—where *khilafatu rasuli Allah* means successor of the messenger of God. As used in the Qur'an, *khilafa* does not refer to a governing system, and instead seems to indicate successorship over the generations of human history that call for deeper human contemplation and thinking. Such calls to take heed of these changes have even inspired some Muslim scholars to make use of the term partly as a proof of their belief in the compatibility of the Qur'anic narrative of creation with the theory of evolution.[4]

Both *Shi*ʿ*i*s and *Sunni*s have presented a variety of contradictory traditions attributed to Muhammad, describing the ruler(s) of the community after him. Major historical sources, including that of the first major Muslim historiographer Ibn Hisham, show that the community was in complete confusion in the aftermath of his death, in 632 CE. The initial reactions of prominent figures like ʿUmar, the second caliph after Abu Bakr, was in categorical denial of the possibility of the Prophet's death.[5] In addition, there were a number of claimants to the leadership of the

community: the *Muhājirūn* (the Migrants, who went from Mecca to Medina along with or following the Prophet of Islam in 622 CE), the *Anṣār* (the Helpers, from Medina) and others who remained discontented even after the first caliph's selection. ʿAli, the fourth successor, and some of his associates, for instance, were among the discontented. Also, there were "the people of apostasy" (*ahl al-ridda*), whose refusal to give *zakat* (religious tax) and to accept Abu Bakr's authority ended only after they were crushed by force.[6]

In some ways, the above-mentioned event had a lasting impact on *Sunni* political thought.[7] It was from that time onward that death was legislated as the proper punishment for apostasy. These events also became the embryonic stage for the later *Sunni* and *Shiʿi* differences, the most important of which was whether or not the caliph had to be a Quraishi.[8] ʿUmar noted Abu Bakr's Quraishi-ness along with his other qualities for leadership, which solidified Quraishi's supremacy in the eyes of Muslims for centuries to come. The Quraishi lineage became a significant issue for the challenges made against non-Arab claimants of the caliphate, and in the age of nationalism Arab nationalists utilized it to serve their cause.

Whether or not Abu Bakr and ʿUmar personally believed in the supremacy of the Quraish, they were farsighted enough to predict that the Quraish would have not accepted the authority of a ruler who was not from the Quraishi lineage.[9] "Abu Bakr, in a speech made at the Saqifa, the building in which the first grand meeting after the Prophet's death was held, clearly gave expression to this view and said: 'The people of Arabia will not acquiesce in this as long as the Quraish lived.'"[10] Upon his death, ʿUmar refused to appoint his successor and famously said, "if Salim, the freed slave (*Mawla*) of Hudhayfa, was alive, I would have appointed him as my successor."[11] This evinces both the Prophet Muhammad's lack of involvement in the creation of the newly established institution after his death as well as the significance of the Quraishi tribal lineage in the establishment of the caliphate. Even contemporary "Islamist" scholars such Abul ʿAla Maududy or Sayyid Qutb acknowledge that the first four caliphs, who later gained the title of *Rashidun*—literally "rightly guided,"—had major juridical, political, and administrative differences between them.[12] Nothing shows their obvious differences better than the fact that ʿAli, the fourth caliph, had no problem in appointing *walis* [regional ruler or governor, pl. *wulat*] and commanders [sing. amir, pl. umaraʾ] who had participated in the assassination of the third caliph, that is, ʿOthman. This issue was one of the causes for his war with ʿAysha, Muhammad's wife.[13]

Still, the dominant *Sunni* have generally remembered the era of *Rashidun* as the golden age. The title *Rashidun* itself signifies their unique moral and political position in the later *Sunni* religious imagination, which distinguishes them from the rest of the Muslim rulers and leaders in all of Islamic history. Yet ʿOthman, the third caliph, was assassinated by a group of rioters. Among the rioters was one of the sons of Abu Bakr, the third caliph. Strict Muslim groups such as the Kharijites not only questioned the fourth caliph ʿAli's qualification for leadership, but were also among the first groups to question the Quraishi lineage as a legitimate prerequisite to lead the community of the faithful.[14] Thereafter, the issue of the caliphate becomes much messier.

Looking for a unified view about the issues of caliphate and universal Muslim obedience to one or another caliph seems to be a futile attempt. Neither Muslims nor Muslim scholars seem to have had consensus on these issues. Their views sometimes might reflect a personal relation with the ruler or the general and independent juridico-political thoughts with which they identify. For example, Abu Ḥanifa (699–767 CE), who is known as one of the greatest *Sunni* jurists and the head of the *Ḥanafi* school, throughout his life kept his distance from the Palace. Once he was summoned to declare his view about the Abbasid caliphate, he told the caliph that he was brought to the Palace to legitimize the de facto power of the establishment. Abu Hanifa contended that it was the caliph's duty to seek the *ʿulamaʾ*'s views prior to and not after his accession to power. He asserted that the caliph knew well that no caliphate would be legitimate without the consensus of the Muslim community [the *Umma*] and their scholars beforehand.[15] However, his most celebrated pupil, Abu Yusuf, was appointed as *Qaḍī al-Quḍat* (chief justice) by the same dynasty. Unlike his master, Abu Yusuf declared that the rulers came to power according to God's will and their subjects were the flock whose shepherd was solely responsible to God alone.[16]

With the emergence of the Muʿtazilites, the issue of the caliphate gained a different dimension and they preferred anyone to a Quraishi ruler since, they believed, it would be much easier to oust an unjust non-Quraishi ruler than the other way around.[17] Al-Mawardi's (991–1058) well-known book on governance, *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya*, reflects the opposite side of the debate. It was an era in which Quraishi Arabs' exclusive right to rule was challenged. The palace also had become one of the battlegrounds of this fight.

Describing the lineage-based politics of the time, Ahmad Amin cites ample examples of these thoughts and beliefs in the superiority of one

blood lineage over another which had infiltrated almost every branch of knowledge from *hadith* to *fiqh* and from poetry to *Adab*.[18] It was against this context that al-Mawardi put forward his famous statement, in the aforementioned book, which could be considered as a well-known treatise in defense of the exclusive right of Arabs to govern by claiming that the Quraishis were the only group qualified for the caliphate. Al-Mawardi formulated a certain approach that would become one of the persistent positions among the *Sunni* for the centuries to come. Al-Mawardi attempts to utilize the first four decades of *Rashidun* rule as a juridico-theological foundation and as the only legitimate precedent for the Muslim community to choose their leaders. To al-Mawardi, a caliph is a successor of the Prophet, and *Sharʿi* precepts necessitate his selection from among the Quraish. He states:

> [The caliph's] functions are political as well as religious: to maintain orthodoxy, execute legal decisions, protect the frontiers of Islam… He must possess certain qualifications, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, as well as the extraneous qualification of belonging to the same tribe of Muhammad, that of the Quraish, and he must be designated for his office by someone else either by choice of the leaders of the community, those who bind and loose, or by choice of the previous caliph. Once chosen, the people owe him obedience…[19]

It should be emphasized that this idea never went unchallenged. A number of prominent contemporaneous scholars like Qadi ʿAbd al-Jabbar (d. 1025 CE) and Abu Bakr al-Asamm (d. 975 CE) and others are known for rejecting the idea of "the obligatory character of the state" itself, let alone its nature or form. They contended that "if the affairs of the community were based on fairness and justice, there remained hardly any need for the state."[20] They declared it was up to the community if they wanted to choose a leader for themselves. Some went even a step further and asserted that the task of choosing a leader, that is, an *imam*, requires the consensus of the entire community and therefore any selection of leadership at times of turbulence is void (which could entail questioning of the selection of the very first *Rashidun* caliph). This was the case since, they argued, at such times the attainment of universal consensus becomes impossible.[21] These discussions were taking place between the Arabs and *mawali* (freed-people).[22] Non-Arab ethnic tendencies were generally known as *Shuʿubiyya* (non-Arab Muslim reactions to the privileged status of Arabs)[23] that took hold among different groups with strong anti-Arab sentiments to anti-Islamic ones. The exclusive governing right of the

Muslim Arabs was strongly questioned and the non-Arabs were quick to claim that unlike the Arabs, they had "a rich history of statesmanship."[24]

The crucial point to be made here is as follows: the debate over the caliphate like many other debates reflects Muslims' diverse, disparate views about governance under their contemporary sociopolitical concerns, which were widely divergent in different stages of Muslim history. It would be simplistic to believe that all Muslims were unified over an immutable political concept and that their views with regard to governance and caliphate remained entirely intact, impervious to the passage of time and changes of place. It is clear that if al-Mawardi's views reflected some aspects of the long-standing and ever-changing debates over these issues, so too did those of Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328 CE), al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), and other celebrated Muslim thinkers. Observing that more than one ruler already ruled the Muslims in his time, Ibn Taymiyya did not have much of a problem with a multiplicity of ruling centers among Muslims. He was content with any form of government, be it a kingdom or caliphate, as long as *Shariʿa* was implemented,[25] while for some of his predecessors such as al-Ghazali, establishing order in society held central importance. Whether the ruler was a caliph or a king, just or unjust, these were all secondary issues to the establishment of the order itself. According to al-Ghazali, to prevent disorder one even has to obey an unjust ruler.[26]

Theological Roots of the Late Ottoman Caliphate

Having glanced at some of the sketches of early debates over the caliphate it is necessary to take a brief look at the Ottoman in sixteenth century as the first non-Arab claimants of the caliphate. This is particularly significant considering that Abdülhamid II based his reinvigorated caliphate claim on the same theological reasoning that was put forward by the famous Ottoman statesman Luṭfī Paşa in the sixteenth century.[27]

A cursory look at the sixteenth-century Ottoman history, when they began to claim the caliphate, indicates that the previous debates could not be settled easily. As shown below, Luṭfī Paşa's (1488–1564 CE) booklet on caliphate[28] clearly illustrates that justifying the ruler's legitimacy was becoming even more problematic.

In the sixteenth century, after conquering the Arab heartlands and expanding his empire enormously, Selim I (d. 1520 CE) took the title of the Caliph of Islam, becoming the first Ottoman sultan to do so. At the

same time, he gained the title of "*Khādim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*,"[29] the servant of the two holy places (Mecca and Medina).[30] However, it turned out that these titles and claims were not sufficient to persuade his subjects entirely to concede to his proclaimed religious status as a caliph. Religious challenges did not die down and the Sultan's opponents reinvigorated the age-old debate over the caliphate with a new force in the face of a non-Arab claimant of *Khilafa*.[31] It seems that the debate made its way well into the reign of Sultan Suleyman and led his grand vizier Lütfi Paşa, (d. 1562) to write a booklet[32] in defense of the legitimacy of the Sultan and of a non-Arab caliphate.

This booklet in part reproduces a context in which existed multiple claimants of the caliphate. Al-Mutawakkil, the last Abbasid caliph, still remained in power until his death in 1543. The Mughals, who had advanced in India, did not accept the Ottoman's so-called "universal caliphate" claim because scholars like Jalal al-Din al-Dawani (1427–1501 CE) had already legitimized the simultaneous rule of more than one caliph.[33] So did Ibn Taymiyah; as indicated earlier, a few centuries before Dawani, Ibn Taymiyya had expressed similar views with a stronger emphasis on the implementation of the *Shariʿa*. It seems that they were so eager to convince the other rulers and to submit to their rule wherever they could not militarily hold their territories. Needless to say, such demands must have been as made in the name of religion. However, what is important here is the existence of multiple interpretations of the concept of caliphate that are partly represented in Lütfi Paşa's booklet.

The booklet reproduces a variety of theoretical challenges that were directed at the Sultan's legitimacy. The jargon in Lütfi Paşa's booklet illustrates the seriousness of the posed challenges and questions by contemporary scholars with respect to Suleyman the Lawgiver's rule, who was introduced as the guardian of the *Shariʿa* and reformer of the customary laws, "*ʿurfi diwans*."[34] The booklet is indicative of the rise of the *Shiʿi* Safavids, along with millenarist and other theological challenges[35] as the author strives to establish that kingship is encompassing both Imamate and caliphate. Lütfi Paşa makes a painstaking effort to prove that the Sultan not only is a caliph but also "the *imam* of the age" or the *imam* of all the *imam*s. For that, he resorts to a whole host of textual (*naqli*) and rational (*ʿaqli*) arguments that he assumes could justify the Sultan's religious legitimacy vis-à-vis the dissenters.

Quraishi-ness, once a problem for Muʿtazilites and Kharijites, now had become an enduring challenge to the non-Arab caliphs that was repeatedly

raised against any claimants to the caliphate. It seems this was a powerful tool against later generations of rulers in the hands of people. As it is shown in Lütfi Paşa's booklet, some of the earlier traditional *Sunni mutakallimun* (*theologians*) such as Saʿdaddin Taftazani (1312–1389 CE)[36] and ʿUmar al-Nafis (1213–1288 CE), raised important questions with regard to equating kings or sultans with caliphs and *Imams*. Therefore, Lütfi Paşa tries to refute their views by referring to that of other *Sunni* scholars and implies that the views of these two scholars on the caliphate are not acceptable to the *Sunni ʿulamaʾ* and community at large.

Al-Taftazani argued that the end of *Rashidun* also ended the caliphal institution (of "the Prophetic Mission"). He considered the ending of the Abbasid reign to be tantamount to the end of Imamate. Al-Taftazani defended his position that "the *Imam*[ate] of Quraish; and as for the status of the Sultans, this arises from conquest and seizure, not from fitness and rightfulness (*istiḥqāq*)."[37] Therefore, it was not permissible to use such a title for non-Quraishi rulers.[38] However, to al-Taftazani, neither the title of caliphate nor Imamate of a lower-level religious title can be used for non-Arab rulers. As such, in the post-Abbasid era, any ruler with no Quraish lineage was a usurper of the leadership position and his rule lacked legitimacy. Thus, according to al-Taftazani, the only legitimate post-*Rashidun* leadership, with some degree of legitimacy would be an *imam*ate, not a caliphate, which would exclusively belong to Quraish. Non-Arabs were not seen to be qualified for the position of either caliphate or *imam*ate. Therefore, in al-Taftazani's view, the caliphate, which lasted only thirty years after the Prophet's death, was a higher level of Islamic leadership that was not revivable. Some twentieth-century modernist *Sunni* scholars like Shakib Arslan (1869–1946 CE) also held a similar view, but remained supportive of the Ottoman State.[39]

To refute such ostensibly restrictive views, which if they had been accepted would have meant an automatic disqualification of any Ottoman caliphate or *imam*ate, Lütfi Paşa resorts to some textual sources and recounts a number of prophetic sayings in which *imam*ate, caliphate, and sultanate are all equated in terms of their religious standing.[40]

At times, Lütfi Paşa resorts to a more rational approach by referring to the necessity of sociopolitical order, in the absence of which, he argues, people will not be able to live up to their obligations, religious or otherwise.[41] As such, the establishment of order by a ruler is tantamount to creating an environment for the community to live up to their religious obligations and, therefore, this very act is sufficient to legitimate his rule.

By the mere establishment of the order, a ruler can legitimate his rule. Similarly, for al-Ghazali and Lütfi Paşa, sultans' and kings' legitimacy originates from the very order they create. To Lütfi Paşa, the sultan's mere ability to establish order should be accepted as a sufficient condition for the subjects to become loyal and obedient to his authority. Lütfi Paşa claims, "A man becomes a Sultan by two things: the first, by the swearing of allegiance to him, and the second, that he effectively executes his decision."[42]

The concept of *baiʿa*, swearing of allegiance, in post-*Rashidun* and particularly in the Ottoman era, has much to do with a given sultan's "effectiveness in executing his decisions" rather than the consensus of the community of the faithful. Therefore, these two conditions in reality are just one. For the Prophet Muhammad, *baiʿa* was a pledge by his followers based on the fact that they could not disobey him in *maʿrūf*—what is good or right.[43] To Lütfi Paşa, apparently, the mere absence of violence against the sultan should be interpreted as people's consensus and their allegiance to the sultan's rule. Thus, he states:

> [He is the] sultan of the Arabs, the Turks, the Kurds and the Persians, and under his hand are many lands, as we have stated; and there is rightly applicable to him the definition of the *Imam* inasmuch as he is the lieutenant of the Apostle in maintaining the Faith in the requisite manner over all the peoples subject to him.[44]

It is evident that there must have been debates whether an unjust ruler is a legitimate one; whether a Muslim has to follow such a ruler or whether he is obliged to launch a war against him, whether an unjust ruler can rule the Muslim community or whether he shall be obeyed at all.[45] Lütfi Paşa rejects the idea of just conduct as a necessary condition for accepting the sultan as a caliph, notwithstanding his emphatic defense of Ottoman justice and claiming that "the ʿOsmani[s][46] are blameless with respect to maintenance of the Faith and Equity and the *cihad* [Ar. *Jihad*]."[47] As such, he tries to delegitimize any uprising or *jihad* against a sultan for his unjust conduct.

Lütfi Paşa, in his booklet, justifies this claim with another non-textual argument when he states that "...the lands of Islam which are in the hands of the infidels are undoubtedly lands of Islam, not lands of [the Domain of][48] War."[49] Lütfi Paşa presupposes the lack of justice in any domain that is ruled by non-Muslim rulers, notwithstanding the subjects' religion.

Therefore, he argues that despite the lack of justice, a land populated by Muslims cannot be treated as the domain of war, *dar al-ḥarb*. And by way of analogy, Lütfi Paşa tries to relax the condition of just conduct in order for a Muslim ruler to be recognized a caliph. Hence, the sultan must be followed and the Muslims are not allowed to unleash violence against him simply for his lack of just conduct. What is revealing here is the supposition that if a sultan is not recognized as caliph, violence against him is automatically seen permissible. However, if an unjust sultan is accepted as caliph, violence against him cannot be justified.

Lütfi Paşa's booklet is significant as it highlights the fact that the debate over the caliphate had remained unsettled. In each era, with new social, political, and historical events unfolding, the debate gained newer dimensions. It also indicates relentless efforts by groups and communities to resist the rulers' pressure to guarantee a greater degree of submission on the part of the subjects.[50] As the rulers resorted to new arguments to overcome the crisis of their legitimacy, so did people venture into other ways to question their claims. If some groups in the Umayyad and Abbasid era, as shown earlier, found Quraishi lineage as an obstacle for ending unjust rule, the lack of such a lineage turned into a big liability for the later generations of rulers. In subsequent eras, the lack of Arab, to be more precise, Quraishi lineage became a liability for the rulers. The lack of Arab lineage was regarded as a violation of a sacred tradition and as a sign of degeneration and moving astray from that tradition that was founded by and embodied in the exemplary rule of the *Rashidun*. The model of the *Rashidun* was remembered and sanctified as a yardstick to measure the degree of degeneration of the contemporary rules in *Sunni* community.

The caliphate from its inception produced neither a universally accepted definition nor a universal obedience among *Sunni* Muslims. To explain ruler–ruled relations with the sole focus on people's religiosity, as if it is a singular phenomenon that is almost everywhere manifested and construed identically, one has to grossly oversimplify the situation. The concept of *khilafa*, thus, should not be treated as if it has remained unaffected by the passage of time and the change in the social political context. It is erroneous to assume that the *khilafa* generated a universal following among *Sunni* Muslims; that *Sunni*-ness alone sufficed as a criterion for making all *Sunni*s obedient to a caliph such as Abdülhamid II (1876–1909 CE).

It must be noted that in post-sixteenth century, among various titles used by the Ottoman rulers, "caliph" was rarely used until the eighteenth century. Even if the sultans did use this title, they "did so without

attaching much weight to it...They sometimes used it as a term of praise for other Muslim rulers...”[51] It was during the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, which was the outcome of the Ottoman defeat at the hands of the Russians, that the Ottoman decided to revive the caliphate. Such a revitalization of the caliphate was merely an outcome of the Ottomans’ new intentional standing. The aforementioned treaty

> marked the full emergence of Russia as a world power and the rapid decline of Ottoman military power….The Ottoman trade monopoly in the Black Sea was broken and the czar received the right to make representation to the Porte on behalf of its Orthodox Christian subjects while Russia’s Muslims were permitted to acknowledge the caliph as their religious head. The newly acquired rights gave both rulers the means to incite nationalist sentiments in their respective communities. Russia justified its drive into Ottoman lands as a move designed to liberate Orthodox Christians and used religion to incite resistance, thereby transforming faith into a foundation for the Balkan Slavs’ nationalism.[52]

It cannot be emphasized enough that even a quick reading of modern Muslim history indicates a different situation than the assumed universal obedience to the caliphate. As far as the *khilafa*’*s* theoretical grounding, the 1876 Ottoman constitution marked the end of the “traditional” *Sunni* approach to the institution, assuming that there had been a unified *Sunni* approach. The second era of Ottoman Constitutionalism in 1909 commenced its practical end. For instance, the Ottoman constitution no longer recognized the caliph as *imam* or *mujtahid*, in the traditional sense. That is, the extent of the caliph’s power could no longer be sought out in the Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions.

The first Ottoman Constitutionalist movement proved unsuccessful. However, it was an attempt, among other things, to specify the limits of the sultan/caliph’s power. In fact, the constitution was a means for transforming him into a constitutional monarch.[53] With the inauguration of Constitutionalism, the caliph was bound, at least in theory to follow the constitution as his decrees no longer constituted the law of the land.[54] It is important to point out that such a blow to the (assumed) traditional view of the caliphate caused no outrage in either the Muslim world at large, or within the Empire. This in and of itself evidences that, despite the significance of the event, the *Sunni* Muslim community did not perceive those structural changes caliphate as an encroachment on Islamic tenants. The final draft of the 1876 Constitution contained a stipulation

stating that "the Sultan cannot be held accountable,"[55] a clause that, in fact, meant that he had no responsibilities. This paradox signaled the gulf between the ideal and the real constitutional power structure.[56] And yet, at the same time, it also illustrated the indefensibility of the older approaches to the caliphate.

In essence, Constitutionalism marked the end of the caliphate as it was known. Nevertheless, the second phase of Constitutionalism received a great deal of support from high-ranking clerics.[57] For instance, the famous Kurdish scholar, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, spent two years of his life propagating the idea of Constitutionalism in Kurdistan. He even offered his own version of a constitutional caliphate.[58] Needless to say, neither phases of Ottoman/Turkish Constitutionalism nor the eventual demise of the caliphate turned the Muslim world into a bloodbath. Yet, especially in the field of Kurdish studies, the caliphate has been assumed to be a universally followed religious institution. We are told that prior to the1920s, ethnicity "did not define boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the imperial system. Rather…the Kurds considered themselves part of the dominant Muslim majority group."[59]

Contrary to some scholars' claims—particularly in the field of Kurdish studies—the debate must be understood in direct relation to the existing power dynamics, rather than as being an inseparable element of the Muslim faith. Unlike Metin Heper does, for instance, one should not assume "that the Kurds almost always preferred to live under an Islamic rather than an all-unifying nationalist government. They displayed such a preference because they had always had a strong loyalty to the caliphate."[60] It is not rare to come across assumptions that regard the Kurdish revolts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as being devoid of any ethno-nationalistic character. Such views are foregrounded in the fact that those Kurdish revolts were mainly led by religious leaders in a tribal society. In his discussion on the 1925 Kurdish uprising, Heper claims that the leader of the revolt believed that the Ottoman "dynasty and caliphate were absolute necessities for the survival of Turkey."[61]

General tendency in the scholarship on Muslim history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is to perceive Muslims as a unified religious community free of ethnic self-consciousness.[62] Thus, Muslim ethno-national consciousness and their indifference toward the *Sunni* caliphate is deemed inconceivable. Therefore, "It should not be a surprise to the reader" Hakan Özoğlu claims that after WWI some Kurdish political factions were "against complete autonomy, for they believed in the unity

of the Islamic umma and until the end of the Ottoman Empire and even afterwards they saw the sultan as the legitimate caliph."[63] As shown in following chapters, neither the caliphate nor "tribalism" could prevent the rise of Muslim ethno-nationalist sentiments. Heper goes as far as to claims that

> an important factor that induced the [Kurdish] chieftains to seek no more than autonomy from the central government was the fact that chieftains *had traditional and religious worldviews and, as a result, they identified themselves with the caliphate in Istanbul.*[64] Furthermore, since the chieftains' legitimacy had religious grounds, for them being part of a basically Muslim empire rather than that of an independent Kurdish entity was preferable.[65]

Religiosity is generally assumed to predate any type of nationalist tendency[66] and therefore any claim about the existence of Kurdish nationalism even in the early twentieth century is supposedly anachronistic.[67]

At times, these studies have been under the direct influence of the official Kemalist historiography.[68] The Turkish state tried to frame opposition groups, especially after the establishment of the Republic, as reactionary and attempting to revive the Ottoman past. In the early 1920s, there was a heterogeneous approach to the abolition of the caliphate in the Turkish parliament. Major arguments in favor of the abolishment of the caliphate were made within the confines of Islamic religious discourse. Mustafa Kemal and his camp argued that the caliphate was not an institution prescribed by dogma but was rather the product of traditional juridical literature.[69] As such, they contended that the original establishment of the caliphate was not a religious imperative. Neither did the caliphate's abolition have any bearing on Islam.[70] The Kemalists argued that Islam solely requires the establishment of the state, which supersedes and encompasses "the government, republicanism and the caliphate."[71] However, after 1925 the Kemalists, due to the geopolitical interests of their new state, described the caliphate as a backward notion. To legitimize their domestic policy of purging and suppression, they frequently accused their opponents of reactionism and longing for the past or the caliphate.[72]

Kurdish historiography, in its general invocation of "the unbridgeable gap" between religion and nationalism, exhibits a partial adaptation of the Kemalist state discourse. This scholarship has adopted the Kemalist state narrative in which Kurdish movements are either portrayed as religious or nationalist. The Kemalist state tried to redefine itself as a modern and pro-West entity. In turn, it strove to paint its opposition—both Kurdish and non-Kurdish—as backward religious attempts to defend the past. Kemalist

supporters also found it important to stress the impossibility of any fusion between religion and nationalism. They thus put forward an incoherent narrative on Kurdish resistance, which is depicted as nationalist sometimes and religious other times. Likewise, some studies on Kurds reject any possibility for Islamic and nationalistic tendencies to unite. No references in this paragraph. Why?

When it comes to their relations with the Ottoman Sultan, *Sunni* Muslims, in general, and the Kurds, in particular, are perceived as a monolithic community, and the idea of the caliphate is thought of as being an immutable and undisputed religious concept throughout Islamic history. For instance, some Western scholars described the 1925 Kurdish Revolt as the expression of "Mohammedan fanaticism [that] was outraged by Mustapha (sic) Kamal's policy of secularization"[73] began with the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate, "which was the very embodiment of Islam."[74] There are historians who assume that the *Sunni* participants in early Kurdish uprisings had incontestable allegiances to the Ottoman Caliph.[75] However, Turkish statesmen themselves were aware of the inaccuracy of such generalizations. In 1924, during the debates the abolition of the caliphate, the Turkish Justice Minister admitted that the scholars in Kurdistan had never ascribed any legitimacy to the Ottoman Caliphal claims.[76]

Mischaracterization of the debate and depiction of the caliphate as if it was a pillar of faith that made it incumbent on every Muslim to blindly obey any self-proclaimed caliph gravely mystifies both the debate itself and the early stages of Kurdish nationalism. A statement by Heper symbolizes such a mischaracterization when he claims that "it was particularly the Kurds, who, being overwhelmingly *Sunni* Muslim in religion, came to have an unqualified sympathy and support for their sultan-caliph, and considered him as both their religious and political leader."[77] Hence, when it comes to the Kurdish–Ottoman Caliph relationship, it is not hard to see the impact of orientalist historiography and Kemalism, which the latter projects its own despised "oriental image" onto the Kurdish other.[78] By labeling Kurdish movements as a mere longing for the Hamidian rule and *irticai* (reactionary), the Kemalist state on the one hand was hiding its double approach to religiosity, and on the other perpetuating the age-old Ottoman orientalization[79] of the periphery.

The aim here was to show that the caliphate did not always mean the same thing and the rulers' claims to the caliphate did not automatically result in people's submission, and the Kurds, as shown in the following

chapters, were no exception to this rule. When it comes to later Ottoman Caliphs such as Abdülhamid II, many contemporary Muslims were well aware of the fact that he propagated Muslim unity in the hope of assimilating non-Turkish into a campaign for confronting the European challenge to the empire.

Notes

1. John Alden Williams, *The Word of Islam*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 202.
2. Despite their contradictory contents, there are various *Sunni hadith*s (the sayings attributed to the Prophet), some of which ambiguously, and others with clarity, hold forth on some aspects of the immediate era after the Prophet's death. Some of these *hadiths* state that it is incumbent on all Muslims to follow his tradition and that of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, (*ʿalaykum bisunnati wa sunnati khulafāʾ al-rāshidīn al- mahdiyīn*). These *hadith*s are delineated during this period of the "true caliphate" according to which the caliphate will last only for thirty years after the Prophet's death. Thereafter, based on the *hadith*s, the caliphate will transform into an oppressive kingdom (*mulkan ʿaḏuḏ*). See, Muhammad ibn Ali al-Shawkani, *Al-Sayl al-Jarrar al-Mutadaffiq ʿalá Hadaʾiqi al-Azhar/the Torrential Flood over the Garden of Flowers*, vol. 4 (Cairo: Lujnah Ihyaʾ al-turath al-Islami, 2000), 472–73. However, as indicated above, the way these events unfolded evidences that the first generation of Muslims was completely unaware of such prophesy about the future. Thus, to claim, as Oliver-Dee does, that "the qualifications and remit of the caliph appear to have been defined with reasonable clarity in the *Hadith* [and] it is from the Traditions that we can glean that the candidate must be of the Quraishi tribe" shows a lack enough familiarity with the contradictory nature of *Hadith*s. See, Sean Oliver-Dee, *The Caliphate Question*: *The British government and Islamic governance* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 33. The above statement also indicates unfamiliarity with some major historical events after the Prophet's death such as the dispute between Ansar and Muhajiroon over choosing the successors of the Prophet of Islam.One interesting question is what the debate over caliphate would have looked like if, for instance, the first caliph was a non-Quraishi or he was from Medina? How much lineage or belonging to a certain tribe or place could become a criterion for the caliphal qualification? It should be noted that some of the most permanent companions of the Prophet, from Medina such as Saʿd Ibn ʿUbbadah, did recognize Abu Bakr's leadership position. Ibn ʿUbbadah never accepted Abu Bakr's *Imam*ate and refused to pray behind him. He also refused Abu Bakr's proposal to choose leaders (*ʾumarāʾ*) from among Meccans and their deputies (*wuzarā*ʾ) from among

Medinans when Abu Bakr proposed *ʾumarāʾun minna wa wuzarāʾun minkum*. (At-Tabbari Vol. 3, 197–211 quoted in: Ali ʿAbd al-Raziq, *al-Islām wa al-ʾUṡūl al-Ḥukm/Islam and the Principles of Authority* (Cairo: Maktaba Ufuq al-Thaqafi, 1925), www.ofouq.com (4/12/13).

3. W.M. Watt, "God's Caliph: Qur'anic Interpretation and the Umayyad Caliphs," in Vladimir Minorsky and Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *Iran and Islam*: *In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 568. It must be noted that during their rules, the first four caliphs were addressed as *amir al-muʾminīn*, the commander of the faithful. The Zaidies have usually used the term *amir* as opposed to caliph. The Twelver *Shīʿi* have continued to use this title for Ali, the fourth caliph. He was the only *Shīʿi imām* to be regarded as such. Also, he was the only *Shīʿi imām* who actually had a chance to rule. However, in a way, the constant reassertion of ʿAli's leadership seems to indicate a continuous protest of the other three caliphs by the Twelvers. Also, the term *Khalīfatu Rasūil Allāh* was generally used in retrospect with a similar purpose to protest the Umayyad's claim to caliphate of which *Khalīfatul Allāh* is a shortened version. After killing one of the Prophet's grandsons, Hussein, and abrogating their contract with another, Hassan, the Umayyads could not easily establish their lineage with al-*Rasul* (the messenger). However, Abbasids, who destroyed the Umayyad rule, were particularly keen to emphasize their Qureshi-ness and their lineage with Muhammad. Most likely, the claim that the *hadith* states "the caliphate will only last for thirty years" was also fabricated by the Umayyads' opponents. (It seems this *hadith*'s condemnatory tone with respect to post-*Rashidun* had inspired Maududy to use as the title of his book, *The Caliphate and the Kingship*.)
4. Yadullah Sahabi, *Khelqat-e Insan/the Creation of Man* (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sahami-yi Intishar, 1972). The aim here is not to reproduce the related theological debate by the Muslim commentators, which is vast and disparate. The attempt here is to show that *Khilafa* is not mentioned in the Qur'ān in its political sense or as an institution. The Qur'ān 14 times uses variations of the root word of this term; sometimes in singular and other times in its plural form. Also, the Qur'an employs noun, verb, or adjective forms of the term caliphate. However, it usually connotes the replacement or succession of a person, a group, or a society by another. For instance, The Qur'an 2/30: "I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit (***Khalīfa***) it. 7/69): " Do but remember how He made you [plural] **heirs** [***Khalā'if***] to Noah's people" 7/129 "(Moses) replied: 'it may well be that your [plural] sustainer will destroy your [plural] foe and make you [plural] **inherit** [*yastakhlafakum*] the earth: thereupon he will behold how you act." 27/62: "has made you [plural] **inherit** [***khulafā'***] the earth" Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar London, Dar al-Andalus, Brill,

1980). Compare the above verses with what attributed to ʻUmar with respect to him becoming a caliph and replacing Abu Bakr: *In Istakhlāfu faqad istakhlāfa man huwa khairu minni*, *wa in atrukhum faqad tarakahum man huwa khairu minni*. Should I choose my successor, I would be following the tradition of a person who was better than myself, that is, Abu Bakr and again, if I leave you without choosing someone to succeed me, I would be following another person better I was: Muhammad. See, Abd al-Malik Ibn Hisham and Muhammad Ibn Is.haq, *Sirat an-Nabi*, trans. Rafi' al-Din Ishaq bn-e Muhammad Hamadani, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1981), 1109. Of course, this again contradicts the commonly accepted *Sunni* view about the issue of succession.

5. *Sirat an-Nabi*, 2: 1113–15.
6. Ibid., 1125–26.
7. Here, the attempt is to briefly attend to some aspects of the debate surrounding caliphate among *Sunnis.* For a comprehensive sociological study of the issue of authority in Islam, see *Hamid Dabashi*, *Authority in Islam*: *From the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads* (*New Brunswick*, *N.J.*, *U.S.A.*: *Transaction Publishers*, *1989*).
8. Cf. Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate."
9. Shawkani, *Al-Sayl al-Jarrar al-Mutadaffiq ʻalá Hada'iqi al-Azhar*, 4: 476. Muhammad Shibli Numani, *Omar the Great*, *the Second Caliph of Islam*, 1 (Lahore: Sh. M. Ashraf, 1961), 18. Ibn Hisham and Ibn Is.haq, *Sirat an-Nabi*, 2: 1118–22.
10. Shibli Numani, *Omar the Great*, *the Second Caliph of Islam*, vol. 1, 91.
11. Amin, *Duha Al-Islam/the Sunrise of Islam*, vol.1, 39.
12. Cf. Abu al-ʻAlà Maududi, *Khilafat va Molukiyyat/the Caliphate and Kingship* (Paveh Enteshârât-e Bayan, 1985), 115–84; ibid. Also, the second part of Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, Rev. ed. (Oneonta, N.Y.: Islamic Publications International, 2000).
13. Maududy, *Khalafat va Molukiyyat*, 174–75. Ali's categorical refusal to follow the tradition of his predecessors was the major reason for the selection committee to disqualify him to succeed ʻUmar.
14. Amin, *Duha al-Islam*, vol.1, 38–96.
15. al-Kardari quoted in: Maududy, *Khalafat va Molukiyyat/Caliphate and Kingship*, 305.
16. Ibid., 351–52.
17. Amin, *Duha Al-Islam*, vol. 1, 79. Also, Abu al-Ḥasan ʻAli ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʻAli al-Masʻudi, *Muruj Al-Dhahab Wa-Maadin Al-Jawhar*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Cairo:1303), 191.
18. Amin, *Duha Al-Islam*, vol.1, 93–100.

19. Quoted in Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939. Issued under the Auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 10.
20. Muhammad al-Ghazali, *The Socio-Political Thought of Shah Wali Allah* (Islamic Research Institute, 2001), 84.
21. Tāj al-Dīn Abū al-Fath Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, vol. 1 (Cairo:1946), 51.
22. *Mawālī* is a plural for *mawlà*, a freed slave. The Umayyad rulers generally considered non-Arabs *mawālī*.
23. For an interesting and extensive discussion on *Shuʿubiyye*, see Ahmad Amin, *Duha Al-Islam/the Sunrise of Islam*, 1.
24. Amin, *Duha al-Islam*, vol.1, 67–70.
25. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939. Issued under the Auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 6.
26. Ibid.
27. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 243.
28. See, Hamilton A.R. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," [Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate.] *Orient*, *Vol. 15* (*Dec. 31*, *1962*), *pp. 287–295.* Since I could not obtain the original booklet by Luṭfī Paşa, I had to really on Gibb's translation of it.
29. It is interesting to note that Saudi press and media always refer to Saudi Kings as the servants of the holy shrines.

    In 1987, after the Iranian regime challenged their authority during the ritual of Haj, such a reference to these kings became a tradition.
30. al-Aqqad, *ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi* 69. Also, M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924*, Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999), 13.
31. In his discussion on the local resistance to the Ottoman rule, Makdisi recounts that "the first century of Ottoman rule in Mount Lebanon was turbulent, and it witnessed frequent local rebellions and equally frequent Ottoman expeditions to subdue the local inhabitants". See, Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 775.
32. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate."
33. Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian politics: a study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924*: 13.
34. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," 288–89.
35. Cf. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Zındıler Ve Mülhidler/Heretics and Infidels* (Istanbul: Tarih Vekfi Yurt Yayinleri, 2003).
36. In the twentieth century, Al-Taftazani's views, once again, were criticized by Rashid Rida, a staunch defender of Arab caliphate. See; Muhammad Rashid

Rida, *Al-Khilāfa aw al-Imāma al-ʿUẓmà/the Caliphate or the Great Imamate* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manar bi-Misr, 1934).

37. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," 292. (Later in nineteenth and twentieth centuries, British Colonial officials made similar augments in their defense of a possible Arab caliphate. Cf. Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877–1924*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, (New York: Brill, 1997).
38. Shah Waliullah Dehlawi, one of the most renowned and influential eighteenth century Muslim scholars in the Indian subcontinent, once more cited Quraishi-ness, as a necessary qualification for a caliph. Yet, in addition Quraishiness, he argued, that a Muslim caliph must be the most prominent scholar and *mujtahid* of his time (see Muhammad al-Ghazzali, 2001). Yet, the grandson of Shah Waliullah, Shah Muhammad Ishaq (1778–1846 CE), with support of the Ottomans, during the *Tanzimat* era, exhibited a starkly different approach to the issue of *Khilafa*. He "was probably the first Indian ʿ*alim* who supported the Ottoman policies from around 1841 when he migrated to Mecca." Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924*: 16. Muhammad al-Shawkani (1759–1834 CE) the renowned Yemeni scholar, also held similar view to that of Shah Waliullah's with regard to the qualifications a caliph. Yet, Al-Shawkani believed that there was no difference between caliphate and *Imam*ate and they both ended as the *Rashidun* era ended. (cf. al- Shawkani, *Al-Sayl al-Jarrar al-Mutadaffiq ʿalá Hadaʾiqi al-Azhar/The Torrential Flood Over the Garden of Flowers*, 4, 472–83.
39. al-Aqqad, ʿ*Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi*.
40. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," 288–90.
41. Ibid., 290.
42. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate."
43. The Quran, 42/38: "O Prophet! Whenever believing women come unto thee to pledge their allegiance to thee …and would *not disobey thee in anything right* [*ma*ʿ*ruf*]- then accept their pledge of allegiance" what needs to kept in mind is how these concepts could change over time. The text indicates that women could have ascertained what is wrong and they were obliged to obey only what they believe was right.
44. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," 293.
45. This question in particular carries traces of *Shi*ʿ*i* belief since the ruler must be just and infallible according to earlier Shiʿism.
46. In the original.
47. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," 294.
48. In the original.
49. Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," 290.
50. For a detailed historical account on different religious groups' resistance to the Ottoman rule, in the sixteenth century, see, Ocak, *Zındıler ve*

Mülhidler/Heretics and Infidels. Also, Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: the historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)*.

51. Albert Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 8.
52. Kemal H. Karpat, *Studies on Turkish Politics and Society: Selected Articles and Essays*, Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East, (Boston: Brill, 2004), 490–91.
53. The letter of Midhat Pasha, the main author of the 1876 Ottoman constitution, to Abdulhamid II, is very revealing. Midhat Pasha writes:

    Your majesty my king! The goal for drafting [the constitution] and for the declaration of the principals of Constitutionalism was: To end autocracy (*istibdad*), to inform (*iḳaẓ*) you about your responsibilities…I, as your majesty's humble servant, am extremely loyal to you. Nonetheless, *I shall declare and excuse myself from your obedience in anything that may even slightly harm or contradict the interests of the nation.*

    See, *İstikbal/The Independent*, (No: 25; 12/22/1880).
54. Ibid.
55. See, "1876 Constitution," in *Salname-i Devlet* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmet İhsan ve Şurekası, 1322/1904).
56. For a detailed study of the Ottoman Constitution, see Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament*, The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963).
57. Cf. Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran, 1902–1910* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
58. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler*, 115.
59. Denise Natali, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran*, 1st ed., Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2005), xviii.
60. Metin Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation* (Basingstoke England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 148.
61. Ibid., 149.
62. Cf. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey.*
63. Cf. Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries*, Suny Series in Middle Eastern Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 124. The head of this "faction" was no one other than Seyyid Abdulqadir. In the late nineteenth century, Seyyid Abdulqadir joined the CUP just a few years after its creation. Interestingly, Özoğlu sees no contradiction between the above statement and his earlier remarks when he states: "It is interesting to encounter his name in the CUP, then an underground organization that

worked against the sultan/caliph Abdulhamid II, because Abdulkadir himself was a part of the Ottoman religious establishment" (90). These assertions become even more interesting when they are contrasted with the state records. The state documents reveal Abdulqadir had no qualms about killing Ottoman soldiers; in 1882, "Sheikh Abdulqadir, the son of Sheikh Ubeydullah, in his attack on the royal army martyred 10 and injured 12 Soldiers. He also captured 30 soldiers including their commanding officers."

See, BOA: Dosya No: 3, Gömlek No: 4, Fon Kodu: Y. PRK.A; Tarih: 23/M /1300 (Hicrî)/[4.12.1882]

64. Emphasis added.
65. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, 45.
66. See the preceding chapter.
67. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey*, 148.
68. Cf. Mujtaba Borzuei, *Avżâ°-E Kordestan az 1258–1325/the Situation in Kurdistan from 1879 to 1946* (Tehran Nashr-e Nou, 1999). Also, Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*.
69. For one the most profound discussions on caliphate by Seyyid Bey, the Turkish Justice Minister in 1924, see, TBMM zabıtları (Turkish Grand National Assembly's minutes):, [VII, 1 Mart 1340 (1924)] Pp. 55–65, http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/asw/tur/htu/data/HTU2136%28ZC%29-35/index.djvu.
70. See, ibid.
71. Quoted in Taha Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justic System of Atatürk* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012), 387.
72. Even renowned secular figures journalist Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın was regarded a reactionary who opposed Kemalist policies with respect to the abolition. Yalçın deemed the abolishment of the caliphate harmful to the geopolitical interest of Turkey. Cf. Ibid., 327.
73. John Parker and Charles Smith, *Modern Turkey* (London: G. Routledge & sons, 1940), 12.
74. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, 148.
75. Cf. Hakan Özoğlu, "Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?" in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey* ed. Ayse Kadioglu and Emin Fuat Keyman (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011).
76. For the complete text, see TBMM zabıtları (Turkish Grand National Assembly's minutes): [VII, 1 Mart 1340 (1924)] p. 44–70. http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/asw/tur/htu/data/HTU2136%28ZC%29-35/index.djvu.
77. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, 51.
78. Cf. http://welatzeydanlioglu.wordpress.com/2015.
79. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism."

PART II

Official Nationalism and Islamic Identity

CHAPTER 4

Ottoman/Turkish "Official Nationalism"

Having discussed aspects of the caliphate debate, it is now essential to attend to one of the most significant historico-political sources of the Hamidian regime, that is, "official nationalism."[1] The Hamidian regime inherited a tradition of political, bureaucratic, military, and cultural reforms, which had been initiated many decades earlier.[2] This era of reforms can also be recognized by the semi-global trend of official nationalism, which had affected the self-perception of the Ottoman state as well as surrounding states. Anderson describes official nationalism as "a discernible tendency among the Euro-Mediterranean monarchies to sidle towards a beckoning national identification."[3] Here, I do not attempt to attend to the Ottoman *Tanzimat* in depth but to shed light on Ottoman official nationalism. First, I show the discrepancy in the literature on the late nineteenth-century Ottoman official nationalism. Second, I demonstrate that the Ottomans were by no means immune to official nationalism because of their religion. Finally, I assert that Hamidian official nationalism (discussed in the next chapter) was the culmination of a trend that had started in the preceding decades.

Turkish Nationalism and Its Latency

After the publication of Bernard Lewis' 1961 *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*,[4] it has become commonplace in scholarship on the Ottomans to defend the latency of Turkish nationalism. Lewis claimed that the Ottoman

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Empire "had been a nonmodern state system designed to govern a vast multiethnic, multilinguistic, and multireligious population. The 'Turkish' and 'Islamic' people of Asia Minor had therefore remained unconscious of themselves as a people in the course of making and sustaining it."[5] In essence, Lewis's claim is based on a hierarchical Eurocentric understanding of "world history" in which any nation that has not undergone a complete process of "Westernization" is deemed "pre-modern" and for the same reason cannot be considered self-conscious. This hierarchical conception of "world history" is best manifested in Hegel's conception of history, in which he divides nations into those with a clear consciousness of history and those with a murky one:

> Nations whose consciousness is obscure, or the obscure history of such nations, are…not the object of the philosophical history of the world, whose end is to attain knowledge of the Idea in history—the spirits of those nations which [have] become conscious of their inherent principle, and have become aware of what they are and what their actions signify, are its object[6]

Lewis's own classification of the Ottomans as "nonmodern" is sufficient for him to brand them as peoples with a lack of national self-consciousness. The religion of the majority of the Ottoman polity, that is, Islam, compounds this "unconsciousness." For Lewis, the real nation was born after the creation of a "secular, Western oriented and civic nationalist Republic"; the people made the leap from prehistory into the history of consciousness and became the subject of their history.[7] This is how the "'Turkish' and 'Islamic' people of Asia Minor had consequently become conscious of themselves as they moved from the imperial to the national phase of their history."[8] In this evolutionary reading, after the end of the old regime, there begins another phase in Turkish history where a new "modern state" suddenly "emerges."[9] With the emergence of the modern state, Turkey supersedes the condition that Hegel identifies as the "so-called unity of the spirit with nature which we encounter in the Oriental World."[10]

The thesis of the latency of Turkish nationalism until the First World War is generally defended along these lines. In more recent works, the so-called non-modern characteristic of the Empire has been dropped. However, the essence of the argument for this "latency" remains the same. Ottoman scholar Taner Akçam defends this view, stating that "due to the multiethnic character of the Empire, the Ottoman ruling elite was unable to offer a stable national identity" and Turkish nationalism thus remained

latent.[11] He also maintains that the political movement of Turkish nationalism began only in the twentieth century.[12] Although the second assertion may not be inaccurate, the lack of a political movement, per se, does not necessarily mean the lack of a national identity, "stable" or otherwise. As Chatterjee has shown, identifying nationalism as a political movement in and of itself is problematic and misleading.[13]

Akçam, in part, bases his claim on the perceived lack of centrality of the ethnic Turk's history in Ottoman literature, particularly in Ottoman textbooks prior to the twentieth century.[14] As I will show in the following chapter, Turkishness and Turkification had a central role in the state's educational project from the mid-1870s onward. It is striking that the multiethnic and multireligious character of Ottoman society is seen as a major reason for the so-called lack of Turkish "self-consciousness" to use Lewis's phrase. In fact, this very factor of multiethnicity was one of the greatest internal threats to the Empire's integrity. In his discussion on the Habsburg and Russian Empires, Anderson shows that in the nineteenth century, such sociopolitical contexts were particularly conducive to the emergence of official nationalism.[15] Needless to say that nationalism is dialectical, in the absence of the ethnic, cultural, or religious Other, nationalist self-consciousness would not be possible.

Akçam enumerates a number of other reasons for the supposed absence of Turkish nationalism before 1912. It is not surprising he cites Islam as another important reason for this "latency," since "in contrast to other Islamic countries, among the Ottomans, Islamic identity developed in tandem with the lapse of any sense of Turkishness."[16] As banal as this might sound, many of the later Islamic countries were still domains of the Ottoman Empire. At best, Turkish nationalists, just like any other nationalists, could be oblivious to their own nationalism and "always seems to [have] locate[d] nationalism on the periphery."[17] Additionally, such an argument reveals an understanding of religion as a universal and uncontaminated phenomenon that is inherently resistant to the impact of any local or ethnic interpretations.

Notably, from the 1840s on, the state/religious establishment underwent dramatic transformations as a result of the Ottoman state's extensive reforms aiming towards the integration of non-Muslims. Henceforth, "managing religion" took a different form due to centralization policies, notwithstanding the fact that the state's instrumental use of religion changed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[18] In a way, the attempts by non-Turkish communities to differentiate Islam from

Turkishness demonstrate the influence of such policies. As will be illustrated in the following chapters, some prominent Kurdish religious leaders were adamant about differentiating the two. The Kurds, whose nationalism was supposedly even more latent than that of the Turks, started separating their own Islamic identity from their Turkish coreligionists as early as 1880.[19] The renowned Kurdish Naqshbandi leader, Sheikh Ubeydullah, in his letter to the foreign councils, insisted upon the distinction between Kurdish religion and that of the Turks.[20] By the turn of the century, Turkish intellectuals were debating which choice suited the empire better: pro-Muslim unity (*Îttîhad-î Îslam*) or pro-racial unity (*Îttîhad-î Anasur*).[21]

Akçam also argues that the practical limitations of the ruling group were another reason for the latency of Turkish nationalism. He states that "the multinational character of the Ottoman state forced the ruling national group into a strange dilemma. Because the main goal had been the preservation of the multinational state, the members of the ruling nation could not openly claim their own national identities."[22] The "strange dilemma" of the ethnic Turks unveils the complexities of Turkish nationalism rather than the absence of Turkish national identity; indeed, there is a difference between lacking a national identity and being reticent about its existence. The above complexities and dilemmas were rooted in the nature of official nationalism. Official nationalism, which fostered the "merger of nation and dynastic empire,"[23] was a common trend, at least in the late nineteenth century. "The key to situating 'official nationalism'" argues Anderson, "is to remember that it developed *after*, and *in reaction to*, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s."[24] Ottoman official nationalism too was developed *after* and *in reaction* to the peripheral and dominated communities' nationalist tendencies.

The Empire and Official Nationalism

In the nineteenth century, Turkish nationalism, like that of other empires, was enigmatic and had its own peculiarities. For example, it echoed some of the characteristics of English nationalism.[25] The elusive and complex nature of nationalism in empires makes both denying it and situating it in the right historical context difficult.

What Kumar calls "missionary nationalism" is quite useful in understanding Turkish nationalist tendencies in the early nineteenth century. Like

other imperial nationalisms, in its early periods, Ottoman/Turkish imperial nationalism was:

> A type of nationalism [that rested] not so much on the nature of empire as a general political form as on the perceptions of particular groups within it. It is these groups that may exhibit "missionary" nationalism, sometimes to the point of threatening the imperial structures that allow them this sense; and if, as several scholars claim, we can discern nations before nationalism, it may be that here we discern nationalism before nations.[26]

From the era of *Tanzimat* (reorganization and reforming the state structure), the state aimed at creating a cohesive society in which its members would feel a strong sense of belonging to the central state.[27] This mission for reforming the state and society gained legitimacy under the rubric of *medeniyet* (civilization). As Karpat points out, the state began to perceive itself as the agent of *medeniyet*—a tool in the hands of bureaucrats and intelligentsia to create its own identity. Therefore, a centralized state was not only deemed a more modern institution capable of greater social and economic achievements, but was also seen as a legitimate agent that could guarantee the supremacy of the ruling group.[28] The state's civilizing practice or "borrowed colonialism…pushed periphery…into a colonial status."[29] Ottoman official nationalism in action is best described by Murat Ergin as "[defining] the center into which all differences would assimilate; defining the boundaries of an unmarked territory into which all others would walk after leaving their particularities behind, produce a multitude of attempts to invent 'us'."[30] Hence, to defend the thesis of the latency of Turkish nationalism, one must, like Bernard Lewis, assume the "unconsciousness" and the innocence of these institutionalized practices.

As mentioned earlier, the Ottoman state was not alone in its undertaking of reform projects. This type of modernization and restructuring of the state was to follow along the lines of reforms that were taking place in Europe. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state and, to a certain degree, the Qajars in Iran—though in a sluggish and much less orderly way—were also trying to adjust to the requirements of the new age. Centralization, in conjunction with a certain nationalist bent emulating the French Revolution, was the order of the day. In addition, the Ottoman state aimed to adopt "Civilization" with certain qualifications in order to remain viable and to be able to stave off mounting European aggression.

In the early nineteenth century, following the French model, European statesmen generally resorted to the strategic goal of centralizing the state and extending its control of the population, rather than adopting the systematic practice of imposing the ruling ethnic group's identity. The emphasis on Turkishness appeared gradually and in a measured fashion in the Ottoman state's population politics.

Notably, the French version of the 1844 census contains the hyphenated category of Turk–Ottomans (Türk–Osmanlı).[31] In this classification, Türk–Osmanlı was clearly distinguished from other ethnic groups such Albanians, Arabs, Kurds and so forth.[32] These policies were not devised as outright Turkism. However, they aimed to obfuscate the nationalism of the Other. Like European states, "what mattered to them was the Napoleonic example of imposing legal and administrative uniformity as a way of eliminating 'the dangers of anti-national, regional or ethnic identities.'"[33] Even though the ruling ethnicity did not declare the state's identity coterminous with its own, since the state was the agent of propagating its own culture, language, and conception of the state and society, the centralized state was also, in the end, a nationalizing agent. Ottoman Turks' attitudes in "the beginning of the age of nationalism" and their hesitation to declare their own ethnic identity as the identity of the sovereign much resembles the attitude of Germans in the Habsburg Empire.[34] However, Turkish language and culture, as the predominant language and culture of the state, like "German [in the Hapsburg Empire] increasingly acquired a double status: 'universal-imperial' and 'particular-national.'"[35] Although the ruling ethnic group exhibited a certain degree of reticence in declaring the sovereign's ethnicity in the beginning of the nineteenth century, dominated groups were not hesitant to call them Turks.[36] The Turks, as guardians of their Empire, conceived of a stronger centralized state as the solution to the threat posed by the development of other ethnic nationalisms. Even in its early stages, Ottomanism was seen as compensating for Turkish reticence to self-identify publicly, since it could help to forge a unifying identity under the patronage of the state, which, according to Karpat, had long emphasized its own Turkish character. Karpat maintains that

> in truth, the language of the Ottoman state always was Turkish, and the *Enderun*, the famous palace school that trained top-level administrators used Turkish as the language of instruction throughout its existence. It is not surprising, therefore, that these facts supplied the arguments to claim that political leadership in the Ottoman state had always been 'Turkish.'[37]

As indicated at the outset, there is a great deal of resistance to the possibility of the existence of Muslim nationalism prior to the First World War in the scholarship on Ottoman history. Republican historiography is based on the denial of the pre-existence of Turkish nationalism. The early republican ideologues tried to define themselves as the real messengers of Turkish nationalism, claiming that it was completely distinct from Ottomanism. To justify this discourse of rupture and the absolute lack of affinity with the recent past, early Republican historiography strives to show that Republican ideologues created their nationalism ex nihilo.[38] Yet, there exist at least two readings of the late Ottoman era by these ideologues, which have affected Ottoman historians' views as well. History writing is not easily freed from the impact of official accounts. At best, it remains a criticism of state narratives, whose content, according to Hegel, "not only lends itself to the prose of history but actually helps to produce it."[39]

Contradictory Readings of the Past

In the early Republican period, nationalists strove to completely distance themselves from the recent Ottoman past. Therefore, they categorically denied the existence of Turkish nationalism in the pre-Community for Progress and Union (CUP) era. By labeling the CUP period an era of catastrophes and treason, they further dissociate themselves from it.[40] Thus, "it is possible [to] argue that the Republican regime in general projected an image of the entire late Ottoman period as the historical 'other'."[41] This radical rereading of the past takes place, in Shissler's terms, as part of the process of "the transformation of nationalism into Kemalism"[42] by the expurgation of nationalism in the pre-Republican history. Kemalism consolidates its power by reinterpreting the past to settle its present internal conflicts and to readjust itself, through the state, in accordance with new geopolitical realities.

Republican and Turkification ideologue Tekin Alp's (1883–1961) writings illustrate that Turkish nationalists were adamant about renouncing late Ottoman history and characterizing it as a wholly religious other.[43] For instance, Alp claims that Ottomanism lacked the capacity to become an inclusive system. In this reading, the multiethnic character of late Ottoman society was the source of discriminatory practices, as opposed to inclusive Republican nationalism.[44] In his 1927 work, *Türkleştirme/Turkification*, Alp refers to Republican nationalism as a melting pot in which people's ethnic and religious backgrounds—once prominent in the Ottoman

system—were to dissipate in the new era.[45] Alp categorically denies that Ottomanism had any nationalist elements. He contends that "in the era of *Türkluk* (Turkishness)," that is, Republican nationalism, "concepts such as Muslim and non-Muslim or subject and non-subject cease to exist. Every individual's membership in the nation is actualized with her/his service to the nation."[46] According to Alp, such categories belong to the past, and would no longer determine people's social standing or citizenship.[47]

Setting aside the inaccuracy of Alp's claim, in theory the nineteenth-century *Tanzimat* reforms were also introduced to universalize Ottomanness as the sole identity of all Ottoman subjects. Makdisi argues that the Ottoman "official nationalism launched in the wake of the *Tanzimat* was a project of modernization that strove to cohere different ethnic groups, different religious communities, different regions, and, above all, different stages of progress within a unified Ottoman modernity."[48] Yet Republican ideologues claimed that this unifying Ottoman modernity obscured the idea of Turkishness.

Alp also claims that the definition of Turkishness in the Ottoman context was a confused one. This was the case since anyone who converted to Islam or was already a Muslim was also considered a Turk.[49] For Alp, this implies that the identity of the ruling ethnic group was a solely religious one; Turkish ethnicity had become invisible.

Fuat Dündar has shown that as early as the 1840s, Ottoman state statistics demonstrate frequent instances of the ethnic classification of the polity[50] and that Ottomanism was not an equalizing concept. Late nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectuals were generally hesitant to equate their own modernized Islam with that of the "savage" periphery.[51] Moreover, despite the importance of religious identity in both the pre-Republican and Republican eras, religion was never the singular marker of identity in Ottoman Turkey. Nonetheless, from the early *Tanzimat* era onward, Islam ultimately became a greater instrument of government in the hands of the dominant ethnic group[52] to justify its rule and to assimilate dominated populations.[53] Yet, in the Republican reading of Ottoman history articulated by Alp, the Turks were victims of their religiosity: they "were supposed to be the ruling ethnic group [but in reality they] were the most forgotten one in this vast and borderless Empire."[54]

According to Alp, the lack of nationalism in the later Ottoman period, in part, was because the Turks did not play their role as a majority and therefore could not suppress non-Turkish ethnic politics. The Turks, in his words, did not have coercive rule (*tehekkum*) due to their lack of cohesive

(*bir hahlde olmayinda*) national consciousness.[55] Alp thus views the sheer inability of the Ottoman Turks to assimilate the rest of the population as a testament to their lack of national consciousness.

Tehekkum, according to Alp, is a manifestation of the will of the majority imposed on minorities. As such, the majority "should crush" a minority if it resists the former's will.[56] Contrary to the Ottoman period, which was plunged in ominous (*menhus*) ethnicity politics, the new Turkey would not allow ethnic policies to surface.[57] In the new Turkey, those who wish to be a part of national life (*milli hayat*) have no choice but to become Turks.[58] This national life is a forceful imposition of the majority's will and identity. In the words of the first prime minister of the Republic, İsmet İnönü, "our mission is Turkifying whoever lives on this land regardless of the cost."[59] Certainly, there are some novel approaches to the rule of majority as posited by Alp, which became the public discourse of the state after 1909. In the previous era or the Hamidian period, the state had declared privileging Turkish as a right, and had Turkified education and the language of bureaucracy, but had not gone so far as to declare that all its citizens were either Turks or that they had to become Turks.[60] Republican nationalism, on the other hand, was exceptionally bold and certainly had no chance for success in earlier periods.

This new nationalist discourse was adamant and unequivocal about its assimilationist character while simultaneously claiming to be inclusive. It was overtly racial and entailed an outright denial of the other. However, it always remained vigilant against other nationalisms, crushing and labeling them as "exclusionary and retrograde (*irtca-i*)." This nationalist discourse was unprecedented in late Ottoman history, at least until the end of the Hamidian period.

It is important to note that Republican ideologues were not alone in their dissatisfaction with the nationalism of their imperial past. Generally, nationalizing tendencies were considered unsatisfactory by the succeeding radical statist/nationalist generations, since they created a particular dilemma for the ruling elite, who could be perceived as both champions and traitors. Comparing the later rereading of this situation in both the Ottoman and Hapsburg contexts, Anderson maintains that "In much the same way [as the Hapsburgs], the Ottomans came to be hated by the Turkish-speakers as apostates and by the non-Turkish-speakers as Turkifiers."[61]

It is of no small significance, however, that prior to the Republican period major Turkist and nationalist ideologues like Yusuf Akçuraoğlu (1876–1932) and Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) not only acknowledge some

type of state nationalism in the *Tanzimat* era, but also declare that one of the ultimate goals behind the *Tanzimat* reforms was the assimilation of non-Turkish subjects. To them, the *Tanzimat* reforms represented the state's homogenizing policies in disguise.

Commenting on Ottoman official nationalism, Yusuf Akçuraoğlu (1876–1935, İstanbul), another prophet of Turkism, keenly observes that the French model was ineffective in solving the crisis of the Ottoman state.[62] He notes that in the 1850s, the Ottoman state adopted the policy of assimilating (*temsil*) the dominated ethnic and religious communities in the hope of unifying all the existing ethnic and religious components of the Empire (*imtizaj*).[63] In fact, Akçuraoğlu refers to a type of missionary nationalism that had been adopted by Ottoman political leaders mostly in the mid-nineteenth century.[64] His *Üç Tarz-i Siyaset*,[65] initially published in 1904, refers to Ottomanism as a failed policy, and posits the pre-Hamidian period as the origin of this type of politics.

Moreover, Akçuraoğlu considered the French type of missionary nationalism of the era to be misdirected. Unlike the German type, which conformed to his more recent views on nationalism, the French model did not emphasize racial and linguistic factors. To him, a proper and realistic Turkish nationalism would be based on Turkish ethnicity with no considerations for geographical boundaries.[66] This was in contradiction to the views of the earlier elite and statesmen, who attempted to forge an identity for Ottoman subjects with no overt emphases on '*irk* (ethnicity).[67] Rather, the earlier Ottoman statesmen were emphatic about their mission to keep the empire intact by entrenching an identity that could supplant all types of religious and ethnic loyalties except for the one desired by the state.

Drafting a constitution and creating a parliament was long considered vital to the Ottoman state's world standing. The state was intent upon readjusting its status in the new world system and legally moving beyond the social division inherent in the entrenched culture of the former *millet* system. However, Ali Paşa, a powerful statesman in the 1850s, whom Akçuraoğlu considers to be one of the greatest proponents of Ottomanism,[68] vehemently opposed this idea. He rightly argued that a constitution and representative assembly would grant a political platform to the very people whose secessionist tendencies were a threat to the Empire.[69] Ottoman historian Makdisi points out the Ottoman paradox in the nineteenth century: The state tried to integrate the periphery, but this very attempt at assimilation caused further segregation between the center and the periphery.[70] Indeed, the real reason behind the façade

of religious equality was to remove differences at the expense of dominated groups. An Ottoman statesman such as Ali Paşa knew that instead of eliminating differences, a constitution could very well legalize them and strengthen the budding nationalistic desires present in dominated communities. Undoubtedly, the Great Powers, such as Britain, France, and Russia, were also keenly aware of this fact and therefore increasingly pressured the Ottomans for reforms they hoped would make the Ottoman Empire more open to the capitalist market. Additionally, they hoped for the eventual disintegration of the empire by way of "according autonomy and independence to its Christian subjects, whose middle class had developed substantially."[71]

The Ottoman fear of non-dominant group nationalism was real and present. Clearly, the dominant groups are not the ones who would see themselves as the beneficiaries of a possible state disintegration. Therefore, despite the fact that "empires usually have recognizably dominant ethnic groups—Germans, Russians, Turks—to identify the empire with these groups would risk bitter resentment and possibly dissolution."[72] When an ethnic group is privileged and dominant, it would be unwise on its part to trumpet its own privileged position and cause unwarranted challenges. Thus, "Ruling groups are aware of the need to distance themselves from any one ethnicity, to appear, at least, impartial as between the various peoples that make up the empire."[73]

To come back to pre-Republican readings of late Ottoman history, a Turkist thinker such as Akçuraoğlu was able to see beyond the guise of so-called Ottomanist and "pan-Islamist" policies. Akçuraoğlu considered these policies genuine attempts to save the Ottoman state. Yet he believed they were outdated and unpersuasive as ideologies, since ethnicity did not constitute the pillar of these policies.[74] Thus, when Akçuraoğlu critiques pan-Islamist policies or emphasizes Turkism, he should not be necessarily seen as anti-religious.[75] However, as a statist nationalist, he no longer believed in defining the identity of the sovereign as Islamic or Ottoman rather than Turkish. In the age of nationalism, argues Akçuraoğlu, neither Ottomanism nor Islamism could save the empire, which was the common strategic goal of all those policies.

In brief, Yusuf Akçuraoğlu intended to make clear the unrealistic nature of the two approaches that were previously devised and adopted in the hope of saving the Ottoman Empire. Since neither Ottomanism nor pan-Islamism were publicly advocating "race" as the basis for defining national identity, they were both inefficacious.[76] He unequivocally "sought the

eventual dominance of Turkism and the transformation of the Ottoman State into a Turkish homeland."[77]

Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), the most influential ideologue of Turkism, makes a similar observation with respect to the real aims of the *Tanzimat* reforms. Until 1912, when the state lost almost all of its European lands in the Balkan Wars, he still hoped that the political ideology of Ottomanism might someday come to fruition. However, as early as 1913, Gökalp expressed his disillusionment, noting "that *Tanzimat* leaders[78] and Young Turks were not sincere in their recognition of the rights of the various communities, but used the ideal of Ottomanism as a cloak for the Turkification of the state."[79] Gökalp goes a step further and introduces the entire enterprise of Ottomanism as a well-thought out state policy for assimilating non-Turks declaring that

> The reformists (*Tanzimatçılar*) tried to disguise Turkishness. There was not a national Turkish language; Ottoman was the interethnic (*unsurlar arası*) common language. By comingling all the elements, they were trying to create a new national breed (*bir kavmi tip*), a historical race, a derivative (*türemiş*) Ottoman nation. Just as the new nation would have had a unique language, it also would have owned a unique history. No ethnic group was deceived by such a lie. In their own schools, every ethnic group taught their children their own history and language.[80]

With the progression of time, Gökalp insinuates, Turkification became a major concern for non-Turks. He contends that

> in the aftermath of Constitutionalism, [from the perspective of the state] this mask [Turkification] gained more significance; ethnic groups began to shout "you are trying to Turkify us." In reality this Ottomanization policy was a disguised instrument for the Turkification[81] [of non-Turks]… Since Ottoman was nothing other than the Turkish language, then, if the goal was to create a nation whose language was Ottoman, this new nation would be a Turkish nation, only with a different name.[82]

In reality, as shown in the following chapter, Ottoman officials were much bolder with regards to Turkish language than Gökalp gives them credit for. Ottoman administrative documents show that state officials were not at all reticent either to call the state's language Turkish or to make it a compulsory subject of study. Even though Gökalp rejects this type of Turkification for its secretive nature, he acknowledges the existence of Turkism (*Türkçülük*)

in other forms, for example, in real language reform tendencies propagated by intellectuals. The prior existence of this Turkist tradition is essential for Gökalp, because without it even modern Turkey would not be possible. Gökalp thus asks: what would have happened after the fall of the Empire.

> if Turkism had not left many of us with a unique national life, separate from the Ottoman Empire, [or with] a homeland with its boundaries drawn in accordance to the science of ethnography, [or with] an independent will that signifies our national right?[83]

In Gökalp's opinion, all this indicates that if the Turks had used "the sacred (*mukkades*) and auspicious (*mübarek*) word *Turk*" to refer to themselves, there would not be any confusion.[84]

When, then, did Turkism emerge and how it was disseminated among the Turks? Gökalp opines that the appearance of Turkism in the Empire coincides with the creation of modern schools. This is what Anderson calls "Hobsbawm's dictum that 'the progress of schools and universities measures that of nationalism'."[85] To Gökalp, these new institutions signified the dysfunction of the old ones, which in turn represented the unsuitability of the old socioreligious bonds among Turks. In Gökalp's own terms:

> The first fathers of Turkism (*Türkçülük*) were two [mid-19th century] institutions of ours: Darülfünun and the Academy of War (*Mektebi Askeriye*). It would not have been possible to open Darülfünun, if the *Medrese* [the traditional school system] could have preserved its strength…Turkish feelings of a bond with the *umma* too began to fade away. The renewed attempts to reorganize Darülfünun and the Academy of War in the last years of the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz (1839–1876) were again an indication of the weakening of the [Turkish] bonds with [the Islamic *umma*].[86]

Akçuraoğlu and Gökalp's designation of the preceding generation of Ottoman statesmen as masked nationalists is worth noting, particularly because claims about the latency of Turkish nationalism and its sudden appearance in 1908 or 1912 fail to see the complexities of official nationalism. Instead of perpetuating this claim, it is more helpful to pay attention to how Turkish nationalism was formulated during and after the *Tanzimat* era, be it Ottomanism, "pan-Islamism" or outright Turkism.

Abdülhamid II's policies, in many ways, were the culmination of the trend of Ottomanism, which had started long before he came to power. Ottomanism was a policy to end the traditional state–subject relationship

which had differentiated Ottoman subjects based on their religious affiliations. The Ottoman elite declared their intention to rectify inequalities among subjects stemming from the fact that their rights and social standing were directly affected by their religious faith. In the mid-nineteenth century, Ottoman leaders were supposed to grant subjects equal legal protection regardless of their religious backgrounds. It was declared that "all the subjects of the one state are members of the same nation."[87] In this manner, the state–religion relationship was to be replaced by that of state–nationality. Such policies aimed at redefining the Ottoman subject's relationship to the nation-state and shifting their loyalties and obligations away from communal and religious identities. This shift in emphasis, as Karpat convincingly argues, "inadvertently moved toward giving political expression to the individual's primordial identities within the nation-state. This individualistic orientation, however, arose within the organizational and institutional framework of the political culture of the 'Turks,' which was premised partly on the supremacy of state authority."[88]

In essence, this modern redefinition of the subject, by which the traditional Muslim–Turk was replaced by the Turk under the guise of Ottomanism, naturally resulted in the redefinition of the sovereign. As such, Turkishness was no longer simply the sovereign's incidental ethnic lineage, but became the source of politico-cultural restructuring of society. Emphasis on the markers of Turkish identity were becoming clearer by the 1870s—the first constitutional era. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the idea of racial and linguistic unity beyond the state's boundaries was gaining currency.[89] Sati'al-Husri asserts that Turkification (*al-istitrak*)[90] of the language, was popular only among small circles of literati. It began with the *Tanzimat* reforms and was later followed by the Turkification of history and the state.[91] Şerif Mardin has shown the significance of the use and revival of Turkish vernacular in the works of Young Ottomans, along with their romantic nationalism. Namik Kemal, a Young Ottoman poet whose "patriotic poetry [was] filled with exhortations to save [the] fatherland…"[92] declared in 1872 that "the desired future prosperity of the Islamic caliphate will be the contribution of the Turks in the first degree,"[93] Kemal was even more rigorous than his "precursors [in his efforts for] the simplification of the Turkish language."[94]

Against the backdrop of increasing emphasis on the ethnic identity of the ruling group, the 1876 Ottoman constitution declared Turkish the official language of the Empire. However, despite this new legal and social

valorization of Turkish, and by proxy of its speakers in the multilingual Ottoman society, major components of the *Tanzimat* reforms remained intact. Some issues were religiously more expedient to ignore such as "the inclusion of non-Muslims deputies…"[95]

The 1876 Constitution, though soon to be overridden by the Sultan's autocratic policies, still espoused the goals and the ethos of *Tanzimat* and Ottomanism. The constitution was the legacy of bureaucrats and did not reflect the aspirations of Ottoman society at large "but [was a tool] designed to reshape society and legitimize control of government power."[96]

The first Ottoman constitution as well as the Sultan's so-called pan-Islamist policies should be looked at as political strategies devised as responses to increasing internal and external pressure that forced the state to reformulate its strategy of survival. However, on the whole, this strategy signified the increasing political will of the state to reshape its own society and to stave off increasing foreign pressures. As such, in addition to the reorganization of the state bureaucracy, the elites hoped to bring legitimacy to the state both internally and internationally. These changes had a long-lasting impact on Ottoman–Turkish politics and thus understanding this era accurately is key to our understanding of the later Republican period.[97] Abdülhamid II was the supreme player in this environment and his policies should be seen in this new context of ever-dominating Turkish official nationalism.

Notes

1. For more on the concept of official nationalism see: Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 83–111.
2. Cf. Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998). Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas, 1st Syracuse University Press ed., Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000*). Erik Jan. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004).
3. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 85.
4. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 3.
5. Michael E. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), xiii.

6. Guha, *History at The Limit of World-history*, 35.
7. See Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey.*
8. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*: *The Ottoman legacy of Turkish modernity*, xiii.
9. For a profound philosophical critique of this type of historiography, see Guha, *History at The Limit of World-history.*
10. Ibid., 36.
11. Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Zed Books, 2004), 52.
12. Ibid.
13. Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*: *Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 13.
14. Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic*: *Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Zed Books, 2004), 62.
15. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 83–111.
16. Akçam, *From Empire to Republic*: *Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*, 63.
17. Billig's statement is not specifically made about the Ottoman context. See, Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 5.
18. See Karpat (2005). Also, for more on religious management in the Ottoman Empire, especially from 1876 to the 1880s see, Zürcher (2010).
19. See Chaps. 6 and 7.
20. Cf. Celîlê Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak/Thirteen Interesting Pages from Kurdish People's History*, trans. Hasan Kaya (Istanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2007), 33–56.
21. Cf. Takin Alp, *Türkleştirme/Turkification* (Istanbul: Resmli Ay, 1928), 3.
22. Akçam, *From Empire to Republic*: *Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*, 65.
23. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 86.
24. Ibid.
25. Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, x-xi & 20.
26. Ibid., 30.
27. Cf. Şerif Mardin, *Religion*, *Society*, *and Modernity in Turkey*, 1st ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006).
28. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 11–12.
29. Selim Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery," 312–13.
30. Murat Ergin, "Chromatic Turkishness: Race, Modernity, and Western Scholars in the Construction of the Turkish National Identity "(Unpublished PhD dissertation, The University of Minnesota 2005), 138.

31. Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Mühendisliği, 1913–1918/the Code of Modern Turkey*, Arastrma-Inceleme Dizisi (Cagaloglu, Istanbul: Iletisim, 2008), 89.
32. Ibid.
33. Wolf's explanation of state centralization policies in France, quoted in Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, 32.
34. Murat Belge, "Genç Kalemler and Turkish Nationalism," in *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Kerem Öktem, Celia Kerslake, and Philip Robins (Basingstoke England; New York; Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 28.
35. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 85.
36. Belge, "Genç Kalemler and Turkish Nationalism," 28.
37. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 14.
38. Cf. Ergin, "Chromatic Turkishness: Race, Modernity, and Western Scholars in the Construction of Turkish National Identity".
39. Guha, *History at The Limit of World-history*, 15.
40. Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Agaoglu and the New Turkey.*
41. Ergin, "Chromatic Turkishness: Race, Modernity, and Western Scholars in the Construction of Turkish National Identity," 90.
42. Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Agaoglu and the New Turkey*, 24.
43. Cf. Alp, *Türkleştirme.*
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 20.
46. Ibid., 20.
47. Ibid., 20.
48. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 779.
49. Alp, *Türkleştirme*, 34.
50. See Chap.2 in Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi.*
51. Cf. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 781–88.
52. It was Mahmud II (1789–1839) who—in order to turn it into an actual state apparatus—incorporated the office of *Shaikh al-Islam*, the highest clerical position in *Sunni* Islam, into the state bureaucracy.
53. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 769.
54. Alp, *Türkleştirme*, 18.
55. Ibid., 31.
56. Ibid., 32.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid. One should remember that this type of nationalism has been lauded by scholars such as Berkes (1965), Lewis (1961) and Landau as a civic, non-racial, and non-ethnic nationalism.

59. Alp, *Türkleştirme*, 32.
60. See the following sections.
61. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*: 85.
62. Yusuf Akçuraoğlu, *Üç Tarz-i Siyaset/Three Types of Politics* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Kadir, 1327/1911), 3–7.
63. "Ittihadi 'Enasur Meselesi/the Question of the Ethnic Elements' Unification "*Sirat-i Mustaqim/The Straight Path*, (5, no. 121, 1910), 280–83.
64. Ibid.
65. See, Akçuraoğlu, *Üç Tarz-i Siyaset.*
66. Ibid., 5–6.
67. *Irk* is generally translated as race. However, in this context ethnicity seems to be a better rendition.
68. Ibid., 5.
69. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, 19.
70. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 770.
71. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*: 4.
72. Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, 30.
73. Ibid.
74. Akçuraoğlu, *Üç Tarz-i Siyaset*, 16–28.
75. For a very interesting discussion on figures like Yusuf Akçuraoğlu, see Shissler's introduction in: Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Agaoglu and the New Turkey.*
76. Akçuraoğlu, *Üç Tarz-i Siyaset*, 16–28.
77. Karpat, *Studies on Turkish Politics and Society: Selected Articles and Essays*, 206–07.
78. There is no doubt that Gökalp was very critical of previous Turkish generations. Yet, at the same time, his reading of the Ottoman past was much more complex than that of the later republican ideologues. Like his contemporaries, Gökalp's soul searching meant that his nationalism was shaped by his opposition to the recent Ottoman past. Therefore, his rereading of the past was overly paradoxical. Gökalp criticized the pro-*Tanzimat* officials for their secretive assimilatory policies and lack of public emphasis on Turkishness, for relegating the economic arena to the non-Turks and for their overreliance on bureaucrats (*idareciler*) instead of the common people. The latter, according to him was detrimental to Turkishness. For instance, he claims that

    the Turks' abstention from the ideal of nationality was both harmful for the state and troublesome for the ethnic groups and was fatal to the exis-

tence of Turkishness. Because they considered nationality as a living nation [of which] the state [was an embodiment], the Turks did not know that their social and economic existence was degenerating. While economic and social domination was shifting to other elements [*unsurlar*: ethnic groups], the Turks were unable to see that they were losing something; because from their perspective those [elements] were nothing more than the classes of which the Ottoman nation was made up. (Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek*, *İslamlaşmak*, *Muasırlaşmak/Turkification*, *Islamization*, *Modernization* (Ankara: Akçağ Basım, 1960), 13.)

79. Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*: *The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac, 1950), 73.
80. Gökalp, *Türkleşmek*, *İslamlaşmak*, *Muasırlaşmak*, 38.
81. *Gerçekten bu. Osmanlılaştırmak Siyaseti Türkleştirmek için Gizli bir Vasıtadan İbaretti.*
82. Gökalp, *Türkleşmek*, *İslamlaşmak*, *Muasırlaşmak*, 38.
83. *Türkçülüğün Esasları/the Principles of Turkism* (Ankara: Yeni Metbaa, 1950), 38.
84. Ibid.
85. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 71.
86. Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 57.
87. Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*: *The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp*, 72.
88. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*: *Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 9.
89. Ergin, "Chromatic Turkishness: Race, Modernity, and Western Scholars in the Construction of Turkish National Identity," 152.
90. As a policy, if it refers to something other than the politics of language, *al-istitrak* could mean the will to become a Turk or self-Turkification, since it contains the element of volition as opposed to *al-tatrik*, which is forcible and means to forcefully turn a non-Turk into a Turk.
91. Abu Khaldun Stai' Al-Husri, *Muhadarat Fi Nushu*' *Al-Fikrah Al-Qawmiyah/Lectures on the Idea of Nationalism* (Al-Qahirah: Matba'ah al-Risalah, 1951), 126–27.
92. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*: *A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*: 283.
93. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 771.
94. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*: *A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*: 283.
95. Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, *1902–1910* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press,

2011), 41. See also Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*: *A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament*.

96. Karpat, *Studies on Turkish Politics and Society*: *Selected Articles and Essays*, 201.
97. See ibid. Also, Erik-Jan. Zürcher, “The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State,” in *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity*: *Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Celia Kerslake Kerem Öktem, Philip Robins (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

CHAPTER 5

Abdülhamid II's Pan-Islamism/Nationalism

Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamism was not a revival of Islam as a religion per se,[1] but the revival of Muslim subjects' political identity within a Turkish cultural context inside Ottoman boundaries. It should also be viewed as an attempt to create a unified stance against European colonialism. However, the religious discourse of the state and the reinvigoration of an Islamic identity was one of the most effective strategies adopted by the Hamidian state for the survival of the Empire. This is how Abdülhamid II tried to veil the state's official nationalism internally and to preserve the Empire's universalist image in the Muslim world at large. His "Islamic revivalist" project took place within the framework of Turkish culture and Ottoman official nationalism. His project had three major important components: Ottoman Islam and linguistic nationalism, the history of educational and linguistic Turkification, and nationalism and the politics of pan-Islamism.

Official Language and Turkification

Anderson's insights with respect to other empires are also applicable to Ottoman official nationalism. Like German's "universal-Imperial" and "particular-national" status in the Hapsburg Empire,[2] in the Ottoman case, both Islam and Turkish acquired a similar double status: Turkish-Islam among Muslim subjects and Turkish among all Ottoman subjects. Islam represented this double status of the Ottoman Empire as Turkishness increasingly fused into official Islam. The double status persisted with a greater public emphasis on Islam along with the gradual shrinkage of

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public space for non-Turkish identities. Moreover, Ottoman officials increasingly Ottomanized Islam in tandem with rigorous attempts at civilizing the periphery.[3] The Ottoman elite or, to use Ottomanist scholar Deringil's phrase, "the White [Men] wearing a fez"[4] progressively strove to turn Islam into a colonizing instrument.[5] Ottoman Islam gradually became infused with Turkishness and became "the condition of the difference"[6] between the center and the periphery. It should be indicated that Turkishness and Islam had been intertwined long before Abdülhamid II's accession to power, but not in the way that some Orientalist scholars have proposed.[7] Also, Islam, in the pre-Republican period, did not make the Turks unconscious of their ethnic identity. On the contrary, Ottoman archival documents and papers reveal that the Turks were quite conscious of their ethnicity. For the Ottoman elite, Turkish-language literacy was a criterion by which they could sometimes determine the degree of non-Turkish subjects' loyalty.[8] Inability to speak Turkish could be viewed as a sign of both backwardness and disloyalty to the state. For example, in 1889, a protracted dispute between Christian and Muslim subjects resulted in the replacement of the bishop in Çeşme/Izmir. The bishop is referred to as one of the actors behind the prolongation of this dispute. He is accused of being under the influence of sources with "evil intentions" and is alluded to as someone who "did not even know Turkish (*Türkçe bile bilmeyen*)."[9]

Conceiving of Turkish as a factor that could ensure Ottoman subjects' Muslimness (or Ottomanness, in the case of non-Muslims) seems to have had long roots in the *Tanzimat* period. Subjects who were not fluent in Turkish were considered amenable to foreign influence. Ottoman archival documents explicitly state that this language gap could represent both religious and political dangers.[10] From the perspective of the elite, a person or a group who did not know Turkish could readily adopt non-Muslim culture, especially in the European side of the Ottoman territories.[11] This notion of Turkishness became the intersection of Islam and nationalism, as Turkish language was perceived as a protecting shield against foreign cultural invasion. An 1865 report by the inspector of the Third Army explains why Turkish, "the sublime language of the state,"[12] should be taught in Kigalık and Toskalık, part of Ottoman territory in Europe.[13] This document is evidence that even in the *Tanzimat* era, the Ottoman state considered other religions threats to its integrity. Additionally, the report not only underscores the centrality of Turkish to official policies but also reveals the connections made between Turkish language and Islam. The

report attributes that region's embrace of Greek costumes (*meşreb*) and religion to their lack of Turkish literacy, noting that this could result in grave consequences for the state.[14] The report concludes by recommending the instruction of the "sublime language of the state" as a panacea. The inspector, along with other officials in the region, proposes Turkish instruction as the best deterrent to the infiltration of foreign religion and culture and the consequent potential loss of those territories.[15] It is clear that the Ottoman elite's perception of Turkish, both as a unifying factor and, more interestingly, as a proselytizing medium, goes back as far as the 1860s. As stated, all high-ranking local Ottoman officials unanimously held that the Turkish language could safeguard both Islam and Ottoman lands in those regions.[16] Hence, these officials unanimously wrote the Minister of Education about the vital role of Turkish instruction in halting people's assimilation into a non-Muslim culture.[17] This document reinforces the idea that the Ottoman elite had misgivings about the way Islam was understood and practiced in the periphery.[18]

The Ottoman elite's attitudes legitimated the civilizing role of Islam in the center.[19] They compellingly illustrate the fact that in the *Tanzimat* period Islam continued to be a major component of Ottomanism and remained an important aspect of the Empire's identity. This not only demonstrates an embedded utilitarian view about Islam but also throws the inclusiveness of Ottomanism into question. The ethnic bent of Ottomanist Islam becomes particularly clear in the context of official reliance on the Turkish language as a vital medium for the spread of Islam, especially in the Empire's European domain.

In the eyes of the Ottoman elite, the nature of Islamic understanding in the periphery was located outside the cultural framework of Turkishness. This view constituted the locus of the Ottoman Turkish elite's specific mission and unique role.[20] The aforementioned examples illustrate that the elite saw themselves as the only agent capable of a true interpretation of Islam; an interpretation that generally takes places in accordance with the Empire's interest and integrity. Strong support for this interpretation can be found in Young Ottoman thinker Namik Kemal's poem, *Vatan*, which advocates the elimination of any non-Turkish language to ensure the unity of the homeland.[21] Turks were perceived as being different from all other Muslims. Thus, within Ottoman Turkish Islamic discourse, agency is completely stripped from the periphery, as Ottoman Turks exclusively bore the responsibility for modernizing Islam and society. In the early 1870s,

Kemal was explicit about the central role of Turks in the Empire. Despite their past contribution to the Muslim world, he could only imagine Arabs as passive beneficiaries of Turkish contributions to the "future prosperity of the Islamic caliphate."[22] Though religious discourse was dominant, especially during the reign of Abdülhamid II, ignoring the nationalist character of this Islamic discourse obscures our understanding of what was really going on. State discourse emphasized Islam as the common bond, but "ultimately justified Ottoman Turkish rule over Muslim and non-Muslim subjects, over Arabs, Armenians, Kurds, Bulgarians, etc."[23]

During the first constitutional period, the Ottoman elite "had a clear notion that the Turks constituted the 'fundamental element' (*unsur-u asli*) of the empire,"[24] a belief that even the Sultan was not hesitant to express.[25] Abdülhamid II himself believed that Islam was indispensable for assimilating non-Turkish populations such as that of the Kurds, especially in Anatolia. The Sultan's remark that "we need to strengthen the Turkish element in Anatolia and [at the same time] give priority to making the Kurds part of us"[26] clearly reveals the Ottoman state's ethnic assimilationist policies.

In the eyes of the Ottoman elite, the gap between Turks and other Muslims was significant. To Ottoman officials like Osman Nuri Paşa, the Vali of Hijaz, only non-Turks' abandonment of their identity—which the Ottomans generally viewed as mere manifestations of savagery and backwardness—could bridge this gap.[27] What Makdisi calls "Ottoman Orientalism" can be situated in this very perception of the other, which was nurtured within Ottoman Islamic discourse.[28] Thus, Ottoman Islamic discourse was exclusionary and ethnocentric. Embracing a full-fledged cultural Turkishness was a step in the right direction because this was the only equalizing possibility for non-Turks.[29] Traces of this cultural definition of Turkishness are visible in Republican discourse as well, which defines it as a type of cultural gestation or as a process of becoming. However, here Islam is less visible (yet still present and regulated).

Ottoman officials' increasing emphasis on the central role of the Turks in protecting Islam and the state reveals their utilitarian view of Islam. They saw the instrumentality of Islam: (a) in the state's civilizing practices that pitted "our" Islam versus "theirs,"[30] (b) in the state's call for general Islamic unity in the face of European aggression, since these calls were predicated on the supposed Islamic unity of the Empire and on a shared understanding of Islam by all Muslims, whereby Islam was an equalizing element. However, these calls for Islamic unity were paradoxical, because

the Ottoman elite's civilizing mission was based on the invalidity of all other existing interpretations of Islam. That the Ottoman state advocated a universal Muslim unity only when it corresponded to its own interest highlights the instrumental use of Islam. (c) The Ottoman state also utilized Islam as a legitimizing tool; other interpretations of Islam were only affirmed when it could entrench the subordinated status of the periphery in the absence of the state's military might.[31] In other words, Islam was invoked only when it functioned as "a hegemonic totalization."[32] These explicit contradictions in the state's Islamic discourse seem to be one of the major causes of the emergence of peripheral Islamic nationalist discourse.

This instrumental use of Islam is further apparent when we note that Ottoman policy privileged Turkish over Arabic, which has historically been an integral part of Islamic culture. Emphasizing the uniqueness of Turkish Islam required decoupling Islam from Arabic and reinterpreting the Islam in tune with the rise of nationalistic tendencies. As philology gained greater currency in Ottoman circles, language, progress, and ethnicity were increasingly tied together and affected the elite's reinterpretation of Islam along with their views of others. An 1885 debate over the connection between the Arabic language and Islam strongly exemplifies these new developments.

In 1885, an Arab journalist named Nacib Nader wrote, "in my opinion, in Arabic unlike European languages (*elsiney-i ifrenciye*), which look like children's toys, we can express any ideas in the most eloquent manner."[33] He added that "up to this day, the Turkish language has yet to have a grammar that it deserves (*layikine*). Therefore, the truth is, without knowing proper Arabic, writing good Turkish is almost impossible."[34] These assertions outraged some of the most prominent Ottoman intellectuals. People like the renowned Ottoman lexiconist, Shams al-Din Sami, mocked Nader publicly, calling him "a vagrant Maronite from Lebanon." Sami wrote that he understood neither Nader's intent nor his point in making those remarks. He added: "may God turn me (not into an Arab) [but worse,] into a black Arab[35] (*bendeniz bundan bir şey anladımse* '*arab değil*' *erâb olayım*),[36] if I have understood any of this and pretend that I have not."[37] Sami also objected that no Ottoman, by which he meant no Turk, could agree with Nader Efendi's assertions about the Ottoman language. For Sami, unlike Arabic, the real Ottoman language was neither concealed in books nor had it degenerated. Furthermore, no one needed Arabic to write in proper Turkish since the two are from completely different language families: one is Semitic and the other is "Turani."[38] These polemical

writings continued for about a fortnight until the Palace ordered an end to the discussion over "Arabic language and Arabic sciences, since [it] could confuse people's minds."[39] The debate, however, lasted long enough to reveal the Ottoman elite's view of Arabic and its connection to religion, progress, and the sciences.

In his initial reaction to Nader, Sami compared Arabic to European languages like English, French, and German, claiming that these three languages were perfect as they constituted the pillars of modern civilization, sciences, and technology.[40] Sami's claim regarding the connection between language and civilization illustrates the influence of the philological discourse of the period that held that there was a direct corollary between people's progress and the language they used.[41] In some instances, his remarks much resemble Renan's famous line about Semitic and Aryan languages, especially when the latter notes that Arabic is a great language for expressing poetic imagination (*hiyalat-i şairane*), but when it comes to its application to technology and science, Arabic is not even "comparable to third rate European languages like Russian."[42] Here, Sami is almost copying Orientalists such as Renan who believed that "the sensual nature of the Semitic tongues is well suited to the singularly affective character of Semitic poetry."[43] Despite this unique poetic capability, however, Renan claimed that Semitic languages were inept at articulating "abstract terms and concepts born of rational effort."[44] Sami's critics had defended Arabic as a language that was uniquely developed due to its great grammatical features, like numerous dual and plural pronouns and conjugations not present in many other languages. However, Sami disagreed with this interpretation, contending that though the languages of some "savage peoples in Africa" have the same features, this does not mean that their languages are well developed.[45]

Sami had recently written a linguistic book based on "a science that is called 'linguistic', in the civilized world … For the first time, I presented this humble work in our own language by consulting all the available literature, in different languages on this specific science."[46] It is clear that philological studies were popular in Ottoman intellectual circles and even outlandish speculations made by philologists as part of their construct of an Aryan–Semitic myth seem to have been taken seriously by Ottoman intellectuals. The philological discussions over Adam's language in the Garden of Eden is one such example. In questioning the sacredness of Arabic, Ahmet Midhat, one of the most prolific Ottoman intellectuals, refers to a book revealed to Adam in Eden, supposedly in Sanskrit.[47]

It should be noted that these discussions also attest to the fact that not every Ottoman subject was considered Ottoman. With regard to the Asian territories of the Empire, philology's racial and linguistic classifications of "Semitic" people deepened the existing chasm between the center and the periphery. This can be inferred from the utterly scornful responses of Ottoman intellectuals to the Arab journalist, Nacib Nader, when he criticizes them for preferring French terms over the existing Arabic equivalents in Ottoman textbooks.[48] Midhat expressed his outrage over Nader's criticism by using some common stereotypes about Arabs and wrote that

> we advise him to go and teach [his nonsense] in Palestine, in Morocco or in whatever hellish place (*cehennem*) he could teach it. *The Ottomans* do not really need this…In the age of modernity and progress they [the likes of Nader] cannot convince us to incorporate their nonsense in the Ottoman educational system… If they are intent to serve, *we will help them*, otherwise it is up to them whether they want to spend their times in *taverns or Arabia*, they should just go and get lost; *amidst serving our nation*, *we have no time for their gibberish* (*turrahat*).[49] (Emphases added)

Like most literature in this period, this debate also illustrates that the Ottoman elite was not contemptuous of the Turks or the Turkish language. On the contrary, they took great pride in their Turkishness and in reforming Turkish, what Midhat terms as "serving our nation." Some, like Midhat, went so far as to say that "we are basically the zealots[50] of the Ottoman[51] language."[52] This was Midhat's reply when a young poet accused him of failing to exhibit his usual forcefulness to emphasize that Turkish was on par with French in its development.[53]

The most revealing aspect of this debate, however, is the way in which it symbolizes the Ottoman elite's dilemma regarding the ties between Islam and Arabic culture and language. It is hard to determine how much their views had been affected by philological studies; however, philology introduced newer ideas about the connection of race, language, and progress, which figured prominently in the Ottoman elite's nationalist thought, especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While Muslims consider Arabic the medium of revelation, it gradually came to be known as the language of the "Semitic people," which philologists claimed was stuck in an infantile stage of development. On the one hand, as Muslims, the Ottoman elite, like Sami and Midhat, had to acknowledge the absolute truth of the revelation through Arabic, and on the other, philologists like

Renan designated Arabic as a "Semitic language," "incapable of articulating abstract terms."[54] The elite's ready embracement of these pseudo-scientific views of Arabic as deficient and backward made it increasingly tempting to decouple Arabic from Islam. The following passage from Ahmet Midhat vividly shows such an attempt to distance Islam from Arabs and Arabic:

> They say Arabic language is sacred, why is that? Because, [we are told that] the holy Qur'an…is in Arabic. Does this mean only the ignorant are Muslims? We are all Muslims. With our service, we have already proven that we own a greater Islamic zeal than they do … Is the language of the Qur'an the same as the gibberish of Arabic (*acwakli fulanly*) spoken by Najib Nader? This is just impossible; because since the time they set foot on the earth, to the day on which the Qur'an was revealed, and now thirteen hundred years to that day, the Arabs have yet to be able to imitate or to produce a single verse as eloquent as, and as supreme linguistically (*i'cazi fashat*) as the Quran. This means that the Qur'an is not the word of Arabs; it is not Arabic; it is *Allahce*[55] (the language of God).[56]

To resolve the incompatibility of the Qur'an with "the science of philology," and to relegate Arabic to a secondary role, Midhat dissociates the Qur'an from a "primitive Semitic" language. Apparently, for Midhat, the commonly held Muslim view about the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'an (*i'jaz*) was not reconcilable with its revelation through a "Semitic language."

Unlike Midhat, Sami refrained from questioning 'the sacredness of Arabic language." Perhaps hoping not to offend conservative groups or to throw his new philological findings about Arabic into question, Sami tried to find a middle ground. He even went so far as to state that all Islamic languages are sacred and Arabic is the most sacred of all.[57] Sami strove to show that the weaknesses of Arabic were real but they had no bearing on the sacredness of language by giving examples. An architect, for instance, could build a mediocre mosque and a house that is spectacular in every sense.[58] The mosque's structure is in no way comparable to that majestic house, but despite the mosque's great architectural deficiencies, it is holy and the house is not. In this way, Sami hoped to assure his audience that when he talked about the deficiencies of Arabic, he had only its scientific flaws (*fununce nuksani*) in mind. He also challenged his opponents and contended that if they possessed any knowledge of this "new science," they

should make their arguments accordingly.[59] Of course, Sami's respect for Arabic could not be extended to Arabs or even to contemporary Arabic—the first were viewed as "primitives" and the second as "degenerated." In his view, the overall Arab contribution to Islam for the past several centuries had been negative. Addressing the Arabs, he noted that

> for the last seven to eight centuries, those who have tried to protect Islam for the cause of Allah were not Arabs, but Turks and other nations who joined the Turks in that cause, whom are not well known to be adored by you. In this entire time, the Arabs have not done anything but to prove and unveil their primitive ignorance and to label Turkish *mujahid*s…as Christians.[60]

Now, it becomes clearer that the insertion of the language clause in the final draft of the 1876 Constitution under the aegis of Abdülhamid II was not a mere accident. The language clause was part of the most significant text in Ottoman history that illustrated the ruling elite's thoughts, views, and philosophy of "reordering or reasserting things" in late Ottoman society. The Constitution was a text, and as van Dijk maintains, a text has to have a context or a discourse,[61] which in this case was the centrality of Turkish language. In modern times, any language is more a political phenomenon than a cultural one, and therefore modern states' policies and attitudes regarding language must not be perceived as apolitical.[62] Declaring a particular language as the official one in a multilingual context signifies the change in this context, or as James Scott and Eugen Weber have suggested, unveils the domestic colonization of the other.[63]

No Ottoman Sultan besides Abdülhamid II had ever been so attentive to the religious aspect of his politics. While Arabic, unlike Turkish, had been traditionally perceived as the language of religious instruction, it received no official attention under the Sultan's rule.[64] This very attempt in and of itself was an official declaration of the secondary role assigned to Arabic and all languages and their speakers. Through such a linguistic hierarchization, "The organization of power… telling us who is included and who is left out, it also differentiates the bounded political community internally. This it does by acknowledging different kinds of identities in law."[65] Considering the historical context of his accession to power and his ostentatious claim to religiosity, Abdülhamid's action was overtly unorthodox. Why was the ruling ethnic group's language declared official when the state was adamant about radically reasserting its religious identity? Is this paradoxical?

The language issue clearly represents another aspect of "the double status" of Turkish and, in a sense, another area of contestation between the dominant and the dominated. Unlike dominated groups, Ottoman officials, however, did not view it as a paradox. As indicated above, they had already particularized Islam, the universalist aspect of the Empire, in their hierarchal (re)interpretation. This interpretation itself represented the merger of Ottoman Turkish Islam with their official nationalism. It was also a step further in the recognition of their own ethnicity as the "foundational element" of the Empire. The Ottoman linguistic hierarchy, which the new constitutional stipulation introduced into a multilingual and multiethnic context, reveals the new aspects of "us" versus "them." Therefore, from the perspective of Ottoman officials, granting Turkish a unique status was not a contradiction, but rather a reinforcement of their already hyphenated Turkish-Islamic identity. Both Islam and the Turkish language were domains of negotiating differences between the dominant and the dominated. The uniqueness of Turkish Islam, understood as the unique role of Ottoman elites[66] and their capability of serving Islam,[67] overlaps with the Ottoman definition of *Khilafa* as well.[68] Others were seen as lacking these qualities and therefore learning Turkish would have provided the right tools for them to remain both Muslim and Ottoman. Hence, both Islam and Turkish constituted the main conditions of difference and inequality and became manifestations of positions of power. In their study of Habsburg multilingualism, Schjerve and Vetter tell us, "investigating these inequalities means that we approach a closer understanding of how the respective languages and their speakers negotiate their different power positions and, ultimately, what kind of conflicts these negotiations were to bring about at a specific historical time."[69]

During the same period, the Russian and Hapsburg Empires too were grappling with competing nationalisms and were forced to deal with and produce specific national language policies. These changes in various multilingual settings were to take place within the specific discourse of official nationalism. Therefore, "We must … bear in mind that diglossic relations are constituted through discourse, since discourse provides for the ideological basis upon which diglossia is produced, maintained and eventually changed."[70]

To come back to the Ottoman case, both Deringil and Makdisi argue that Ottoman colonialism or Orientalism was some type of adaptation of the enemy, that is, the West's strategy in restructuring its periphery. The

Ottomans were not acting much differently in their adaptation of linguistic strategies either, as shown by one of Abdülhamid's decrees in 1894 on Turkish instruction.[71] In comparison to the Russian and Hapsburg Empires, the linguistic Turkification policies of the Ottomans reflect quite a modern official nationalism. The Hapsburgs were actually much more accommodating and unlike that of the Ottomans, the Hapsburg "constitution of 1867 decreed that every ethnic group should have the right of maintaining and protecting its nationality and language."[72] The language policy reflected in the first Ottoman constitution was more similar to the Russian state's language policies during "the Reign of Alexander II (1881-94) [in which] Russification [became] official dynastic policy: Long after…other nationalisms had appeared in the Empire."[73] It seems there was a general evolutionary trend that showed greater state emphasis on language corresponding to the gradual invigoration of official nationalism.

In the Ottoman context, this greater emphasis on Turkish was followed by certain practical limitations and excessive sensitivity to the linguistic demands and activities of dominated groups. In 1907, Said Nursi, a renowned Kurdish scholar, requested the inclusion of the Kurdish language in the education system. As a result, he was transferred to a mental hospital, which marked the culmination of a trend that illustrates the Ottoman state's reaction to the non-Turkish Other's ethnic and linguistic demands. Attending to this event in his book on Nursi, Şerif Mardin explains Abdülhamid II's reaction as his sensitivity to the unity of the state, thus ignoring the ethnic aspect of Nursi's demand.[74] Though Mardin rightly points to Abdülhamid's sensitivity, he overlooks language as one of the battlegrounds of nationalism and therefore relates the event mostly to Abdülhamid's personal paranoia.[75] It is true that Abdülhamid was a paranoid Sultan. However, as shown below, he was very attentive to the universalization of Turkish as well. He famously "ordered *huzur dersleri* (lessons in 'royal' audience), where young scholars could challenge the established *ulema*, *to be given in Turkish rather than in Arabic*, *as it had long been the tradition*."[76]

The weight that a modern state ascribes to a particular language in a multilingual sociopolitical context unveils the nature of the ethnic and linguistic power relations. Therefore, it should not be isolated from the overall nationalist tendencies of the ruling nations.[77] The issue of language and its connection to the integrity or creation of the nation-state has been a matter of great importance for nationalist groups. In both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nationalists, dominant and otherwise,

have taken this issue of language and its connection with political power very seriously. Nationalistic tendencies in multilingual social contexts are much concerned with "the diglossic distribution," to borrow Schjerve and Vetter's phraseology. Therefore, "language domain behaviors"[78] are fertile grounds for detecting nationalistic trends.

It the era of nationalism, the fear of a polity with a diverse linguistic make up has always been present. In Walker Conner's, nationalism scholar, terms, it could easily tear a country into pieces in the event of crisis.[79] In the modern era, "This way of thinking is not new. In the eighteenth century, Herder and Fichte were declaring that the basis of a nation, and its genius, lay in its language."[80] As shown below, Ottoman state documents reveal that the Ottoman elite generally considered language as "the basis of the nation."

The issue of official language is central to the project of modern nation-state building and nationalism. Charles Taylor, elaborating on Gellner's insight, points to the importance of the issue of official language and linguistic demands in modern nationalist rivalries. He states:

> What Gellner has done, which is very valuable, is define some of the very important stakes of a nationalist struggle. Just because the modern state does sustain an official language/culture, it becomes of ultimate significance to those with a strong national identity to get some kind of control of the state.[81]

Yet, despite its significance, Hamidian linguistic nationalism has rarely been attended to, though some aspects of that period's "obsessive linguistic talks" have been the focus of a few important works by the historians of the late Ottoman Empire.[82] The wrangling over languages, official and otherwise, in the modern era, is directly connected with the fight over controlling the state and is therefore a nationalist fight.

The linguistic and ethnic policies of the Hamidian regime seem to be among the least studied subjects partly because of this regime's insistence on its religious character. This is in addition to the later Kemalist depiction of it "as the wholly religious other." As shown below, the Hamidian regime had a systematic project of linguistic Turkification, which their contemporary non-Turkish Muslims were well aware of.

The emphasis on language and its political nature in the Hamidian era should thus be seen in the context of nationalism. The late nineteenth-

century language debates illustrate the fact that the Empire's different groups were becoming increasingly aware of the connection between the role of language and political power as they embraced nationalist views. Renowned Muslim revivalist Rashid Rida's views best represent the language and ethnic politics of the era within a religious framework. Rida's views are a paramount example of the interconnectivity of religion and nationalism, as well as the role of language in the late Ottoman context.

In the late 1880s, as the Hamidian regime pushed for stricter Turkification policies in the realms of education and state bureaucracy, Arab revivalists like Rida were also advocating for Arabic to be recognized as the Empire's official language. Such efforts at first glimpse might seem to be rooted only in religious concerns and sensitivities. However, the subtext of his writings continually shows that his concerns go beyond pure religiosity and reflect the ongoing battle of the time.[83] They show that the debates surrounding language could not be easily separated from the racial and nationalistic politics of the time. As Haddad has shown, Rida was well aware of the nationalistic and political implications of diverse languages for the state when advocating that Arabic be granted the status of the sole official language in the Empire:

> The society should…strive to unify the language of religion and of the state by making Arabic the official language of the Ottoman state. Rida held that such unification would result in both secular[84] and religious benefits. It would spread the language of religion and abolish the racial differences between the Arabs and the Turks. For Rida, at that point, language was the criterion of race, and competing languages would breed conflicts between the races of the Ottoman Empire in the same way they bred conflicts in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[85]

It is important to remember that at the turn of the twentieth century, some Kurdish activists also used language as the main platform to further their national cause. As Ottoman Kurdish intellectual Bàbàn posited, "the basis of the liberation of a nation is not national liberation but education. The key to education is language. The gate to civilization will be opened by this key."[86] Persian and Turkish reformists, who were striving for the creation of their respective strong nations, deemed language one of the most important building blocks of the nation. It is not surprising that from the second half of the nineteenth century

onward, they advocated purifying their respective languages as a way of purging Others from their linguistic space. They thought that a simple, publicly accessible language, along with a modernized education system, could provide sufficient tools for their nations to enter the gate of "Civilization" and to survive in the face of European colonialism. It was in this context that Mirza Aqa Khan-e Kirmani (1854–1896/1897), who spent the later years of his life in Istanbul, stated that the "nation is a polity (*Umma*), which speaks a single language" and its "strength (*qavam*) is founded in its language."[87] Hence, it was not an accident that "Sultan Abdülhamid II…was also for increasing administrative efficiency through *the use of a single language*."[88]

Language was becoming one of the important battlegrounds of nationalism, and modern linguistic policies generally reflected this dialectical relationship between the opposing nationalisms of dominant and dominated ethnic groups. Dominant nationalism usually takes its right to sovereignty for granted, while from a dominated ethnic group's standpoint this assumption could be the locus of the dominant Other's hegemony. Again, the domain of language becomes the battleground for different ethnic groups to engage in "claiming [or reclaiming] one's nation" to use Janet Klein's phrase.[89]

It is against the background of linguistic nationalism in the Ottoman context that by the end of the nineteenth century some Kurdish intellectuals decided to publish an Ottoman Kurdish paper called *Kurdistan*.[90] It was an attempt on the part of those intellectuals to revive and modernize the Kurdish language, while Ottoman officials regarded this journal as the "accursed Kurdish (*Kürtçe mel'ûne*)."[91] By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the overall emphasis on one's language and place in connection to one's ethnicity increasingly became the source of communal rivalries.[92] As Ottoman state documents demonstrate, rewards given to one's own language, on the part of the dominated groups, could signify that their sense of belonging to the dominant language and commitment to official nationalism was fading.[93] The Ottoman state's severe reactions to the linguistic activities of the dominated ethnic groups are also a testimony to the then growing linguistic nationalism. The Hamidian state went so far as to confiscate[94] traditional Kurdish religious books such as elegiac poetry that praised the Prophet of Islam (*naat*) or the Albanian alphabetic book (*Elifba*), which had previously been granted a permit.[95]

History of Educational and Linguistic Turkification

Why has the phenomenon of linguistic nationalism in the late Ottoman period been generally overlooked? As indicated above, Kemalist and Orientalist depictions of late Ottoman state and society as the universe of the *homo religiosus* should not be overlooked. Even in the face of indisputable evidence of linguistic discrimination, the Kemalists persist in denying that the Hamidian state was biased in favor of Turkish. For instance, they claimed Kurdish was forbidden as a language of instruction[96] not because of the preferential status accorded to Turkish, but because Kurdish was an "unsophisticated language."[97]

There is an important body of scholarship which does not question the arbitrary origins of Turkish nationalism. For instance, Hasan Kayalı states that "the main proposition of [his] study is that among the chief Muslim groups of the Ottoman Empire political nationalism was not a viable force until the end of World War I."[98] Yet, other scholars claim that the actual display of Turkish nationalism took place in 1910. We are told that in "the second annual convention [of the CUP], which met in Salonica in November 1910, it decided that the Turkish language be employed in all schools throughout the Empire, aiming at denationalization of all non-Turkish communities and instilling of patriotism among the Turks."[99] Nevertheless, as shown below, such a policy had already been rigorously implemented by the Hamidian state in the late nineteenth century.

Another reason might be the slower pace of Turkification policies in the Ottoman Empire compared with those of the Republic. The enormous population of the Empire, most of whom were unable to communicate in Turkish, was a major obstacle to the Ottoman state's project to universalize its language. Therefore, one must not try to understand the Turkification of the Ottoman language by comparing it to Republican project. The Kemalist state dealt with a more manageable population in which Turks constituted the majority. The enormous population and vast geographical territories are mainly to blame for rendering the Empire's linguistic policies less visible. More than anything, these realities should point to the fact that the Hamidian regime could not act identically everywhere all the time. Although the Hamidian state's official nationalism could be considered a major component of its survival strategy or a paradigmatic requirement, the state would have had to compromise in the face of more urgent and pressing necessities. Therefore, many of the state's documents,

directives, and regulations had to be translated into non-Turkish languages before regional policies could be put into practice. However, even in such circumstances, the use of non-Turkish languages has always been referred to *as an exception* and a temporary measure. The code for making such exceptions is the phrase "because this region's people do not know Turkish."[100] This was the case from at least the early 1880s onward in all Ottoman regions from Libya to Kurdistan.[101]

Archival documents like those referenced above support al-Husri's[102] contention that there existed a gradual Turkification of language from the *Tanzimat* period onward. Clearly, in this period a traceable trajectory and a steady growth of language nationalism are observable. It should be noted that the Hamidian regime's censorship policies were notorious and could lead to misinterpretations of the intentions behind state practices.

In certain instances, it might seem difficult to discern whether it is nationalism or paranoia that can best explain the state's restrictive policies with respect to non-Turkish languages. The rapid increase in censorship by the Hamidian state in comparison with its predecessors might tempt one to dismiss the state's behaviors in the linguistic domain. However, the richness of Ottoman archival documents makes such a dismissal impossible. They clearly show how the state accorded the ruling group's language a unique status and restricted other languages. Though these policies in the language domain may appear confusing, by the end of the nineteenth century the language of archival documents, as shown below, becomes clear enough and does not leave much room for misinterpretation.

The Hamidian regime saw Turkification policies as a supplement to its security and disciplinary measures. The state was aware of the significance of its Turkification polices as an instrument of governmentality. Mere security approaches cannot entirely reveal the embedded and hidden nationalistic view of "us" versus "them" in a diglossic linguistic context like that of the Ottoman Empire. Viewing such policies as security imperatives should not make us oblivious to the covert ethnic-based divisions in them.

From the mid-1880s onward, the state embarked on a dual policy of security and Turkification. Those policies concurrently aimed at the creation of a more Turkified public and the introduction of new security and disciplinary measures that could increase the state's control simply by universalizing Turkish.[103] In 1886, for instance, state laws had already criminalized advertisements of theatrical and other artistic activities[104] (*Tiyatro ve benzeri hususlara*) even in foreign papers unless they appeared

along with their Turkish rendition.[105] The following year, the state banned any language other than Turkish from being used in sending telegrams, both within and outside Ottoman domains.[106] Realizing the difficulties, these restrictions had created for Europeans, about a decade later the state relaxed some of the communication-related restrictions. Subsequently, foreigners could use English, Italian, French, and German in sending telegram messages.[107] However, these provisions were not extended to non-European languages; restrictions remained in effect for Arabic, Persian, or any other non-European languages.[108] Another example of the application of such disciplinary measures was to be seen in prisons, like the one in Kastamonu, which housed many prisoners from different backgrounds.[109] Based on these new measures, inmates could not use any language other than Turkish in their correspondence with the outside world. Their letters had to be written in Turkish so that they could "be opened and read by postal workers in the local post office."[110]

The Trajectory of the Turkification of the Language

The Turkification of language followed a linear trajectory in the Ottoman Empire. The inauguration of the *Tanzimat* period in the first half of the nineteenth century also marked the beginning of thinking of Turkish as the language of the state. From this period on, the spread of Turkish became part of the agenda of the Ottoman state. The thought behind a unified language could very well be a by-product of the creation of the modern army, which also necessitated a singular medium of communication. Although Ottoman Administrative Records do not mention any type of language reform in the earlier periods of the nineteenth century, there is evidence that in 1838 attempts were made to teach soldiers Turkish in places like Erzurum, in Eastern Anatolia. Less than a decade later, according to archival records, the state apparatus made efforts to spread Turkish among non-Turks.[111] These records reveal that the people of Libya were perhaps among the first targets of state-led educational missions. In 1847, the Committee of Public Education (*Maarif-i Umumiye Meclisi*) attempted to establish a school in this region, in which Turkish would be the sole language of instruction.[112] Arabic instruction in that school was deemed unnecessary since the people in that region "were all Arabs and already knew Arabic."[113] All teachers had to be sent from Istanbul. The document cites "the exceptional benefits of this measure" by referring to the fact that those people would learn "*the language of the state* (*devletin*

lisani)." As such, they would have access "to the unmediated diktats and notifications (*emr ve tenbih*)" of the state and its officials.[114]

How do these behaviors "reflect the ideological background of specifically diglossic manifestations of power?"[115] Are these practices not common state practices in the modern era? They surely are, and for this very reason, unlike what Orientalists such as Bernard Lewis and Kemalist historians want us to believe, they contain a great deal of assimilatory intent on the part of the dominant group. Ottoman archival documents show that in the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, officials strove to turn the Turkish language into a means of creating a sense of loyalty to the state. Even if the 1847 education mission to Tripoli and Benghazi[116] can be construed as a benevolent act to educate "poor African Arabs," teaching Turkish to the Christian subjects of the Empire in Paris does not look like an act of mere goodwill. In 1856, the aforementioned Committee (*Meclis-i Maarif*) decided to send a number of teachers to teach Turkish to the Christian subjects of the Empire living in Paris.[117] The Committee also declared its commitment to bear all the costs of this educational mission and to give financial aid to all the Christians who were residing in Paris and willing to study Turkish.[118] The state's mission of teaching Turkish was not limited to sporadic instances or to non-Muslim subjects living abroad. Non-Muslim communities remained one of the major targets of linguistic Turkification throughout the nineteenth century.[119] This validates the above claims by Akçuraoğlu and Gökalp that the main objective of Ottomanism was the Turkification of non-Turks.

Up to the mid-1880s, the general policy of the Ottoman state focused on giving incentives and encouragement to non-Muslim religious private schools. The state reimbursed private schools for all expenses incurred by teaching Turkish.[120] According to the Education Department's Regulations (*Maarif nizamnamesine göre*), even though non-Muslim private schools did not receive any governmental financial aid, Turkish instruction was regarded as an exception (*müstesna*) to this general rule.[121] The Turkish-language teachers in those schools received their salary directly from the Ministry of Education.[122] It became the official policy of the state to help private religious schools with Turkish instruction. If a non-Muslim private school decided to hire a Turkish-language instructor, s/he would have received her/his salary either from the Ministry of Education or from the Treasury.[123] The state, as indicated earlier, followed this policy until almost the mid-1890s, having introduced a tough monitoring regime by the late 1880s.

In 1888, Ottoman officials were alarmed by a report that all the guards of the foreign councils in Salonika carried arms and that the local Christian schools did not comply with the Turkish education policy.[124] After the immediate investigation, the authorities found out that though the first piece of news was not entirely accurate, Turkish was not being taught in Salonika schools. The Education Ministry received a warning that such a violation of the state's Turkish instruction policies would hamper the universalization of Turkish language (*türkçe te'mimi*).[125]

In the 1890s, non-Muslim private schools faced even greater pressure to implement the state's Turkish-language instruction policy. In 1894, these schools received warnings that they were legally obliged to include Turkish language in their curricula.[126] The Palace issued a decree claiming that European states were imposing their own languages without hesitation, not just in their own homelands but even in lands they temporarily occupied.[127] So, as Christian schools in Ottoman domains were actively disseminating their own languages, they had to be forced to teach the Turkish language.[128] The Ministry of Education was to plant an informant (*muhbir*) in the schools to observe student progress in learning the Ottoman language.[129] This Ministry was also to appoint an inspector to closely mentor and examine the Turkish-language proficiency of the students.[130] If any school faltered in its compliance with these measures, it would face closure.[131] These new measures resulted in a scandal when the American embassy sent a protest letter to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. The letter was written by a schoolteacher in Beirut and harshly criticized the newly introduced language instruction policies.[132] The letter even warned that the new Ottoman regulations could have breached mutually agreed upon political protocols by the two states.[133] Though the Ottoman state had the right to impose the teaching of a specific language or religious belief in its own schools, such impositions on Christian schools, which were funded by the American people for the sole purpose of teaching Christians, could not be lawful at all.[134] Almost a year later, the Ottoman Porte informed the Foreign Ministry that upon the Sultan's order all foreign and non-Muslim schools had been notified about the benefits and significance of Turkish instruction. Additionally, the Porte's letter indicated the suspension of obligatory Turkish instruction in non-Muslim schools.[135]

From the Hamidian state's point of view, Turkish-language instruction had a strategic importance. Turkish instruction was seen as an extension of the state's presence. The lack of Turkish instruction at any school

within the Empire's domain was viewed with suspicion. Therefore, the state resorted to whatever means it could to guarantee the infiltration of Turkish in foreign and non-Muslim schools in its domain. After the temporary suspension of obligatory Turkish instruction, the Hamidian state started giving incentives to Christian schools for teaching Turkish. Only a few months later, non-Muslim middle schools in Balkan territories (rüşdiye) were promised official recognition and financial support if they complied with the state's language policies.[136]

Hamidian Official Nationalism and Language

How one can be certain that the Hamidian state's focus on language represented anything other than its security concerns? Were the state's anxieties in any ways nationalistic?

As mentioned earlier, if Benedict Anderson is right, official nationalism was "developed *after*, and *in reaction to*, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since 1820s." In some ways, the later Ottoman state's nationalism was similar to that of other empires. The special weight that the Ottoman state ascribed to the official language was connected to the spread of nationalism, since language has been a battleground for competing nationalisms.

An ideological approach to language is clearly manifested in the concerns of Ottoman officials. A fascinating letter written by the Vali of Ankara to the Ottoman Education Ministry in 1895 unveils the Ottoman official's conception of a unified language as the guarantor of state unity.[137] In his letter, the Vali offers a counterstrategy to what he sees as the spread and success of Armenian and Greek languages in the educational sphere, specifically in private Anatolian schools. The Vali states that up to a few years ago, the Greeks and Armenians in Adana could only communicate in Turkish. However, just in few years, they were able to spread their language successfully even in Anatolia. Now, their children easily communicate in their own languages.[138] To the Vali, this amounted to a great loss and a threat. Therefore, he asserted that the state must act immediately and had to use its financial and spiritual means to bring those non-Muslim schools under its control to educate them in accordance with its own policies. If the state delayed, warned the Vali, its non-Muslim subjects (*zir destan*) might entirely lose their Ottoman feelings (*hissiyat*) and attire, as had happened before in Izmir and Edirne.[139] In the last paragraph of his letter, the Vali indicated that though it was beyond his authority to take up such

a role, he had nevertheless allocated some money for teaching Turkish to non-Muslims. He then concludes that the Education Ministry should take full control over[140] non-Muslim schools with compassion (*dilnevazi*) and "spread Turkish" among them, since "spreading (*vüsat*) the language constitutes one of the foundations[141] of the state's unity."[142]

Ottoman Intelligentsia and Turkification of the Language

It must be kept in mind that the Ottoman state's linguistic Turkification policies are no different when it comes to dealing with Muslim subjects. During the Hamidian regime, linguistic and cultural activities became the subject of much tougher measures in general. Before Abdülhamid came to power, the state had mostly resorted to giving incentives and rewarding all Muslim and non-Muslim subjects for their efforts in learning Turkish.[143] In some instances, officials rewarded parents for teaching Turkish to their children.[144] Along with this, in 1870, the Education Ministry pushed for teaching Turkish and adopting it as a medium of communication and instruction in various academic and scientific institutions like the medical academy and observatories—and to replace French with Turkish.[145] Some instructors resisted the language change in the Imperial Medical Academy and insisted that the lack of a sufficient number of medical doctors had nothing to do with non-Turkish instruction.[146] In addition, there were still not enough textbooks available in Turkish.[147] (The report does not specify whether or not there were foreign professors among those who opposed the language change.) However, the committee agreed with instructors. The committee's report, to the *Seresker*, the Defense Minister, indicated that "originally foreign language was adopted because there were no Turkish instructors who could teach medicine."[148] The report also maintains that the lack of Turkish medical textbooks and instructors "should be seen as [our] lack of obligation to teach in Turkish unless to do otherwise was unfeasible."[149] Whatever the reason "for neglecting obligatory Turkish instruction might have been," stated the report, "the gradual use of foreign language eventually" replaced Turkish instruction in its entirety.[150]

The Ottoman intelligentsia provided theoretical grounds for many of these Turkification measures. Therefore, the state's policies, in many ways, were foregrounded by growing nationalistic tendencies among the elite. As stated earlier, a closer study of Ottoman documents and literature with respect to linguistic issues leads one to conclude that the Ottoman elite

were not contemptuous of the Turks and Turkishness. On the contrary, they were proud to promote Turkishness and Turkification policies, especially from the 1870s onward. For instance, in 1871, in a laudatory column, the Ottoman journal *Terakki* regarded the replacement of French instruction by Turkish in the Imperial Medical Academy as "a colossal change (*tebdili cesime*)."[151] These changes had engendered debates among the elite, especially after some had expressed their dissatisfaction with the replacement of French in the study of medicine. Apparently, some Ottoman medical doctors, along with foreign journalists, had raised questions about whether Turkish was sufficiently developed[152] to be employed for medical studies.[153] These debates clearly unveil the prevalence of Orientalist and philological approaches to language. In addition, the justifications for Turkifying the educational system evince important traces of growing nationalist sentiments.

These discussions on the replacement of French were replete with nationalistic expressions. The arguments for Turkish instruction were mostly nationalistic, even when framed as analyzes of the costs and benefits of foreign language learning. Writers of the Ottoman journal *Terakki*, who seem to be among the major proponents of both language reform and the Turkification of the education system, saw resistance to Turkification as unpatriotic, if not stemming from outright ignorance. In an article titled *taaccüp* (astonishment), the columnist sounds appalled that there could be Turkish doctors arguing in favor of keeping French. Thus, he states:

> It is regretful (*taasüf olunur*) to see that there are Ottomans who even resist the idea of the translation of the science of medicine into Turkish (*fen tibin türkçe tercümesi*). Because what is expected from any individual is to demonstrate some zeal (*gayret*) and patriotism (*hamiyet*) about the nation to which s/he belongs.[154]

It is hinted that the intent behind the reforms was primarily to preserve Turkish language and dress. The foreign journalists' argument against Turkish instruction is seen as normal.[155] However, some compatriots' resistance to Turkish is viewed as troublesome since it could signify either their lack of patriotic zeal or lack of appreciation for education in Turkish. Nonetheless, the article asserts that the first was not the case. Their resistance was then rooted in their lack of self-confidence[156] since it was "obvious" that

> every nation has to safeguard its language and its costumes and has to be proud with the progress of its language. If we say that our language is not reformable and incapable of incorporating (*ihate*) [the technical terms of] the science of medicine, we make ourselves laughable before Westerners (*ferankler*)… These types of talks, which patently signify the lack of knowledge, are against the interest of the sons of our nation (*abnay-i vetan*) … It is just astonishing to find those who still hold such unsound views in this era.[157]

With the passage of time, these views become more entrenched. In 1875, the state made it a requirement for every secondary school (*rüşdiye*) in the Empire to receive a copy of *Takvim-i Vekayi* on a regular basis.[158] This new requirement aimed at helping students become accustomed to reading Turkish.[159] Introducing newspapers to school students was necessitated, as Anderson would say, by a certain "mode of apprehending the world."[160]

In 1878, just two years after Abdülhamid's accession to power, the journal *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*[161] appeared. Unlike *Takvim-i Vekayi*, this new weekly journal was published exclusively for students in secondary schools. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly* provides a window into Turkish official nationalism and Turkish self-perception of the time as well as the reading material to which the students were exposed.

The journal was published by a group of intellectuals who were heavily under the influence of the new philological views on race, language, and progress discussed earlier. Therefore, the diglossic display of language in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly* is one of the more fascinating aspects of this paper. In general, it focuses on language reform. In a number of issues, an important portion of the journal is devoted to questions directed at students, such as: What is the origin of the Ottoman language? Does the Ottoman language need reform? Can it be purged of Arabic and Persian vocabulary and grammar? And finally, how should this language reform take place?[162] Some of the responses to the above questions were published, since their content, we are told, corresponded with the publishers' politics of language. The publisher awarded these respondents by giving them a book titled *Philology*[163] for their contributions.[164]

The journal does not claim to be the first to initiate such a reform. On the contrary, the publishers seem to be grateful to changes due to some language reforms that had been initiated at least fifteen years earlier. In one of these articles, it is stated that their current "literacy progress" had

become possible as a result of the previous fifteen years of purging Turkish of Arabic and Persian vocabulary, without which "we would have still used those meaningless (*soğuk ve tatsız*) Arabic and Persian words."[165] The article, however, does not refer to any of the individuals or groups involved in those efforts to purify Turkish.[166] We are told that it was not possible to do away with much of the Arabic and Persian vocabulary. However, most Arabic and Persian grammar could be weeded out of Turkish.[167]

Probably the most important aspect of the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly* is the weight it ascribes to Turkish language at the expense of other languages. In this journal, Turkish is usually referred to as the mother tongue of students who attend Ottoman secondary schools. The Turkishness of Muslim students is taken for granted. The hierarchical classification of the languages is also treated as natural. For instance, references to the Arabic language surface in a series of articles, but their appearance is relational. Arabic is talked about in relation to Turkish and discussed in the context of its usefulness to Turkish learning.[168] There is a section on *Serf* (Arabic *Sarf*: grammar/conjugation) in most of the issues of the journal. The section starts by justifying the discussion on *Serf*. We are told that the Ottoman students could study *Serf* for two reasons: (a) to read Arabic books and (b) to learn "our language better," which relies on Arabic, and that "our investigation here takes place for the second reason."[169]

The way the writers of this journal contextualize Turkish language is very revealing, and unveils a great deal about the ideological intent behind the paper's publication and the language politics of the time. Turkish is generally referred to as "our language" along with references to the Empire's domains as "our homeland,"[170] as if the Empire was a single nation and Turkish was its only language. For instance, someone by the name of Nazim writes that

> the wellbeing of *our homeland* (*vatanımızın*) is my highest wish…therefore, as my obligation to the sons of *my race*,[171] I am ready to proudly acknowledge…that as long as the Ottoman grammar is not reformed in accordance with the spirit of *our language* (*lisaniminzin ruhu*)…not only does it cost *our citizens* (*vatandaşlarımızın*) their *progress* in the literary field, but in all other types of scientific endeavors as well. For those who appreciate the value of *our language*, this is a matter of an extraordinary grief…if *our language*'s grammar comes to be known with all clarity and simplicity …and the modern press and newspapers observe these rules…[then] no matter how long it may take … it will be the cause (asbabi) for the progress of *our nation*.[172] (Emphasis added)

These remarks underscore the validity of Makdisi's insights regarding Ottoman Orientalism. It is clear that this literature, which was officially sanctioned and provided to the Ottoman schools, either does not see the non-Turkish population as noteworthy or explicitly excludes them from "our citizens, our progress, our race and our homeland."

The above behaviors and attitudes of the ruling ethnicity are further evidenced by the casual disregard of the presence of non-Turks in schools or in society at large. For example, in an article concerned with the importance of women's education and its impact on the learning of one's mother tongue, it is implied that every student in Ottoman schools was a Turk and his/her mother tongue was Turkish. So, when the writer of the articles asks rhetorically, whom did you learn Turkish from? "Without any doubts, you will reply, from our mothers,"[173] he adds. This "taken-for-grantedness" is observable in all the issues of this publication.[174] In another piece, which defines progress teleologically to mean that each generation supersedes the previous one, it is stated that for a child whose "father only knows his own language, *which is Ottoman*,"[175] progress meant learning the required foreign languages, that is, European languages.[176]

As indicated earlier, it seems that the nature of Ottoman subjects' relationship to the state was increasingly determined by their reception or rejection of the Turkish language. This becomes abundantly clear in a piece in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*, which attends to the significance of language learning. It is stated that "Jewish and Christians schools in our homeland (*vatanımızda bulunan*) are now keen in teaching Ottoman language, which means *they are trying to advance their current citizenry*[177] *relationship with us*."[178] It should be reiterated that this journal constitutes part of the reading material for Ottoman secondary schools. However, it highlights the nature of power relations in Ottoman society in the late 1870s. It also explains who "we" are, or whose language is celebrated, and which language plays what role in Ottoman state–society relations. Moreover, this "we," which stands for the Ottoman Turks, reveals the identity of the sovereign. Turkish is not only declared as a marker of the sovereign's identity but also becomes a yardstick for determining the degree of the citizenship of others in this hierarchical sociopolitical context. Here, non-Muslims' advancement toward full citizenship or subjecthood is obviously tied to the efforts they put into learning "our language." There is no doubt, however, that this state of limbo of non-Muslim citizenship turns it into something that is either conditional or in progress; as such it has been deferred to the future. The social standing of non-Turkish Muslims

has also been obscured. Their presence cannot be imagined unless they are thought of as being a part of "us." Since the criterion for citizenship or subjecthood is Turkish language, not Islam (alone), it is Turkish instruction or learning that would improve non-Muslims' sociopolitical standing and pave the path for progress toward full citizenship.

After Abdülhamid's accession to power, the focus on Turkish significantly intensified. The Hamidian regime introduced more rigorous language policies in order to give a central role to Turkish in its education system. In 1881, in order to emphasize the importance of Turkish,[179] the Ministry of Education ordered the removal of French from the first year of the middle schools and as well as its overall re-evaluation and reduction in the higher grades.[180] However, French still kept its prominence along with Turkish in official correspondence, issuing passports, and other bureaucratic matters. During the reign of Abdülhamid, Turkish occupied a much greater space in the state policies; so did education itself.[181] However, as mentioned earlier, its position reflected the continuation of a trend that had started much earlier.

"The Language of the State"

The Ottoman state imagined itself as Turkish or saw Turks as its fundamental element, as Abdülhamid once put it. By the mid-nineteenth century, at least, the Turkishness of the state and Turkish as the official language of the state was taken for granted; this was repeatedly reflected in the state's practices all over the Empire. State records attest to the fact that the Ottoman elite saw their language as the official one long before its constitutional stipulation in 1876. However, it is hard to tell when exactly they started referring to Turkish as the official language (*resmi dil*). Yet, if "the official language" and "the state's language" have the same connotations, Ottoman records show that the latter was in use as early as 1847.[182] Henceforth, the term was in use regularly.[183] This declarative aspect, however, only sheds light on one aspect of the Ottoman state's practice. In reality, the Turkification of bureaucratic language, regardless of its pace or success, was an ongoing process in the nineteenth century.

As early as 1861, the Highest Council of Judicial Regulations (*Meclis-i Valay-ı Ahkam-ı Adliye*) decreed that all records in the penal system were to be kept in Turkish.[184] As a letter by the Vali of Bagdad indicates, the Sublime Porte expected the new law to go into effect immediately. However, the Local Council ostensibly did not believe in the practicality of the new law and therefore requested its modification[185] The Local Council

of the Vilayet explained that the suspects (*ashabi tohmet*) only knew Arabic and therefore should be required to sign the Turkish paperwork only after the content of their interrogation records was explained to them in their native language(s).[186] Another document indicates that the suspects and criminal offenders knew either Arabic or Kurdish or Persian but had no familiarity with Turkish.[187] This shows that even in non-Turkish regions, the interrogation forms (*istintaknamelere*) were kept in Turkish.[188] Such policies not only reveal the place of Turkish in statecraft but also signify the eventual goal of the Turkification of the entire bureaucratic system. Had these policies proven successful, their implications would have been grave for the non-Turkish regions of the Empire. Eventually, illiteracy in Turkish would have become a great impediment to the entry of non-Turks into the state bureaucracy even in their own localities. After a certain period, those who could hold sensitive positions would have to be either Turkish or well versed in Turkish language.

It should be noted that the state documents show that in a big Vilayet like Baghdad, the Turkish literacy of the general population was almost non-existent.[189] However, they would have to interact with a penal system that communicated only in a foreign language. These attempts at Turkification were not taking place "for increasing administrative efficiency through the use of a single language"[190] as Turkish nationalists claim. As Charles Taylor puts it, albeit in a slightly different context, arguments for the efficiency of a single language in a multilingual context "are generally technological pre-texts for chauvinism that does not declare itself openly."[191] Based on the state records, these linguistic regulations engendered problems rather than solutions. For example, when inmates appeared before judges, they questioned[192] the accuracy of their paperwork and claimed that their records did not reflect what they confessed to before their trial.[193]

In his insightful paper on Turkification, Mahmud Haddad notes that "Abdülhamid decreed for the first time that Turkish [would] be the language of correspondence among the different branches of the provincial administration."[194] He bases his claim on a report published by al-Ahram in 1913.[195] Turkifying the language of bureaucracy reached a new level in the Hamidian period. However, as the state records reveal, this tradition had existed long before Abdülhamid's reign. The phrase "official language" appears in state records in the early 1870s. In that period, Turkish was regarded as the official language. Nonetheless, the context of such utterances is worthy of greater attention. There was often an association between the context of these utterances and the state's assimilationist

policies or "Ottoman Orientalism." For instance, in 1874, there was a project to establish a teacher's college (*darülmuallimin*) in Syria, in order to train enough teachers for elementary (*sıbyan*) and secondary schools (*rüşdiye*) in highly populated Arabic neighborhoods.[196] The primary goal of this project was to "prepare teachers capable of teaching the official language," that is, Turkish.[197] It is worth noting that, in general, this was in the context of declaring Turkish as "the language of the state" since 1847—when, for the first time, a Turkish school was going to open in Africa.[198]

Up to 1876, the context of the use of these phrases generally reveals some type of interaction between the state and the non-Turkish populations of the Empire. However, these interactions either render the state a modernizing agent, as in the above example, or proclaim and reinforce the state's own ethnic identity. The latter phenomenon is visible in the prominence that Ottoman officials gave to Turkish. For instance, in 1875, in the Arab city of Beirut, Ottoman officials fired an Arab teacher merely for his unfamiliarity with "the official language" and replaced him with someone who knew Turkish.[199]

By the 1890s, the state's linguistic Turkification polices had rapidly evolved. In this period, Turkish no longer holds its ambiguous status. By this time, the state clearly uses language as a means of assimilation. For instance, in an Arab city like Basra, if a teacher could teach Turkish in a middle school, he was not required to know Arabic. He would not be forced to take any Arabic courses either. Nor would he be replaced with another teacher who knew both Arabic and Turkish.[200] The justification is even more telling: According to the new regulations (*talimat gereği*), starting at the elementary level, all schools had to be reformed and all students were required to get used (*çocukların Türkçe'ye alıştırılmaları*) to Turkish.[201] By 1893, every school in the Empire, whether in Istanbul or elsewhere, had to follow the same guidelines. In 1894, another pivotal point in the state's policy of accelerating Turkification, the government initiated a project for a full-scale reform (*ıslah*) of Turkish (*Türk lisanı*) language and ordered the establishment of various scientific associations (*cemiyyet-i ilmiyyeler açılması*).[202] Based on these new regulations, Turkish was the first thing that each student had to learn in school. In addition, the state strove to universalize Turkish as the language of instruction for all subjects and to determine periods of education (*tahsil müddetleri*), subjects (*müfredatı*), content of lessons, and tuition (*ücretleri*) throughout the Empire.[203]

Hamidian Official Nationalism and Language-based Discrimination

In the Hamidian period, language-based discrimination became increasingly worse. Hence, to claim that in 1900 "the Ottoman educational system did not pay attention to ethnicity and differences of language [but instead] stressed the unity of faith in order to keep together all of the Muslim subjects of the empire"[204] flies in direct contrast to what Ottoman records reveal. There are various examples of the state's repressive policies favoring the universalization of Turkish. For instance, in 1896, the Minister of Education sent a warning to the local branch of the Education Department (*mudiriyet*) in Beirut, remarking that Turkish was not being taught there with due diligence.[205] He added that he had learned that teachers were chosen from among those who were not up to the task of teaching Turkish.[206] He noted that since the official language was Turkish, all elementary students must learn Turkish. Moreover, learning Turkish was necessitated by the fact that after elementary school all the lessons were in Turkish,[207] noting that while foreign and non-Muslim schools were complying with the requirements of Turkish instruction, Muslim schools remained indolent. For him, Turkish language competence was to be of a particular (*bilhasse*) consideration in hiring teachers.[208] Even those teachers who were hired and paid by the local people had to be summoned and reoriented based on these new regulations. In the event of non-compliance, they were to be removed from their jobs and those who had hired them were to be properly informed in accordance with local customs.[209]

By the turn of the century, the state had become extremely intolerant toward non-Turkish languages in the educational arena. The following are some excerpts of a formal letter to the lieutenant governor in Deir al-Zor, which highlights the value attached to Turkish by the state. The letter warns

> we have learned that the lieutenant governor does not agree with Turkish instruction in the elementary and middle schools since *the textbooks are all in Turkish*, which have been assigned by the Ministry of Education…instead he has personally assigned Arabic books on Arabic language, which have been printed in Beirut…*in the well-protected domain of the Empire, like any other country, education and all other bureaucratic works must be in the official language that is Ottoman*…the value of opening schools… *is as much in universalizing* (*te'mim*) *the state's official language* (*devletin resmi lisanı*) as

> it is the spread of knowledge itself…*the use of any book*, *in any school*: *elementary*, *middle or high school is categorically banned*; *unless it is in the state's official language* and it has been assigned by the Ministry of Education.[210] (Emphasis added)

The language Turkification policies of the Ottoman state clearly display some sort of longevity and a traceable history. State policies regarding language, especially from the early 1870s onward, manifest all the signs of modern governmentality. In the Hamidian period, language became a handy tool for assimilationist policies. Thus, Haddad's description of Abdülhamid's Turkification policies is accurate when he asserts that Abdülhamid

> employed Turks rather than Arab Syrians in some sectors of the local administration and apparently Turkified the higher positions of the local civil and judiciary bureaucracies. Under his rule, many teachers in state secondary schools (*rüşdiye*), including teachers of Arabic, were Turks sent from non-Arab provinces.

The culmination of this trend is visible in 1910, when the Baghdad governorate declared that since the state's official language was Turkish, it would not accept petitions in any language other than Turkish.[211] Seeing the people's reaction, however, the Ministry of Interior revised this policy and asked local officials to adopt a more lenient strategy toward the Arab population of the Vilayet. However, it insisted in its later directives that no petitions in Arabic should be accepted from Ottoman subjects of Iranian, Chaldean, and Jewish origins.[212] The documents instruct the local officials that they must do their best to universalize (*ta'mim*) Turkish. They were to follow this course since even the sudden introduction of this law—save a few opportunists (*menfaatperest*)—had not angered anyone.[213] However, they were still advised to act moderately, since the majority of people in that region did not know Turkish.[214] This also indicates the fact that previous directives had mandated that every member in the City Council of Baghdad was to know Turkish. The letter, however, suggested that it was advisable to take people's sensitivities into consideration and to relax those rules for the time being.[215]

There were similar attempts by the state in other areas of life which rendered the systematic Turkification of the language domain increasingly invasive. For instance, space for cultural and literary production

by dominated Muslim groups such as the Albanians and the Kurds was shrinking. In reading Ottoman archival records, one finds much greater restrictions on issuing publication permits to non-Turkish journals and papers. Before the 1870s, this "diglossic power relation" was still "hidden"[216] to the extent that local councils could give publication permits even to foreigners.[217] However, in later periods, room for non-Turkish Muslim groups' cultural activities became increasingly slim. In the 1870s, there was an important shift in the state's policy about regulating print and publication. To a certain degree, the Hamidian state inherited its paranoia and vigilantism from the preceding regulatory tradition(s). In the early 1870s, the state was the sole publisher and distributer of the Qur'an itself and did not allow its import or its distribution by anyone or any groups.[218] Only the Ministry of Education (*Maarif*) had the authority to print the Qur'an, be it in part or in whole. Thus, it seems the Hamidian state had inherited some of its restrictive policies from its immediate predecessors.[219] However, the pressure on non-Turkish cultural activity became monumental in the Hamidian era, to a degree which turned the dawn of the twentieth century into the dusk for non-Turkish Muslim publications. As indicated earlier, these restrictions reached a point where even traditional religious books, notwithstanding their prior legal permits, were to be confiscated.[220] The state's hostility to non-Turkish books and publications, particularly to those of Kurds and Albanians, increased greatly. The state ordered the Customs and Border Patrols to bar the import of Kurdish and Albanian books even if they came with their legal permits (*resmi ruhsatı olsa bile*).[221] When the Ministry of Education made an inquiry as to why Albanian and Kurdish dictionaries and alphabetical books should be collected, the Palace replied: "printing and disseminating such books in Albanian and Kurdish languages, is extremely (*fewkaladeh*) harmful to the state's policies."[222]

There are many scholars who defend the view that the above political trend, notwithstanding its intensity and longevity, did not represent nationalism and was nothing more than an innocent attempt at centralization by the Ottoman state.[223] Centralization as a policy was the outgrowth of a certain worldview that deemed it necessary to homogenize the polity in a way that was unmanageable otherwise. Even if this enterprise was informed only by the bureaucratic manageability of the population, the compartmentalization of existing languages, and the privileging of the language of the ruling ethnic groups, was neither arbitrary nor innocent. Contrary to commonly held views, Ottoman officials denied neither

their ethnic lineage nor the value they attached to their own language. Nonetheless, the most innocent-sounding attempts at identity formation by a state are not free of nationalism, and even if a state "denies particularistic ethnic loyalties or subordinates them, it has itself to create its own sense of belonging, and it does this very often for instance to the mother country or the fatherland."[224]

As indicated earlier, at the heart of this denial of Ottoman/Turkish national consciousness exists the claim that the ethnic or national amnesia of Muslim communities is caused by their religion. It is important to remember that Namik Kemal, the most prominent Ottoman figure who adamantly advocated for the revival of Islamic identity, also defended Turkification and the destruction (*imha*) of non-Turkish identities. In 1878, arguing in favor of restricting non-Turkish languages, in a poem titled *Vatan*, homeland, Kemal asks: "if it is doable, except for Turkish, why should not we eliminate[225] all the existing languages…in our homeland? …Is it right to hand [non-Turks their] grammar books that could be used as spiritual weapons for [the] disintegration?"[226] One might think that Kemal's religious devotion made him disregard ethnic and linguistic factors and that he therefore privileged Turkish over other languages only for practical reasons. However, he does not leave any room for such a misreading, writing that "language is even a firmer (*metin*) deterrent than religion to an ethnic group's (*kavm*) rebellion against the other."[227]

It is striking to see that even Namik Kemal believed in the instrumental use of religion. However, what is even more fascinating is the then widespread belief among intellectuals in the assimilatory power of language. Kemal goes on to say that we cannot

> universalize (*te'mim*) *our language* among Bulgarians and Greeks but it is very much possible to do this *among Muslims* such as Albanians and Lazes. This becomes a reality only by the application of the right strategies; it is possible with opening schools. *In 20 years, even by the implementation of our current insufficient educational laws, languages like Albanian and Laz will be completely forgotten*.[228] (Emphasis added)

The Ottoman Muslim intellectuals' attempt at and hope for eliminating non-Turkish languages constitute the sociopolitical and cultural background of Hamidian Islamic discourse and Islamic unity. The influence of the Young Ottomans on Abdülhamid is well known.

Nationalism and the Politics of Pan-Islamism

The disastrous Ottoman defeat at the hands of Russians during the 1877–1878 War is generally cited as one of the overarching causes for the Hamidian regime's redefinition of Ottoman identity along religious lines. This defeat resulted in the Empire's loss of half of its non-Muslim population, which now constituted approximately 20 % of the entire Ottoman population.[229] This led Abdülhamid II to come to the conclusion that Ottomanism, as had been formulated before, was a failing policy and did not persuade non-Muslim subjects to identify as Ottomans. Therefore, it made sense for him to reformulate Ottoman identity with a stronger emphasis on its religious aspects.[230] It is this shift in Hamidian policies and the redefinition of the identity of Ottoman subjects, along with general anti-colonial sentiments in the Muslim world, that are labeled as "pan-Islamism."

"Pan-Islamism" was a European fabrication and an ideological label that portrayed the Muslims as a monolithic entity, which collectively and blindly obeyed a retrograde Sultan.[231] The increased Muslim awareness of European colonialism took various locally inflected forms of expression which were not always in line with the policies of the Sultan. Despite common views about European colonialism, both the Sultan's and other Muslims' politics were devised as a response to their own local needs. However, these responses were generally interpreted as fanatical Muslim reactions to progress and European civilizations. Such themes are perpetuated even in some recent works, where it is claimed that pan-Islamism is "based, first and foremost, on the commonality of religious sentiment which one can take for granted while devoting the attention [...] to politics and economics as perceived and employed by Pan-Islam."[232]

There is no doubt that there were many calls for Muslim unity against European colonialism, and Abdülhamid II hoped that he could make good use of Muslims' growing anti-colonial sentiment for his Empire's interests. He hoped that his proclaimed religious status as a caliph would give him a greater political advantage among all Muslims. However, it does not mean that even Abdülhamid II was deluded enough to think that the entire Islamic world could be turned into a single political entity administered under his rule, as was the case in the Umayyad era. The unity of the Muslim world aside, even all Ottoman Muslims were not ready to follow Abdülhamid II or any other ruler blindly. Abdülhamid II simply hoped that all Muslims would take a unified stance against increasing

European pressure. His celebratory approach to the caliphate was "a diplomatic ploy aimed at doing unto Europeans what they were doing to the Ottoman state through their patronage of various non-Muslim *millets*."[233] Thus, the uniformity of Islam in a real sense did not exist. Such a perception of a unitary Islam was, rather, the outcome of a European attempt to define its identity in opposition to the non-European other in general and to the Muslims in particular.[234] Therefore, Europe portrayed itself as one entity, while picturing the other, that is, heterogeneous Muslim anti-colonialism, merely as the manifestation of Islam with the Ottoman Caliph as its absolute embodiment. However, it is clear that pan-Islamism was not a purely religious or political sentiment for Abdülhamid or other Muslims. For Abdülhamid, the enterprise, as Zürcher describes, was "an ideological counteroffensive, which Poulton has likened to Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*."[235]

Pan-Islamism should be seen in the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and the term mostly reflects the different concerns and politics of the period, which, as Khalid puts it, were "completely at home with discourses of progress, nation and ethnicity."[236] Alongside European pressure, there were nationalists, secessionists, and cultural and political challengers to Abdülhamid II's rule. To advance their competing agendas, those challengers also took up the very same religious jargon and discourse utilized by the Sultan himself. When Turkish opposition literature is compared with Iranian reformist literature from the same era, it is clear that religion figures much more prominently in the literature of Abdülhamid II's opponents.[237] Iranian reformists also claimed that their reformist views were compatible with Islamic teachings. However, since in the Iranian context the emphasis was generally on the religious necessity of the constitution as opposed to the state's religious monopoly, the use of religious discourse seems to be less than in the Ottoman case. In the Iranian context, reformists mostly attempted to gain the support of *Shi'i* clerics rather than challenging the state's religious claims and interpretations, since the Qajar state was far less capable of managing religion and generally could not independently claim religious legitimacy.[238]

The Ottomans had already drafted a constitution that was put on hold by the Sultan, a self-proclaimed religious leader of the Muslim world. His opponents thus attempted to cast doubt on his religious legitimacy for a variety of reasons. However, they primarily pointed to the Sultan's disregard for the principal of consultation, *Şura* (Ar. *Shura*), which they lauded

as the essence of constitutionalism and a parliamentary system. Hence, Abdülhamid II's opponents advocated for consultation as a religious obligation for the ruler based on Qur'anic teachings and the Prophetic traditions. The Sultan's disregard for the principal of consultation was used as a powerful tool against his general indifference to the constitution.

It should thus be no great surprise that not all Muslim intellectuals in the Ottoman context were happy for their anti-colonial stances to be interpreted as a sign of their endorsement of the Sultan's pan-Islamism. Some of them were abundantly unequivocal in expressing their displeasure with respect to the mischaracterizations of their struggle. They contended that "The aim of Pan-Islamism then is to liberate these three hundred millions of human beings from *any yoke whatsoever that would maintain them in a state of ignorance* and degradation [it is a struggle] against the aggressor, be he the Pope or Khalifa."[239] Some non-Muslim activists and leaders clearly saw the local aspect of pan-Islamism as an anti-colonial movement. The solidarity of figures like Mahatma Gandhi with the movement indicates pan-Islamism's strong anti-colonial tendencies.[240] All accounts that overlook competing claims and Muslim rivalries of the time within their greater anti-colonial politics as a sheer manifestation of religious conviction commit the great sin of reductionism. Studies that are more recent show that not only the Ottomans but also the British, Germans, and Bolsheviks were all entertaining the idea of *Khilafa* for certain political interests.[241]

What is called pan-Islamism in the Ottoman Turkish context, with its statist qualifications, had roots in the pre-Hamidian era. Abdülhamid II's adamant claim to the caliphate created the grounds for intense religious criticism of his policies shortly after his accession to power. A cursory look at some of the Ottoman newspapers, such as *İstikbal*,[242] in the late 1870s shows a very robust intellectual opposition to Abdülhamid II's rule with equally deep religious and nationalist–populist overtones, as does the publication *Şura-yi Ummat*. Confronted with the Sultan's approach to Islam, the writers of *İstikbal* posed a serious intellectual challenge to Hamidian rule on almost every ground using sophisticated religious jargon. The newspaper not only portrays Abdülhamid II as an unfit, anti-constitutional autocrat but also attempts to falsify his religious claims based on the same religious discursive framework that he used to discredit his opponents. *İstikbal's* writers utilize *nas* (the Qur'an and *Hadith*), history, and major canonical Islamic sources for their theological-political fight against the Hamidian regime. They contend that Abdülhamid II's Caliphate was no

more legitimate than that of Yezid, who murdered Husain, Muhammad's grandson.[243]

Generally, these arguments and the way they formulated their religious opposition to Abdülhamid II's claim to the caliphate ostensibly appealed to the traditional *Sunni* clerics. In addition, their religious objections and arguments in part resemble some of the objections that were raised against the Ottoman Sultan in the sixteenth century, such as those in Lütfi Paşa's booklet on the caliphate.[244]

In some ways, Abdülhamid II had based his interpretation of the caliphate on Lütfi Paşa's defense and redefinition of it.[245] He confronted Muslim opposition and "countered the British by reviving the sixteenth-century Ottoman argument that service to Islam, rather than Quraish descent, was most important to the legitimacy of the caliphate."[246] Prevalent populism and the instrumental use of religion as the mark of the era aside,[247] their argument bears witness to the unending debates over the *Khilafa* throughout Islamic history. Their challenge also reveals the fact that the *Khilafa* had become the battleground where the fight for the Sultan's legitimacy was taking place. As the Sultan's bureaucracy attempted to increase the state's religious façade, his opponents strove to show the "profanity" of his rule. For example, *İstikbal* reports[248] that the Şeyhülislam (Sheikh al-Islam) had published a booklet informing Muslims of their obligations in both Arabic and Turkish. The article indicates that the state intended to distribute the booklet in North Africa, Arabia, and India. It is said that the booklet consisted of three parts: (a) a definition of Muslims' duties and their responsibilities before God; (b) an enumeration of their obligations and duties to "the shadow of God" and "the Prophet's caliph"; and (c) the claim that all Muslims, no matter where they might live, are religiously obliged to obey the caliph's order for jihad against non-Muslims even if the caliph errs in his call.[249] The newspaper then attends to every major point in the booklet in an attempt to refute them on religious grounds. Therefore, parallel to the arguments of some *Sunni* scholars, the writers of *İstikbal* claim that (a) all Islamic sources and Prophetic traditions evince that the true caliphate was that of *Rashidun* which lasted only for thirty years and thereafter there will only be a sultanate, and (b) Abdülhamid II is not a just Sultan and has violated the principal of equality. Unlike the era of *Rashidun* when the judge could rule in favor of non-Muslims against the caliph himself, in the Hamidian regime an independent judiciary is unimaginable. (c) The Sultan has violated the principal of consultation as required by the Quran. (d) The Sultan has annulled the principal of

enjoining good and preventing evil, which, based on Qur'anic teaching, is the duty of every individual Muslim. (e) In addition, since he is the appointee of the very same illegitimate Sultan, the current *Şeyhülislam* has no more religious credibility than the Sultan himself.[250]

The aim in citing these detailed examples is to point to the complexity of the political context of the Hamidian era. Undoubtedly, all the political players were aware of the importance of religion and the degrees of its instrumental use. If the understanding of a political ideology is merely based on the use or the application of slogans and jargon, then it would be impossible to make any sense of the literature produced by the CUP and other opponents of Abdülhamid II. *Şura-yi Ummat*, a CUP publication, which had as its logo a Qur'anic verse about consultation, describes the mission of the paper in its first issue as follows:

> *Şura-yi Ummat* is the publication of an association whose goal is to bring happiness to all the Ottomans and to save them from current calamities… this association both hopes and makes its duty to *preserve the unity of the sublime Ottoman state*, *safeguard its political independence*, to protect it from any *type of foreign meddling in its affairs*, and to *revive its glory…to defend the rights of the Umma*, to work for the betterment of the welfare …of the Ottomans… [the goal of this publication is] to bring unity of their views … to unite all *Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans* based on *their patriotic and humanistic* sentiments…to bring to power those who *understand the requirements of our ages*.[251]

Save for the first word in the publication's title, *Şura*, consultation, and "the current calamities," Abdülhamid II would have endorsed the paragraph in its entirety. It contains all the popular ideas of the time such as *Umma*, Ottomanism, Islamic unity, and national unity. But the paragraph puts on display the conditions of a polity, that is, the Ottomans, who experience a myriad of contestations, contradictions, fears, and uncertainties that can be neither ignored nor easily resolved. Importantly, however, religiosity is only one issue among many. Regardless of religious faith, the entire population is considered the *Umma*. The Ottoman *Umma* is the entire Ottoman population including all non-Muslims, which the CUP tries to unify based on their sense of belonging to what was once the glorious Ottoman state. This glorious state was to be revived under truly modernist CUP leaders, who were trained and educated in the modernized education system that was itself put in place by Abdülhamid II. That

is why some Ottoman scholars generally warn against espousing simplistic binaries in analyzing the complexity of Ottoman society or existing trends of the period such as nationalism, Ottomanism, or Hamidian pan-Islamism in particular.[252]

The caliphate and "universal" Muslim obedience to it was far from reality, not just in the entire Muslim world but even within Ottoman borders. Ottoman state–society relations were fraught with too many contradictions, challenges, and conflicting policies and agendas. Abdülhamid II's rule was faced with a multitude of foreign threats and encroachments on his domain. In order to neutralize such threats, Abdülhamid II sometimes had to make "unholy" alliances with those powers like Britain whose strategic goal in the region was to undermine his rule.

Abdülhamid II greatly feared the political force of the idea of an Arab Caliphate and its possible use by foreign powers like Britain. To combat the notion of an Arab Caliphate and growing nationalisms, and to decrease foreign influence in the fringes of the Empire, Abdülhamid II strove to spread Sufi orders that preached absolute obedience to him.[253] These types of activities, however, did not always produce the intended result and it was not rare that his calls for *jihad* were ignored even in places that were close to the *dar al-khilafa*, such as Central Asia.[254] Shortly after his accession to the throne, Abdülhamid II faced turmoil in some of the Arab lands, like Syria.[255] It is believed that his attempts to spread Sufi orders such as that of the Rifaʻi, who eagerly advocated obedience to the Sultan, were a counteroffensive measure against growing dissatisfaction in that region. The Sultan had chosen one of his major propagandists from among the Rifaʻis in Syria; there was a great amount of publicity from 1880 onward that aimed "to defuse… incipient Syrian nationalism."[256]

In other parts of Arab lands, too, the Sultan was not perceived as a Godsend or as the successor of the Prophet. One of the Sultan's greatest worries was Arab nationalism, religious and otherwise, which was forming around the discourse of an Arab Caliphate.[257] Wahhabi defiance to Ottoman rule and their constant challenge to the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphs had a long history. Wahhabis had no qualms in seeking foreign (British) support against the Ottomans. During the Hamidian reign, the ʻ*ulama* in Mecca had declared Britain as "the greatest Muslim power" and had recognized India under the British rule as *dar al-Islam*, which could have induced the loyalty of the vast majority of Indian Muslims to Britain.[258]

Muslim revivalists, too, had ambivalent feelings about the Sultan and his policies. Their ambivalence was rooted in both nationalistic and religious

attitudes. They had not remained unaffected by increasing nationalist and anti-colonialist sentiments. It should be obvious that the revivalists' interpretations were to take place under the influence of or within a simultaneously nationalist, modernist, and anti-colonial sociopolitical and cultural environment. Interpretations of Islam, rigid or flexible, contain elements of both continuity and specificity of context. A cursory reading of the works produced by religious scholars of the time leaves no doubt that their literature shows its racial and ethnic bent quite clearly. This signifies the fact that religious interpretations cannot be detached easily from their historical circumstances and sociopolitical contexts. As such, even ethnic influence on people's religious interpretation may entail both continuity and context specificity.

Competing nationalist ideas of different Muslim groups were reflected in their religious expressions. The paramount example of the ascendance of nationalistic expression in the caliphate debates was showcased in the 1926 Muslim Congress in Cairo. The congress was formed for the purpose of reviving the Islamic Caliphate, and mainly took place because of Rashid Rida's efforts. However, instead of supporting the Ottoman Caliph, with few exceptions, "each participating delegation wanted to make its own ruler caliph."[259] Nationalist tendencies in revivalist literature were not limited to the influence of the idea of the nation-state and the way it informed debates over the caliphate. Without paying attention to the influence of nationalism and racial claims, there is no other way to reconcile prominent religious scholars'—such as Rashid Rida or Bediüzzaman Said Nursi—remarks in praising their own ethnicity for possessing "distinct ethical qualities."[260] Rida's views were not just an instance of the outburst of racial tendencies, as summarized below by Haddad:

> Arabs were more courageous, and more steadfast in adherence to Islam, Rida wrote. Unlike the Turks, who usually followed their leaders unquestioningly, Arabs were prone to political power struggles. But in Rida's view, this fractiousness, while not promoting unity, reflected the Arabs' closer adherence to the Islamic "democratic principle" and an independence of mind and will.[261]

To return to the revivalists' relationship with the Sultan, for both parties, nationalism was a dividing factor and anti-colonialism a uniting one. The overarching factor for Muslim unity, as pointed out by Mushirul Hasan, was the Sultan's ability to defend Islamic holy places, especially Mecca and

Medina, in the face of a possible European incursion. British documents also underscore the fact that the Ottoman Caliphate was unloved by the Muslims in India and Arabia, though its demise was seen as the end of the Muslim world as they knew it.[262] This remained a determining factor for major figures like Rida even after the dethroning of Abdülhamid II in 1909. In Rida's view, although "the Arabs [had] supremacy in the religious sphere … the Turks [had] supremacy in the attributes of political and military power, at least since the emergence of the Ottoman Empire."[263] This makes clear that for Muslim figures like Rida, Muslim unity, strong or loose, was more a political expediency due to the threat of colonial presence than a strong religious sentiment that was aroused by faith.

Muslim revivalists were well aware of Abdülhamid II's intentions and agenda and did not see them as especially religious. Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad (1889–1964) testifies to this reality and states that the *Du'at* (Muslim revivalists) knew the Ottoman state's intention in employing the title of the caliphate and was aware of its instrumental use of Islam.[264] The Arabs generally believed in an Arab Caliphate. However, this did not make many avoid cooperation with the Ottomans when it came to their anti-colonial agenda. For instance, the renowned scholar Shakib Arslan contended that the end of *Rashidun* era was also the end of the caliphate, in the true sense of the term. These views, however, did not stop him from cooperating with the Ottoman state. For all his anti-colonial tendencies, Arslan acted almost like an Ottoman ambassador, traveling back and forth between Istanbul and European capitals.[265]

Iconic revivalist figures such as Abdurrahman al-Kawakibi, Rashid Rida, and others always had deep misgivings about any non-Arab claimants of the caliphate.[266] Al-Kawakibi wrote two very influential books: *Tabāyi' al-Istibdād wa Maṣāri' al-Isti'bād*, which later became a regional classic against autocracy, and *Umm al-Qura*, that was almost entirely a defense of the exclusive Arab right to the caliphate. The latter is basically al-Kawakibi's program for the re-establishment of an Arabic Caliphate.[267] Al-Kawakibi believed that the Ottomans' use of the caliphate was "only a diplomatic ploy, to perpetuate their rule over their subjects with ease and to scare Europe in the name of the caliphate and Muslim public opinion."[268]

Kawakibi was unequivocal in stating that there was no path to the revival of Islam and no actual Prophetic message other than the re-establishment of an Arab Caliphate.[269] He also believed that an Arab Caliphate was the only way to Arab liberation (*falah*).[270] Thus, al-Kawakibi quotes the

renowned medieval Arab poet al-Mutanabih, announcing that "people are dependents on their kings for [any achievements] and there will never be an Arab deliverance under non-Arab kings."[271]

Notably, al-Kawakibi's book was very popular among Muslim Arab revivalists. It was so popular that Sami Dhahran, one of al-Kawakibi's biographers, claims that the book was "revised either by Abduh or by Rashid Rida," two well-known revivalist figures.[272] To al-Kawakibi, Islam and the Arabs were almost inseparable. The Arabs were the only people who could have halted "the degeneration of Islam" caused by the Turks and other non-Arabs. In essence,

> al-Kawakibi's defense of Islamic civilization was a glorification of Arabs in the development of that civilization. The virtues of Islam—its language, its Prophet, its early moral and political order—were Arab achievements. In his view, the decadence of Islam was caused by the practices of the Turks and other non-Arab people had introduced into the *umma*, and he went so far as to express regret that the Turks had ever embraced the faith…al-Kawakibi called for the Ottomans to relinquish their unjustified claim to the caliphate and to restore the office to its rightful possessors, the Arabs.[273]

The populist rhetoric[274] of pan-Islamism was certainly "at home with nationalism."[275] Any revivalist who believed the *imam*ate to be an exclusive right of the Quraish or was for Arab independence rejected the Ottoman caliphate,[276] at least on a theoretical level. As such, all pro-independent Arab groups and figures believed that recognizing the Ottoman caliphate amounted to giving up the caliphate as their exclusive right, and that this would render their claim to a state of their own illegitimate.[277] This was very much in line with pan-Arabism, which also aimed at forging Arab unity under an Arab caliph. Depriving the Ottoman Sultan of this religious status would have provided Arab nationalism, religious and otherwise, with legitimate grounds for Arab independence, and this tactic was used as a weapon against the Sultan. Furthermore, pan-Arabists did not see their aspiration for independence as contradictory to greater Islamic unity in any way. However, they did not want the future of their people or religion to remain tied to the future of the Ottoman state or its policies.[278] These examples not only demonstrate an extraordinarily complex situation but also render any attempt to detach these institutions, movements, and sociopolitical and religious claims from their historical loci very problematic.[279]

Any attempt to characterize even the revivalist movements of the time as unaffected by nationalist tendencies falls into the trap of essentialism. As indicated earlier,[280] from its inception, some elements of ethnocentrism remained persistent in the debate over the caliphate, which was thus far from being a purely theological one. The debate over the caliphate, especially following the murder of the third caliph, reflects sociopolitical conflicts and rivalries more than anything else. Muhammad Iqbal's assertions illustrate this historical chasm and the gulf between the ruler's claim to legitimacy and the collective consensus of Muslim scholars. According to Iqbal, the political environment was rarely, if ever, hospitable to independent collective juridical endeavors.[281] However, the disparate and contradictory nature of the debate reveals the ethnic political interest of its participants as much as their religiosity.

When it comes to recent Ottoman history and the relationship between the caliph and Muslim subjects, the label pan-Islamism does not reflect the way Muslims viewed Abdülhamid II. Nor does the Sultan's unyielding urge for recognition as caliph illustrate some type of decontextualized understanding of Islam. Abdülhamid strove to universalize Turkish cultural markers within Islamic discourse. As shown, through his Turkification policies he mobilized almost the entire state apparatus to create a totalizing discourse, since "a hegemonic tantalization requires a radical investment."[282]

It should be noted that in modern times, greater emphasis on state religious identity was not unique to Muslim rulers or to Abdülhamid II, for that matter. Nor was it an unfamiliar phenomenon in Christendom. Emperor Francis-Joseph II of Austria, Tsars Alexander III and Nicolas II, and Queen Victoria in Britain had all posed as defenders of their faith and Christianity in some way or another.[283]

Abdülhamid II seems to have adopted a different policy from that of his predecessors, that is, pan-Islamism. However, if his political priorities are ignored, in essence the new policies of Abdülhamid appear to be largely congruent with Ottomanism. Ottomanism, however, was supposed to be about religious equality,[284] which hardly went beyond a pretentious claim.[285] Many modernizing policies continued with full force: "In 1879, there was a whole reorganization of the judicial system by the creation of a Ministry of Justice [that] was based on French jurisprudence."[286] Abdülhamid II also adopted a profoundly modern education policy.[287] It is said that "the Hamidian period was a complex and inventive reaction to the blind Westernism of the *Tanzimat*."[288]

Leading scholars of Ottoman history generally concur that, as opposed to previous, superficial adoptions of Westernism, Abdülhamid II's policies were more in line with those of the Young Ottomans and should be seen as "an alternative vision of modernity that was emerging at this time."[289] Modernization policies followed, especially in the fields of education, infrastructure, and state bureaucracy. Overall, however, "Pan-Islamism" was a response to long-lasting internal and external problems.[290] It is commonly held that there is a great deal of similarity between the Hamidian period, the reign of Selim III and Mahmud II (1789–1839), and the *Tanzimat* reforms (1839–1876); these periods are characterized by attempts to unify and centralize the state. These periods are known for the state's struggle to create "legal-rational norms along Western lines, yet they are differentiated by degrees of intensity and styles through selective borrowing from more successful rivals."[291]

As previously shown,[292] Abdülhamid II's policies in the areas of language instruction, education, and bureaucracy were becoming increasingly Turkified. Notwithstanding their intensity, the succeeding regime's Turkification policies were more evolved and represented the culmination of the Hamidian regime's policies. The Hamidian era is seen as the matrix of Turkish nationalism in all its later forms. Therefore, the Kemalist narrative of a break with the recent Ottoman past has been criticized in recent studies by major Ottomanist historians.[293] They contend that Hamidian pan-Islamism was not merely a religious doctrine, nor were the Kemalist state's "civilizing" tendencies a complete abandonment of that era's sociopolitical and religious legacy. More importantly, Kemalist statism, in some important ways, is viewed as a continuation of those policies, ideas, and reforms.

Abdülhamid's legacy was not limited to the above-mentioned reforms that were followed by later generations of Turkish political leaders with varying speed. One of his legacies was the adoption of the policy of combating "tribalism" by "civilizing" the sons of tribesmen and introducing them to the modern sciences and "true Islam." In 1892, a year after introducing Hamidiye Cavalries,[294] which was aimed at making Kurdish tribes dependent on the state and preparing them for any possible conflicts with Armenians, the state opened tribal schools (*Aşiret Mektebleri*). The sons of disobedient tribes,[295] famed for their lack of loyalty, rebelliousness, and refusal to pay taxes, would be brought to these schools to be educated and to become better subjects.[296] Among other things, the students at the school would have learned "to pray together and express their submission

to Allah, the Prophet, and *the Sultan's guidance*,[297] 'so that they would abstain from falsehood'."[298]

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Hamidian legacy was what Erik Zürcher calls the state's "religious management."[299] Karpat finds the genesis of this policy in the *Tanzimat* and describes it as the end of the traditional religion/state separation.[300] It is hard to agree with Karpat's characterizations—the traditional religion/state separation—since the two had probably never been separated, at least from the perspective of the state.[301] However, Karpat's claim is not entirely invalid in the sense that the nature of state dealings with Islam was transformed dramatically. It was in the *Tanzimat* era that the state started to regulate religiosity, as opposed to earlier eras in which the state's regulation of religion lacked the same sophistication.

In Abdülhamid II's period, this process of regulating Islam was intensified by the Sultan's struggle to restore the caliphate as a religious Leviathan that would increasingly centralize Islam along state lines and reintroduce both Turkish and state-sanctioned Islamic identity. In Abdülhamid's era, the state became the sole source of "true religiosity." From Abdülhamid's reign onward, the Ottoman/Turkish state reserved for itself the exclusive right of determining correct Islam, as opposed to a false Islam, or *Irtica*, any religious interpretations that strayed from officially sanctioned religiosity. The Hamidian policy of managing religiosity continued to be the state's practice long after the creation of the supposedly "militant secularist state" in 1924.[302] The Hamidian regime turned Islam into a political battleground that forced the opposition to contest it within the framework of its own discursive parameters. Ironically, Abdülhamid's rule was ended with significant support from Ottoman clerics. On April 15, 1909, even before the Liberals changed their stance, the higher-ranking clerics publicly asserted the constitution's compatibility with *şeriat* beyond a shred of doubt, going so far as to call its defense a religious duty. Furthermore, by recounting the religious book burning at Gülhane Park during this despotic period, they highlighted their hostility toward the Palace.[303]

This further evidences the complexity of the Hamidian period. Despite the pervasiveness of religious discourse and competing claims to religious legitimacy, religion was not and could not become the sole determining factor in state/subject relations. Even the concept of the unity of Islam was "a condition of difference," since the Ottomans did not see every Muslim group or country as being civilized enough to be a part of this unity.

As indicated earlier, pan-Islamism was a term coined by Europeans. The unity of Islam (*İttihadi İslam*) advocated by Muslims, including the Hamidian regime, was not equivalent to pan-Islamism. It never lost its local characteristics and was probably never understood by all Muslims as meaning the same thing. As far as its Hamidian version is concerned, it mostly remained nationalistic. It gave a central role to state interests, and interestingly enough, bore all the marks of Ottoman Orientalism. The Ottoman elite's view of Iranians highlights this attitude and their selective "pan-Islamism." Not only did the Ottomans have laws banning Ottoman women from marrying Iranian men,[304] Iran as a state too was seen as unqualified to be part of Islamic unity. This becomes evident in an article titled "The Unity of Islam" (*İttihadi İslam*), published in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* in 1880. The article is a response to a piece that had been written earlier by an Iranian that stressed the need for unity between the two Muslim states. Despite the fact that the writer concurred with his Iranian interlocutor on the strategic importance of this unity, he did not see Iran as qualified to be a part of it.[305] One might naturally expect the *Shi'i* religion to be a major impediment to the unity between the two states. However, the article does not even touch upon this issue. Instead, Iranian hatred for Turkmen and Turks (*tayfey-i Atrak*) on the one hand, and Turkish reactions to this hatred on the other, are regarded as the major obstacles to a possible unity.[306] It is worth noting that the Ottoman refers to his interlocutor somewhat contemptuously as the "Asian individual" (*Asiali zat*).[307] This again reflects the Ottoman elite's Orientalist attitudes toward Muslim others, which become increasingly apparent as the article enumerates reasons for the impossibility of unity between the two states.

The centrality of Istanbul's role in civilizing and enlightening the rest of the Islamic world is seen as a condition for this unity, since Istanbul was perceived to be the carrier of modern civilization. Istanbul was no longer under the influence of the old Asian civilization (*Asya'nın Medeniyet-i kadimesi*).[308] The writer of the article states that Nasser al-Din Shah's recent visit to Europe was part of his outstanding achievements (*neticey-ı semerat-ı berguzide*) in recognizing the significance of modernity (*teceddüd*). However, the idea of modernity had yet to gain popularity (*henuz ta'ammum etmemiştir*) in Iran.[309] This imagined distance of Iran from modernity is the major hindrance to an Islamic unity with the Ottomans. However, the writer did not believe that Iran was capable of stepping onto the path of modernity independently, a requirement for an Islamic unity with the Ottomans.[310] Then, "perhaps in order to arrive at the stage where

it could serve the unity of Islam, yet again, Iran has to receive an array of light from the enlightenment in the Dersaadet (Istanbul)."[311] The writer's overall assessment of Iran's degree of modernity leads him to conclude that Iran is not ready for service to the unity of Islam and it is therefore too soon to impose such a unity on Iran.[312]

From a non-essentialist perspective, when religion becomes a hegemonic identity, religious concepts can function as empty signifiers.[313] Laclau has shown that "the hegemonic identity becomes something of the order of an empty signifier."[314] This is how religion can be an instrument of governmentality, a legitimizing tool in the hands of the Hamidian state to justify its civilizing mission in the periphery and accommodate its official nationalism and orientalism. The Sultan used his religious status as a caliph to further his project of Turkifying the language, education, and the state bureaucracy. Simultaneously, opposing nationalist groups could interpret the same religion both as a unifying factor against Western colonialism and as a weapon at their disposal against a religious autocrat such as Abdülhamid II.

Notes

1. In 1898, the writers of the Arabic el-Kanunü'l-Esasi, a CUP publication, sent a lengthy open letter to Sultan Abdülhamid II. While the Sultan claimed to be the caliph and strove to unite the Muslim world, the letter mocked his religious integrity. It aimed at exposing the Sultan's hypocritical attitudes by asking how he could simultaneously claim to be the caliph and yet be so lax in practicing the daily prayers that are required of every single Muslim. "How can you skip Friday prayer," asks the letter, "for your wasteful parties in the palace?" "You have become a source of embarrassment for the Turkish *Umma*." See el-Kanunü'l-Esasi = la Constitution (no: 7, 1898), 3.
2. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 84–5.
3. See Selim Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery."
4. Ibid., 312.
5. See ibid. Also, Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism."; Thomas Kuhn, "Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: Contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872–1919" (Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Vol. 27, No. 2. 2007), 315–331.
6. Selim Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery", 312.
7. See: Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey.*

8. For an important discussion on using language as a tool for nationalization in a different context, see Alyssa Ayres. *Speaking Like a State*: *Language and Nationalism in Pakistan*. (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
9. BOA: Dosya No: 1599, Gömlek No: 10, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 26/C /1306 (Hicrî) [27.02.1889].
10. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1015, Gömlek No: 70, Fon Kodu: MVL, Tarih: 23/S /1282 (Hicrî)[[16.07.1865].
11. Ibid.
12. *Develetin lisani alisli olan*.
13. BOA: Dosya No: 1015, Gömlek No: 70, Fon Kodu: MVL, Tarih: 23/S /1282 (Hicrî)[[16.07.1865].
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid. The report reveals that the letter was jointly written by the inspector of the Third Army, the governors of Rumeli and Yanya, and the lieutenant governor of *İş*kodra and Tırhala.
17. Ibid.
18. For more, see Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?," *Post-Traditional Societies* (102, no. 1, winter, 1973).
19. See Ibid.; Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery." Also, Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism."
20. The Russian Orthodoxy exhibited similar characteristics. Russian elites too believed that they were burdened with the mission of preserving Orthodox Christianity. For a fascinating discussion on this subject, see Nikolai Berdiyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism* (London,: G. Bles, 1948).
21. Mesut Yeğen in his introduction to Mehmet Bayrak, *Şark Islahat Planı Kürtlere Vurulan Kelepçe/the Eastern Reform Plan and Shackling the Kurds*, Özge Yaynlar (Beysukent, Ankara: Özge, 2009), 13.
22. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 771.
23. Ibid., 769.
24. Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery," 328.
25. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*: *Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 176.
26. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey*: *The Question of Assimilation*, 47.
27. See "BBA YEE 14/292/126/8 Memorandum by the Governor of Hicaz and Yemen, Osman Nuri Paşa. Copy compiled by his secretary after his death. The report is dated 5 Temmuz 1301/18 July 1885." Quoted in Deringil, "'They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery': The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate," 328.
28. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 769.

29. Ibid.
30. See: Selim Deringil, *The Well-protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998). And ———, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery." Also, Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism."
31. Cf. Deringil, "'They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery," 341–42.
32. I am borrowing from Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London; New York: Verso, 2007), 71.
33. *Saadet.* (No. 280, January 1, 1885).
34. Ibid.
35. *Erâb*, according to Sami's own Turkish dictionary (*Kamûs-ı Türkî*), is "a black Arab, [the term is] used for those [blacks] who have come to our country from Arab lands. Such an appellation became necessary to distinguish them from the *real Arabs*; [from the] '*white Arabs*'." Shams al-Din Sami, *Kamûs-ı Türkî* (Istanbul: Ikdam, 1900), 932. (Emphases added). One should not assume that Arabs were unaware of such stereotypes. Al-Kawakibi, who was an ardent proponent of Arab separation and retaking the *khilafa* from the Turks, provides a long list of disparaging Turkish expressions about Arabs. In *Um al-Qura*, a book he wrote in 1898, al-Kawakibi states that "there exist many common Turkish expressions about Arabs to which one cannot ascribe any meaning except as signs of strong Turkish hatred for Arabs." He goes on to enumerate those stereotypes, stating that the Turks call the Arabs of Hijaz begging Arabs (*Arap dilencisi*), Egyptians blind farmers (*kör fellah*), or "gypsy" Arabs (*Arap çingenesi*), or Coptic "gypsy" Arabs (*kıpti Arap*), and, referring to Syrian Arabs, say "no to the Shami's sugar and no Arab face (*ne şamın şekeri ne arabın yüzü*)." He also uses many other derogatory terms such as: "Dirty Arab (*pîs Arab*), Arab-mentality (*Arab akli*), Arab nature (*Arap tabieti*), Arab nonsense (*Arap çikkesi*), may God turn me into an Arab if I do that (*bunu yaparsam Arap olayim*), What does an Arab have to do with a music stool (*Arap nerede tanbure nereda*)?" See al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura*, 150–51.
36. This expression is still in use in Turkey. However, for most people it no longer connotes a black Arab.
37. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat.* (No: 2236, January 5, 1885).
38. Ibid.
39. BOA: Dosya No: 971 Gömlek No: 76,684 Fon Kod: İ.DH. Tarih: 11/Ra/1303 Hicrî) [18.12.1885]
40. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat.* (No: 2236, January 5, 1885).
41. Cf. Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).
42. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat.* No: 2236, (January 5, 1885).

43. Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 64.
44. Ibid.
45. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat.* No: 2241, (January 11, 1885).
46. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat.* No: 2241, (January 11, 1885).
47. Ibid. No: 2240, (January 10, 1885).
48. I was unable to locate Nader's own writing on language reform. What has been recounted here is entirely based on Ahmet Midhat's account. See *Tercüman-ı Hakikat.* No: 2238, (January 8, 1885).
49. Ibid.
50. *Biz asasan osmanli gayretkeşi.*
51. In my English rendition of the related documents, I follow the original in deciding whether to call the Ottoman state's language Ottoman or Turkish.
52. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat.* No: 2240, (January 10, 1885).
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., 64.
55. *Allhace* (*Allah* + *ce*) is a word made up by Midhat. When the suffix "*ce*" (in Turkish language) is used in reference to a language, it functions like *ish* in Engl*ish*.
56. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat.* No: 2240, (January 10, 1885).
57. Ibid. No: 2241, (January 11, 1885).
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Teun van Dijk, "Social Cognition and Discourse," in *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology* ed. Howard Giles and W. P. Robinson (Chichester England; New York: Wiley, 1990), 164.
62. Cf. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. Also, Abbas Vali, *Kurds and the State in Iran: The Making of Kurdish Identity* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).
63. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, 72. Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1976), 156.
64. The first draft by Midhat Paşa lacked any directives regarding the official language. Yet, in its final draft, it was stipulated that the official language of the Empire was Turkish. For the full text of the 1876 Constitution, see "Salname-i Devlet," (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmet İhsan ve Şurekası, 1322 (1904)).
65. Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press,

2001), 22. It should be indicated that Mamdani's focus is on political identity rather than ethnicity and language.

66. Zürcher points out that at the end of the 1860s, with the publication of *Mecelle* by Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, the Ottoman elite's Islam began to diverge from other interpretations. According to Zürcher, the Ottoman elite were "[i]nspired by positivism, they were vehemently anti-clerical, but with the possible exception of Abdullah Cevdet, the 'atheist philosopher' (*dinsiz mutefekkir*) every one of them saw in a 'true' or 'purified' Islam, a 'rational' religion, which was open to science, a valuable building block of Ottoman reconstruction and a social cement." Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State," 60.
67. See Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism."
68. As stated above, the Ottoman ruler insisted that the establishment of order per se was considered a service to Islam regardless of how the caliph ruled.
69. Rosita Rindler Schjerve and Eva Vetter, "Historical Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism: Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Development of a Multifunctional Framework," in *Diglossia and Power Language Policies and Practice in the 19th Century Habsburg Empire* ed. Monica Heller Richard J. Watts (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), 39.
70. Ibid., 38.
71. BOA: Dosya No 1312/1, Gömlek No: 27, Fon Kodu: M/101, i. HUS. [07.26. 1894]. This letter is attended to in some length in the next section below.
72. Susanne Czeitschner, "Discourse, Hegemony and Polyglossia in the Judicial System of Trieste in the 19th Century," in *Diglossia and Power Language Policies and Practice in the 19th Century Habsburg Empire*, ed. Monica Heller and Richard J. Watts (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003).
73. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 87.
74. See Chap. 8.
75. See Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*: *The case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, SUNY series in Near Eastern studies (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), 75–80.
76. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey*: *The Question of Assimilation*, 67–68. (Emphasis added)
77. Cf. Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
78. Schjerve and Vetter, "Historical Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism: Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Development of a Multifunctional Framework," 35–69.
79. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 14.
80. Ibid.

81. Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity," 223.
82. See David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876–1908* (London; Totowa, N.J.: Cass, 1977).
83. For a great account of Rida's views, see Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate."
84. I did not have a chance to consult the original Arabic source. However, I believe the word "secular" is not a precise translation of terms such as *ad-dunya*, *al-ma'ash*, or *al-Haya*. To people like Rida, religion was so comprehensive that even strictly economic or political activities of Muslims were to take place in the confines of the religion and, as such, were themselves religious activities.
85. Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate," 255.
86. Mehmed Emin Bozarslan, *Kurdistan: Rojnama Kurdi Ya Pêşin/the First Kurdish Newspaper*, (Uppsala: Deng, 1991). Also, Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes*, Social, Economic, and Political studies of the Middle East and Asia, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 40.
87. Faridun Adamiyat, *Andishahha-ye Mirza Aqa Khan-e Kirmani*, Chap-e 1. ed., Zaban Va Farhang-I Iran (Tehran: Kitabkhanah-i Tuhuri, 1967), 258.
88. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, 67–68. (Emphasis added).
89. Janet Klein, "Claiming the Nation: The Origins and the Nature of Kurdish Nationalist Discourse" (Unpublished MA thesis, Princeton University, 1996).
90. For the analysis of Kurdish papers, see ibid. Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes*, Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003); Mehmed Emin Bozarslan, ed. *Kurdistan: Rojnama Kurdi Ya Pêşin/the First Kurdish Newspaper* (Uppsala: Deng, 1991). It should be noted that the First Office of the Chamberlin (*Baş Kitabet Dairesi*) banned the paper *Kurdistan* in 1899 before it could be disseminated in the Kurdish region. BOA: İ.MTZ. (05): Dosya No. 30, Gömlek No. 1685, 1315. Z. 8 [1899]; quoted in Metin Yuksel, "Dengbej, Mullah, Intelligentsia: The Survival and Revival of the Kurdish-Kurmanji Language in the Middle East, 1925–1960. Unpublished Dissertation" (The University of Chicago 2011).
91. BOA: Tarih: 27/Z /1318 [1901]. Dosya No: 2473, Gömlek No: 105, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT.
92. In 1881, the Ottoman state banned the use of names such as Kurdistan and Armenistan and claimed it did so "to prevent ethnic conflicts between the

Kurds and Armenians in Bitlis." See BOA: Dosya No: 121, Gömlek No: 7231, Fon Kodu: İ.ŞD. Tarih: 20/L /1298 (Hicrî)[1881].

93. For instance, in the following document it is clearly stated that education in Armenian and Greek is a threat to the Empire's territorial unity: BOA: Dosya No: 279, Gömlek No: 18; Fon Kodu: MF. MKT. Tarih: [6/10/1895].
94. BOA: Dosya no. 1097, Gömlek: 41, 27/Ha/1322 [1908]. In 1887, a certain Ahmed Süreyya Bey attempts to publish a Kurdish–Turkish paper by the same name: Kurdistan. However, it seems he got in trouble with the Hamidian regime's press regulation (*Matbuat Nizamnamesi*) and his attempts to publish the paper were unsuccessful. BOA: Tarih: 14/L /1326/1904 [1887] (Hicrî), Dosya No: 2651, Gömlek No: 48, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT.I also came across a document referring to another paper called *İmdada*. The document states that in 1900, this paper incited Kurdish people to rise up against the state. However, it does not provide any information with respect to the paper's language, its publisher, or its place of publication. Cf. BOA: Tarih: 05/Ca/1318/1900 (Hicrî) Dosya No: 36 Gömlek No: 48 Fon Kodu: Y: PRK.EŞA.
95. The document evidences this fact. See BOA: Dosya no. 591, Gömlek: 86, 09/Te/1322 [1906]; also quoted in Yuksel, "Dengbej, Mullah, Intelligentsia: The Survival and Revival of the Kurdish-Kurmanji Language in the Middle East, 1925–1960. Unpublished Dissertation" 268.
96. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey*: *The Question of Assimilation*, 48.
97. Ibid.
98. Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*: *Ottomanism*, *Arabism*, *and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire*, *1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 13.
99. Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism*: *From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 48.
100. *Ahalisinin Türkçe'ye Vakıf Olamamalarından Dolayı*.
101. BOA: Dosya No: 1343, Gömlek No: 68, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT, Tarih: 29/Ra/1301 (Hicrî) [27.01.1884]. This document states that "the people in Tripoli have made a request for the translation of the laws and directives into Arabic since they do not speak Turkish. Hereby this letter is sent for consultation on the matter (*Valinin icraatlarından memnuniyetlerini belirterek Türkçe bilmedikleri için kanun ve nizamnamelerin Arapça tercümelerini isteyen Trablusgarb ahalisinin mahzarının… görüş alınmak üzere gönderildiği*). BOA: Dosya No: 348, Gömlek No: 65, Fon Kodu: DH. MKT. Tarih: 29/Ş /1312/(Hicrî) [1895]; BOA: Dosya No: 2646, Gömlek No: 11, Fon Kodu: ŞD. Tarih: 22/Ra/1313/(Hicrî) [1895].
102. Cf. al-H̲usari, *MuhaDarat fi Nushu' al-fikrah al-Qawmiyah*, 126–27.
103. For more on the universalization and particularization of German language in the Hapsburg Empire, see Anderson's discussion on official nationalism

in: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

104. I was only able to find those documents that pointed to the existence of these laws, but I found nothing regarding the first time they were introduced.
105. All governorates of Adana, Edirne, Manastir, Salanik, Syria, Uskudere, Yanya, and so forth were warned against instances of the possible violation of this law. See: BOA: Dosya No: 1375, Gömlek No: 98, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 06/S /1304 (Hicrî) [02.11.1886].
106. BOA: Dosya No:496, Gömlek No:56, Fon Kodu: HR.TO. Tarih: 09/6/1877.
107. BOA: Dosya No:2242, Gömlek No:44, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 27/R /1317 (Hicrî) [03.09.1899]
108. Ibid.
109. BOA: Dosya No:270, Gömlek No:25, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 07/S /1312 (Hicrî) [09.08.1894]
110. Ibid.
111. BOA: Dosya No: 91 Gömlek No: 52 Fon Kodu: A.}MKT. Tarih: 14/Ş /1263 (Hicrî) [28.07.1847]
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. I am borrowing from Schjerve and Vetter, "Historical Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism: Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Development of a Multifunctional Framework," 39.
116. BOA: Dosya No: 91, Gömlek No: 52, Fon Kodu: A.}MKT. Tarih: 14/Ş /1263 (Hicrî) [28.07.1847].
117. BOA: Dosya No: 150 Gömlek No: 69 Fon Kodu: HR.MKT. Tarih: 28/L /1272 (Hicrî) [02.07.1856]
118. (*tahsilde bulunanların masraflarının ödenmesi*). Ibid.
119. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 150 Gömlek No: 69 Fon Kodu: HR.MKT. Tarih: 28/L /1272 (Hicrî) [02.07.1856]; and BOA: Dosya No: 79 Gömlek No: 66 Fon Kodu: A.}AMD. Tarih: 1273 (Hicrî) [1856]; Also, BOA: Dosya No: 675 Gömlek No: 61 Fon Kodu: MVL. Tarih: 24/Ca/1281 (Hicrî) [25.10.1864].
120. BOA: Dosya No: 9, Gömlek No: 97, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 11/M /1290 (Hicrî) [10.03.1873]. Aslo, BOA: Dosya No: 10 Gömlek No: 63 Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 06/Ra/1290 (Hicrî) [04.05.1873].
121. BOA: Dosya No: 9, Gömlek No:97, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 11/M /1290 (Hicrî) [10.03.1873].
122. (*Türkçe öğreten Muallimlere Maarif Tahsisatından Maaş Verildiği*). Ibid.

123. (*Maaşlarının Maarif Bütçesi yada Hazine'den ödenmesi*): BOA: Dosya No: 10, Gömlek No: 63, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 06/Ra/1290 (Hicrî) [04.05.1873].
124. BOA: Dosya No: 1505, Gömlek No: 43, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 19/Ş /1305 (Hicrî) [30.04.1888].
125. Ibid.
126. *Memalik-i Şahane'de Bulunan Mekatib-i Hristiyaniye'de Dahi Suret-i Ciddiyede Türkçe Tedris Ettirilmesi*. BOA: Dosya No: 443 Gömlek No: 33,208, Fon Kodu: BEO, Tarih: 24/M /1312 (Hicrî) [27.07.1894].
127. BOA: Dosya No 1312/1, Gömlek No: 27, Fon Kodu: M/101, i. HUS. [07.26. 1894].
128. Ibid.
129. (*…muhbir bulundurarak şâgirdanın dereceyi osmaniyedeki tahsillerini tahkik etmek…*)
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid.
132. BOA: Dosya No: 580 Gömlek No: 43,486/2 Fon Kodu: BEO. [02. 28. 1895].
133. BOA: Dosya No: 580, Gömlek No: 43,486/3, Fon Kodu: BEO. [02. 20. 1895].
134. Ibid
135. BOA: Dosya No: 641 Gömlek No: 48,013/2, Fon Kodu: BEO. Tarih: [06.08. 1895].
136. BOA: Dosya No: 308, Gömlek, No: 32, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 18/L /1313 (Hicrî)[01.04.1896].
137. BOA: Dosya No:279, Gömlek No:18, Fon Kodu: MF. MKT. Tarih: [6/10/1895].
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid.
140. (*nüfuzu şamile tehtine alınması*)
141. (*vahdeti mulkiye asaslarindan*).
142. BOA: Dosya No: 279, Gömlek No: 18, Fon Kodu: MF. MKT. Tarih: [6/10/1895].
143. BOA: Dosya No: 12, Gömlek No: 99, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT Tarih: 26/ Ca/1290 (Hicrî) [22.07.1873].
144. BOA: Dosya No: 12, Gömlek No: 99, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 26/ Ca/1290 (Hicrî) [22.07.1873].
145. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 622, Gömlek No: 43,260, Fon Kodu: İ.DH. Tarih: 04/Ş /1287(Hicrî) [28.10.1870]; BOA: Dosya No: 31, Gömlek No: 77, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 13/Ş /1292 (Hicrî) [1975].
146. BOA: Dosya No: 622, Gömlek No: 43,260, Fon Kodu: İ.DH. Tarih: 04/Ş /1287(Hicrî) [28.10.1870].

147. Ibid.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid.
151. *Terakki*. No. 2, (February 17, 1871).
152. *Lisani turkinin edemi vus'ati*
153. *Terakki*. No. 18, (April 7, 1871).
154. Ibid.
155. Ibid.
156. Ibid.
157. Ibid.
158. BOA: Dosya No: 22, Gömlek No: 142, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 08/Za/1291(Hicrî) [16.01.1875].
159. Ibid.
160. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*: 22.
161. Its complete title was *Tercüman-ı Hakikat: Mekatib-i Rüşdiye şakirdanı için Haftada Bir Kere Neşrolunur* (published once a week for students in the secondary schools). Therefore, hereafter, it will be referred to as *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*, to differentiate this publication from the other *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*. The latter was published for the general public by the same group of people from 1878 to 1921.
162. See: *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*. No: 4–7, (1878).
163. Most likely, Sami wrote this book on philology. As mentioned earlier, he himself had indicated that his book on philology was the first on this topic in Turkish.
164. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*. No: 7, (November 11, 1878).
165. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*. No: 2, (October 17, 1878), 1–2.
166. Gökalp particularly praises two instructors in Darülfünun: Ahmet Vefik Paşa (1823–1891) and Süleyman Hüsnü Paşa (1838–1892) for their pioneering role in this regard. See Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 8–10.
167. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*. No: 7, (November 11, 1878), 3–4.
168. Ibid. No: 3, (October 24, 1878), 5.
169. Ibid. No: 6, (November 14, 1878), 6.
170. Ibid.,1–2.
171. (*Ohdeyi çakiraneme duşan hayiri min gayri hadd abnayi cinsme.*)
172. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*. No: 6, (November 14, 1878), 1–2.
173. Ibid. No: 1, (October 29, 1878), 7.
174. It must be stated that I consulted only fifteen issues of this paper (1–15).
175. Emphases added.
176. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly*. (No: 2, (October 17, 1878), 5.

177. *Hemşehri* could mean a compatriot or citizen, but citizen seems to make more sense in this context. In modern Turkish, citizen is *vetandaş*, not *hemşehri*; now, the latter only means fellow country person.
178. (*demek olyur ki onlar bizimle hemşehrilik munasebetlerini şimdiki derecesinda artırmak istiyorlar*) Ibid. No: 2, (October, 17, 1878), 2.
179. (*Türkçeye önem verilmesi*), BOA: Dosya No: 68, Gömlek No: 15, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 12/L /1298 (Hicrî) [06.09.1881].
180. Ibid.
181. Cf. Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
182. BOA: Dosya No: 91 Gömlek No: 52 Fon Kodu: A.}MKT. Tarih: 14/Ş /1263 (Hicrî) [28.07.1847].
183. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1015, Gömlek No: 70, Fon Kodu: MVL Tarih: 23/S /1282 (Hicrî) [16.07.1865].
184. BOA: Dosya No: 534, Gömlek No: 39, Fon Kodu: A.}MKT.UM. Tarih: 19/B /1278 (Hicrî) [21.01.1862].
185. BOA: Dosya No: 761, Gömlek No: 8, Fon Kodu: MVL. Tarih: [5.12.1861]; also see: BOA: Dosya No: 761, Gömlek No: 8, Fon Kodu: MVL. Tarih: [26.11.1861].
186. Ibid.
187. BOA: Dosya No: 761, Gömlek No: 8, Fon Kodu: MVL. Tarih: [1.12.1861].
188. BOA: Dosya No: 761, Gömlek No: 8, Fon Kodu: MVL. Tarih: [5.12.1861].
189. BOA: Dosya No: 761, Gömlek No: 8, Fon Kodu: MVL. Tarih: [26.11.1861].
190. Cf. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, 67.
191. Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity," 222.
192. I am assuming that it might have been before the judge, though the records do not explain where the denial might have taken place.
193. BOA: Dosya No: 761, Gömlek No: 8, Fon Kodu: MVL. Tarih: [1.12.1861].
194. Mahmoud Haddad, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 2 (May, 1994): 203.
195. Ibid.
196. (*Arablarla meskun mahallerde*)
197. BOA: Dosya No: 21, Gömlek No:107, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 17/L /1291 (Hicrî) [1874].
198. BOA: Dosya No: 91 Gömlek No: 52 Fon Kodu: A.}MKT. Tarih: 14/Ş /1263 (Hicrî) [28.07.1847].
199. BOA: Dosya No: 31 Gömlek No: 25 Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 06/Ş /1292 (Hicrî) [06.09.1875].
200. (*Basra Rüşdiyesi muallimінin Arapça bilmeyip Türkçe eğitim yapması talimat gereği olduğundan ayrıca Arapça bilen bir muallim tayinine gerek olmadığı*): BOA: Dosya No: 119, Gömlek No: 77, Fon Kodu: MF. MKT. Tarih: 17/Z /1307 (Hicrî) [03.08.1890].

201. Ibid
202. BOA: Dosya No: 29 Gömlek No: 1312/RA099 Fon Kodu: İ.HUS. Tarih: 28/Ra/1312 (Hicrî) [28.09.1894]. This once again shows that the Republican elite's obsession with language reform had much deeper roots in the past.
203. For the details, see: BOA: Dosya No: 2, Gömlek No: 82, Fon Kodu: Y.PRK. MF. Tarih: 29/Z /1310 (Hicrî) [13.07.1893].
204. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, 63.
205. BOA: Dosya No: 309, Gömlek No: 20, Fon Kodu: MF. MKT. Tarih: [5.3.1896].
206. Ibid.
207. Ibid.
208. Ibid.
209. Ibid.
210. BOA: Dosya No: 446, Gömlek No: 41, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 20/Z /1316 (Hicrî) [30.04.1899].
211. BOA: Dosya No: 103/–2, Gömlek No: 1, Fon Kodu: DH.MUİ. Tarih: 06/C /1328 (Hicrî) [14.06.1910].
212. Ibid.
213. Ibid.
214. Ibid.
215. (*Belediye Meclisi' ne gireceklerin Türkçe bilmelerinin şart olduğu*). Ibid.
216. For more on hidden diglossic power relations, see Schjerve and Vetter, "Historical Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism: Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Development of a Multifunctional Framework," 40.
217. For instance, in 1862 the regional council of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Meclisi*) gave a license to a certain Şemail Refail to publish books in Arabic, Armenian, Chaldean, Kurdish, and French in Kurdistan. See: BOA: Dosya No: 479, Gömlek No: 21,725, Fon Kodu: İ.MVL, Tarih: 08/B /1279 (Hicrî) [29.12.1862]
218. In 1872: (*Mesahif-i şerifenin basılmasına, ithal ve ihracına yasak olmasından dolayı izin verilemeyeceği*) see: BOA: Dosya No: 4, Gömlek No: 66, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 30/C 1289/(Hicrî) [1872]; and in 1873: BOA: Dosya No: 8, Gömlek No: 99, Fon Kodu: MF.MKT. Tarih: 25/Za/1289 / (Hicrî) [1873]; also in the Hamidian period: BOA: Dosya No: 48 Tarih: 23/R /1294/[1877]. Gömlek No: 67 Fon Kodu: MF.MKT.
219. Ibid.
220. BOA: Dosya No: 1097, Gömlek No: 41, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 15/ Ca/1324 (Hicrî) [08.07.1906].
221. BOA: Dosya No: 5, Gömlek No: 32, Fon Kodu: Y.PRK.MF. Tarih: 29/Z /1325 (Hicrî) [02.02.1908].

222. BOA: Dosya No: 1097, Gömlek No: 41, Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 15/Ca/1324 (Hicrî) [08.07.1906].
223. Cf. Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.
224. John Rex quoted in: Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Critical Discourse Analysis Series (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 20.
225. *Mevetemek iktiza ederken*.
226. Mesut Yeğen in his introduction to: Bayrak, *Şark Islahat Planı Kürtlere Vurulan Kelepçe/The Eastern Reform Plan as a Handcuff for the Kurds*: 13.
227. Ibid.
228. Ibid., 14.
229. See Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State," 58.
230. Ibid.
231. See the insightful piece by Khalid, "Pan-Islamism in Practice: The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and Its Uses." Nikki R. Keddie, "Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism," *The Journal of Modern History* 41, no. 1 (March, 1969). Also, Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*: *Indian Muslims*, *the Ottomans and Britain*, *1877–1924*, 26n.
232. Jacob Landau quoted in Khalid, "*Pan-Islamism in Practice*: *The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and its Uses*," 203.
233. Khalid, "*Pan-Islamism in Practice*: *The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and its Uses*," 205.
234. For a great discussion on Western religious discourse as a means of defining its own identity versus "the rest," see Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, *or*, *How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*.
235. Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State," 58.
236. Khalid, "*Pan-Islamism in Practice*: *The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and its Uses*," 204.
237. See, for instance, the oppositional Ottoman journal *Istkibal*.
238. See, for example, Muhammad Muhit Tabatabai, *Majmuah-e Asar-e Mirza Malkum Khan/the Collection of Mirza Malkum Khan's Work*, Chap-i 1. ed. (Tehran: Intisharat-i iIlmi,?).
239. A Turkish Intellectual by the name of Behdjet Wahby Bey quoted in: Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*: *Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 17.
240. See Ishtiaq Ahmad, "From Pan-Islamism to Muslim Nationalism: The Indian Muslim Response to the Turkish War of Liberation "in *International Conference Turkish War of Liberation* (Istanbul, Turkey. May 12–13, 2005).
241. Khalid, "*Pan-Islamism in Practice*: *The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and its Uses*," 205–21. Mushirul Hasan., "Religion and Politics: The Ulama and

Khilafat Movement," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 16, no. 20 (May 16, 1981). Also, Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924.*

242. It was published by a certain Ali Şefkati Bey in Europe. The Hamidian state was very sensitive to this paper and attempted to halt its publication many times. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 498, Gömlek No: 57, Fon Kodu: HR.TO. Tarih: 09/9/1880 (Miladî).; BOA: Dosya No: 818, Gömlek No: 66,007, Fon Kodu: İ.DH. Tarih: 24/Z /1297(Hicrî) [1880].; BOA: Dosya No: 165, Gömlek No: 116, Fon Kodu: Y.A...HUS. Tarih: 04/L /1297(Hicrî) [1880].
243. *İstikbal*, No: 15–19, (November, 18 & 24, 1880).
244. Discussed in Chap. 2.
245. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 243.
246. Ibid., 256.
247. For more on this, see ibid.
248. *İstikbal*, No: 15&19, (November, 18 & 24, 1880).
249. Ibid.
250. Ibid.
251. *Şura-yi Ummat*. No: 1, (1902).
252. See more recent works on the late Ottoman period by the following scholars: Deringil, Karpat, Khalid, Hanioglu, Sohrabi, and Zürcher.
253. Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*:, 126–28. Also, see Yitzchak Weismann, "The Forgotten Shaikh: ʿĪsā al-Kurdī and the Transformation of the Naqshbandī-Khālidī "*Die Welt des Islams, New Series* 43, no. 3 (2003).
254. Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924*, 20.
255. For instance, *İstikbal* (no: 9 August, 9, 1880) reports that based on information made available by the European press, the Arabs in Beirut and Syria had written mocking slogans on the walls of the big mosques. These slogans pointed to state discriminatory policies and asserted: "The Turks need us only for their wars and ignore us when there is peace."
256. Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 126–28.
257. Pears writes: "In the early years of Abdul Hamid, the chief mosques in Stamboul contained extracts from the Sacred Books of the qualification of required in the Caliph. Around 1890, by Abdul Hamid's command, these were ordered to be taken down, and a considerable amount of discontent was thus created amongst the Ulama." Quoted in Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the near East*, [Rev. ed. (Beirut,: Khayats, 1966), 54n.

258. Oliver-Dee, *The Caliphate Question*: *The British Government and Islamic Governance*, 47.
259. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*: *Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 257.
260. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler*.
261. Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate", 257.
262. FO 141/587/2, F83 quoted in: Oliver-Dee, *The Caliphate Question*: *The British Government and Islamic Governance*.
263. Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate", 257.
264. al-Aqqad, *'Abd Al-Rahman Al-Kawakibi*, 73.
265. Ibid.
266. Cf. Rashid Khalidi, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
267. See al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura*, especially from page 150 onward.
268. Quoted in al-Aqqad, *'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi*, 144.
269. al-Kawakibi, *Um al-Qura*, 150–51.
270. Ibid.
271. Ibid., 151.
272. al-Aqqad, *'Abd Al-Rahman Al-Kawakibi*, 81.
273. William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000), 126.
274. See Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*: *Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*.
275. See Khalid, "*Pan-Islamism in Practice*: *The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and its Uses*."
276. al-Aqqad, *'Abd Al-Rahman Al-Kawakibi*, 75.
277. Ibid.
278. Ibid.
279. As shown in Chap. 4, some Ottomanist scholars tend to portray Muslims' interpretation of their religion as universalistic and unitary.
280. See Chap. 3 in the present study.
281. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.
282. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 71.
283. Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State," 59.
284. Ussama Makdisi, "After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 4 (Nov., 2002): 606.
285. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1015, Gömlek No: 70, Fon Kodu: MVL Tarih: 23/S /1282 (Hicrî) [16.07.1865].

286. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, *With a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East*, 27.
287. Cf. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*: *Islam*, *the State*, *and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*.
288. Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, *1902–1910*: 47.
289. Ibid.
290. Karpat, *Studies on Turkish Politics and Society*: *Selected Articles and Essays*: 204. Also, Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State," 57.
291. Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, *1902–1910*, 32.
292. See Sect.2 of the present chapter.
293. Cf. Deringil, *The Well-protected Domains*: *Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire*, *1876–1909*. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*: *Islam*, *the State*, *and Education in the late Ottoman Empire*. *Erik-Jan*. *Zürcher*. *The Importance of Being Secular*, in Kerem Öktem and Philip Robins (Ed). Turkey's Engagement with Modernity; Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century (Palgrave. New York. 2010).
294. For a detailed study of Hamidiya Cavalries and their political significance, see Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire*: *Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).
295. The tribal school was for Arabs, Albanians, and Kurds.
296. For more on tribal schools, see Alişan Akpınar, *Aşiret*,*Mektep*, *Devlet*: *Osmanlı Devletinde Aşiret Mektebi* (Istanbul: Aram Yayincilik, 2001).
297. Emphasis added.
298. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey*: *The Question of Assimilation*, 48.
299. See Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State."
300. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*: *Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 9.
301. A brief look at the distant history of governing practice, such the Abbasid rule, emphasizes that interference by rulers in the direction of religious scholarship occurred. Some canonical works produced under the auspices of the rulers: *Al-Muwatta* (a *Hadith* and *fiqhi* book) by Malik, the head of the Maliki School of jurisprudence, and *al-Kharaj* (a *fiqhi* book) by Abu Yusuf, just to name a few. This situation exemplifies the impact of "the political" authority on religious knowledge production. There have been times during which noted Muslim scholars, such as Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the head of Hanbali School, could not undertake his scholarly endeavors independently without risking his dignity.

302. For more on Ottoman/Turkish state religious management, see Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State."
303. Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran, 1902–1910*, 305.
304. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1395, Gömlek No: 126 Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 03/Ca/1304 (Hicrî) [1887]; Also, BOA: Dosya No: 34 Gömlek No: 39 Fon Kodu: Y.MTV. Tarih: 22/Za/1305/(Hicrî) [1888].; And BOA: Dosya No:14 Gömlek No: 16 Fon Kodu: MV. Tarih: 11/S /1304/(Hicrî) [1886].
305. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*. No: 595 (Jun 7, 1880).
306. Ibid.
307. Ibid.
308. Ibid.
309. Ibid.
310. Ibid.
311. Ibid. (*Belki İttihad-ı İslam' e istidad mevkisinin yardımıyle hizmet etmesi lazım gelen Iran'ın bu. istidadı yine Dersaadet' den aksettirilecek olan bir nur ile tenvir etmesine mütevakkıf olur*).
312. Ibid.
313. See Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam.*
314. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 71.

PART III

Kurdish Nationalism and Exclusionary Islams

CHAPTER 6

Exclusionary Islam and Kurdish Nationalism: The Case of the Naqshbandi Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri

The current chapter shall be devoted to the religio-nationalist discourse of the 1880 Kurdish uprising under Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri. This particular Kurdish uprising offers an important example of the fusion of peripheral Islam with Kurdish ethno-nationalist aspirations. Such a fusion between Islam and nationalism is evident in the documents produced by Kurdish religious leaders, especially the charismatic leader of the uprising, Sheikh Ubeydullah. This chapter discusses the Sheikh's personal account of the major Kurdish-Ottoman Turkish interaction as documented in his Persian *Mesnewi*[1] along with his personal letters. The religio-political project of Sheikh Ubeydullah is analyzed in order to illustrate how his Islamic revivalism goes hand in hand with his Kurdish nationalism. I employ the Sheikh's writings to shed some light on the Kurdish self-perception and the way they perceived ethnic Others. The 1877–1878 Russo-Ottoman War (and the resultant Kurdish interaction with the Ottoman army) constitutes the defining moment in the Sheikh's ethno-nationalist consciousness.

In this chapter, I argue that Sheikh Ubeydullah's writings indicate that he understood the significance of self-referentiality in making collective political claims. Neither previous Kurdish texts nor Kurdish uprisings reflect the type of ethno-national consciousness that tied collective self-referentiality with the idea of self-rule. For instance, despite Ahmad Xani's (the renowned seventeenth-century Kurdish poet) emphasis on writing in the Kurdish language,[2] his poetic oeuvre *Mem u Zin* does not evidence the presence of Kurdish ethno-nationalism.[3]

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The concluding section of the current chapter offers a more theoretical approach to the Sheikh's Revolt. In particular, I will argue that the political statements by the Sheikh and more significantly his political demands could not take place outside the modern paradigm of nationalism. By way of analyzing Sheikh Ubeydullah's writings, I venture to demonstrate the fusion of religion and nationalism. In doing so, I intend to make sense of the Sheikh's utterances in the light of works by John Langshaw Austin, Michael Billig, Judith Butler, Partha Chatterjee, and Quentin Skinner. Borrowing from Austin's phraseology, I argue that nationalism is a modern "convention." Therefore, any utterances that signify the modern nationalist convention would have to be uttered to invoke such a convention. When it comes to the Sheikh, he did invoke the idea of modern nationalism through his religious idiom. Therefore, the Sheikh's uprising has to be understood as a significant case of religious nationalism in the Modern Middle East.

The Rise of Sheikh Ubeydullah

Ubeydullah of Nehri (d. 1883) was a Naqshbandi Sheikh and a Kurdish religious scholar. His main *khanaqah* (Sufi lodge) was located in the village of Nehri, in the borderland region between the Qajar and Ottoman states. He led rebellions against these states in 1879 and 1880, respectively. In addition to his sporadic personal letters, the Sheikh wrote a *Mesnewi*[4] to revive what he considered "the true Islam" and "authentic Sufism" to guide "the people of true religion," that is, the Kurds.[5] He was probably the most prominent Kurdish Sufi Sheikh and community leader of his time. Describing the place of the Sheikh among *Sunni* Muslims, Speer states that "*next to the Sultan and the Sheriff of Mecca the Sheikh was the holiest person among the Sunni Mohammedans.* Thousands were ready to follow him as the vicar of God… He was a man of some real virtues of character, vigorous, just, and courageous."[6]

The Sheikh must have been concerned about the prospect of an independent Armenian state.[7] It is clear, however, that he did not share his contemporary Kurdish intellectuals' negative views about his Christian neighbors.[8] There is a significant amount of scholarship that views the Kurdish fear of the emergence of a possible Armenian state as the sole cause for the Sheikh's Revolt.[9] However, it should be emphasized that the evidence used to substantiate this claim is itself contradictory and dubious. The source for the statement below, allegedly uttered by Sheikh, comes from an Ottoman official in Kurdistan who had an active role in campaigning against him.[10]

The Sheikh is famously quoted as saying "what is this I hear, that the Armenians are going to have an independent state in Van, and that the Nestorians are going to hoist the British flag and declare themselves British subjects. I will never permit it; even if I have to arm the women."[11] No matter how celebrated this quote is, it should be regarded with great caution because (a) Captain Clayton, the British official who reports this, claims that he had heard it from Toussoun Pasha.[12] Toussoun Pasha was an Ottoman state official in Hakkari, who had stated that he heard these remarks from one of his subordinates. (b) It seems that this statement has been one of the reasons that some scholars assume the prospect of an Armenian state was the *prima causa* for the Sheikh's Revolt.[13] This conversation between Clayton and Toussoun Pasha occurred in July 1880, as Clayton notes that "since my arrival here Toussoun Pasha the Mutesarrif has told me that some little time ago he sent an officer" to visit the Sheikh.[14] It should be kept in mind that before 1880, the Sheikh had become disillusioned with the Ottoman state and had revolted against it a year earlier. (c) Toussoun Pasha relates this story along with two other important pieces of news: (1) Again according to the Pasha, the Sheikh was already trying to build a coalition with Nestorians and "ha[d] sent [a message] to Mar Shimoun to urge him to join forces against the Turkish Government and ha[d] made the same request to the chief Armenian ecclesiastic here, saying that he would protect the Christians."[15] The Sheikh had also urged for everyone to refrain from paying taxes to the government.[16] (2) In addition, the Pasha had told Clayton that "some little time ago" the Sheikh had been trying to send his son to Istanbul with a proposal to pay a large sum "to the Sultan by Bedir Khan Bey when semi-independent, and will offer to pay a still larger sum if his authority over Kurdistan is recognized and his rule is not interfered with."[17] (d) This quote could also be a rumor and part of the Ottoman campaign to pit different communities against one another. Clayton speaks to this reality when he recounts that "Samih Pasha told [him] also that he had heard that the Sheikh had a plan for exterminating the Christians in view of the talk that has been going on about the formation of an Armenian State."[18] Ottoman officials were trying to spread these rumors, especially after the Sheikh's attack on Iran, to the extent that they were ready to hire Russian mercenaries to scare Christians and simultaneously caution British Officials of "the Sheikh's ulterior motives" and paint his revolt as entirely anti-Christian. Clayton relates that

> there is a certain Russian "*loupeur*" named Tchilingiroff, a restless adventurer, who has been acting as a sort of factotum of the Sheikh and *has*

> *recently been brought here by the Turkish authorities.* This man has been telling the Armenians that *they all owe their lives to him that the Sheikh intended to massacre them, but that he had persuaded him to turn against the Persians instead*.[19] (Emphasis added)

To come back to the Sheikh's appearance on the Kurdish political scene, Ubeydullah rose to prominence especially during the Russo-Ottoman War (1887–1888) as he received a request from Abdülhamid II to join the "*jihad*" against the Russian Army. According to his personal account, the Sheikh was able to gather thousands of armed men.[20] The Sheikh's participation in the War became one of the major factors in his growing nationalist sentiment and his disillusionment with the Ottoman state. In 1879, the Sheikh led an unsuccessful uprising against the Ottoman state. However, seeing the superiority of the state forces and an inevitable defeat at hand, he found a way out of this situation and convinced the Sultan that the uprising was not a rebellion against the Sultan himself, but rather an outbreak of the people's frustration and against the local officials' corruption. In the following year, perhaps in the hope that the previous year's rebellion was the end of the Sheikh's anti-state political activities, the Sultan bestowed his decoration upon him.[21]

Months later, using his Kurdish league,[22] which was a broad union of Ottoman and Persian Kurds, the Sheikh took control of major parts of Kurdistan that were under Qajar rule. After a few months, especially when the war took some ugly turns as it increasingly came to be understood as a *Shiʿi- Sunni* war, the Sheikh was defeated and squeezed between the Qajar and Ottoman Armies amidst rumors of a possible arrival of the Russian troops to support the Persians.[23] Later on, the Sheikh was removed from his own region and sent to exile in Istanbul. After his escape and return to Hakkari, this time he was sent to Hijaz, where he remained until his death in 1883.

It is important to note that unlike in the previous Kurdish uprising, the Sheikh's activities were not limited to taking up arms and gathering forces to go against the non-Kurdish states. He started his movement with diplomatic efforts in an attempt at convincing the Great Powers that the Kurds were a separate nation. In addition to contacting Russian and British Consuls, he "established contact with the Sharif of Mecca[24] and Khedive of Egypt."[25] He also tried to persuade Abbas Mirza Molkara, a half-Kurdish Qajar prince, to join his efforts.[26]

The goal here is not to rewrite the chronology of the historical events, which has been dealt with as best as possible by others,[27] but to investigate

how a nationalist discourse fuses with Kurdish religious discourse and into their narration of the nation. This takes place in various contexts and forms: by Kurdish intelligentsia in Istanbul with their emphasis on ethnic Kurdish contributions to Islamic civilization (as shown above), Kurdish migrants and religious leaders from Iran, and by Sheikh Ubeydullah himself, in his political letters and poems. The fusion of religion and nationalism is also visible in these groups and figures' criticism of their others, especially of the states, who are seen guilty for their failings or lack of desire to educate the Kurds.[28]

The rise of Sheikh Ubeydullah signified a new era in the Kurdish politics and presents a modality of its development in which the fusion of nationalism and religiosity were clearly visible. This interesting fusion in the Kurdish political movements, which in some cases lasted until the 1960s, endowed them with a unique characteristic. It could be explained by the fact that the Kurds simultaneously represented the religious and ethnic peripheral "Other." The Kurds were generally portrayed as backward and ignorant in the late Ottoman period. So too did their religiosity, in the eyes of the Ottoman elite, represent a backward Islam.[29] This was the case, as mentioned in the foregoing chapters, not just because Kurdish Islam in particular, and non-Turkish Islam more generally, was deemed outdated, and the Ottoman elite believed that "without receiving light from the Istanbul's enlightenment"[30] no nation could possibly leap to their stage of modern comprehension of Islam. Moreover, when it comes to the Qajar/Iranians' and Kurds' perceptions of each other, the *Shiʿi- Sunni* or Kurd-*ʿAjam* [non-Kurdish Iranians] divide represented a much wider intercommunal chasm than the division between the peripheral *Shafiʿi*/Naqshbandi/Kurds vis-à-vis the official Ottomans/Turkish *Hanafi* Islam across the border. This classification should not be seen odd. *Shafiʿi* School showed persisted stubbornness in its refusal to follow the officially propagated *Hanafi* School of law in the Empire. "This branch of Islam had not followed the Hanefis the main Ottoman mezhep (school of law) in its supine attitude towards the state."[31]

"The Kurds' Religion Is Different"[32]

There is a great body of scholarship on Sheikh Ubeydullah's rising in 1880. Unfortunately, except for a few letters by the Sheikh himself, his *Mesnewi* was not available[33] to those who have studied his uprising before. The lack

of attention to the *Mesnewi* is partly due to the fact that it was not available in print. It existed only in the form of a manuscript available to the close relatives and followers of the Sheikh. Also, it is written in Persian. Most likely, Persian constituted an important barrier for the new generation of the Sheikh's relatives who were living on the Turkish side of Kurdistan to have access to the Sheikh's poetry. Furthermore, except for the work of Sabri Ateş, most of the scholarship concentrates on non-Persian documents in studying the Sheikh's Revolt. This is why for long the *Mesnewi* remained a manuscript unknown to people other than close relatives and followers of the Sheikh in the East. It took this poetry book over a century to appear in Persian print.

The Sheikh's *Mesnewi* offers a first-hand account about his political and nationalist thoughts, which help us to get a better grasp of how his religious and nationalist views were intersecting. Jwaideh's pioneering work more than any other has revealed a great deal about the Sheikh's personality and his thoughts. Had Jwaideh had a chance to consult this *Masnawi*, he could have offered even more about the Sheikh's thoughts, his approach to Islam, politics, Kurdish nationalism and national identity, and the religious content of that identity. Jwaideh was among the first scholars, if not *the* first to note that "The Sheikh's contention that the Kurds' religion was different from that of the others is extremely significant. It indicates the extent to which nationalism depends on exclusiveness and difference."[34] Jwaideh contends that the Sheikh's claim was untenable, particularly when it came to the Kurds' religious differences from the Turks. However, "in order to emphasize the complete distinctiveness of the Kurds, the Sheikh magnified denominational differences and made this extravagant claim."[35]

Even if one assumes that these claims were made by a prominent Kurdish Naqshbandi Sheikh merely to garner British and Western political support, it does not diminish their validity. It still demonstrates that making a distinction between the Kurds' religion and their Turkish brethren's did not bother him and that this was not seen, as an Orientalist might suppose, as an act that was harmful to the unity of the "*umma*" or as a *Sunni* Muslim's breach of his assumed pledge to "the caliphate." The existence of the Ottoman Caliphate seems to have had no effect on the Sheikh's thinking when he wrote those letters or when he sought non-Muslim support to divide "the caliph's domain." Nonetheless, this self-differentiation on the Sheikh's part as a member of a national community was necessary for "imagining national singularity and homogeneity."[36] This "imagined

homogeneity" simultaneously takes the form of "construct[ing] the distinctions between themselves and other nations, most notably when the other nationality is believed to exhibit traits similar to those of one's own national community, similar to what Freud called the 'narcissism of small differences'."[37]

The Sheikh's poems about the Russo-Ottoman War and preparation for it, which must have been composed after the war,[38] illustrate his admiration for Abdülhamid II solely as a person. He never refers to the Sultan as a caliph,[39] but the Sheikh does not hesitate to call him an (or the) *imam*[40] or as the promulgator of the religion and of justice.[41] Apparently, at least when he wrote his *Mesnewi*, the Sheikh felt a significant amount of respect toward the Sultan, especially after hearing that the Sultan could not control his outburst of emotions when he read the Sheikh's letter—calling on Kurds to join the *jihad* against Russia, in 1877.[42] The Sheikh had been told that the letter was so moving that made Sultan unable to read the letter himself in its entirety. Therefore, Abdülhamid asked an *Imam* sitting next to him to read the rest of the letter to him.[43] It is clear that Ubeydullah perceives the Sultan's reaction as a sign of his great religious devotion and piety. The Sheikh thinks that Abdülhamid concurs with him that the calamities that had befallen the Ottoman state were the result of the abandonment of Islamic traditions and laws and the spread of a great moral laxity (*bar kabs'er moderr*).[44] In the "absence of a true faith in Islam," how could the Ottomans expect anything other than shameful defeats?[45] However, the Sheikh was of the opinion that the Ottoman state was too corrupt for Abdülhamid to reform it. It was beyond his ability to make the required and necessary structural changes (*tabdil in hay'at*). Ubeydullah claims that the spread of this non-Islamic culture had reached a point where Abdülhamid could no longer exert his power or rule effectively.[46]

Such assertions not only illustrate the Sheikh's great disappointment with the entire Ottoman state apparatus, but also shed light on the incompatible appropriation of Islam by the center and by the periphery, which in turn signifies ethnic and communal differences as well. As discussed in preceding chapters, even though the Ottoman elite usually saw peripheral Islam in a negative light, they tolerated some aspects of it, particularly those that could be put into the service of more effective governance. An Ottoman official's remarks about Sheikh Ubeydullah and Kurdish Islam in 1873 showcase this dual approach to Islam in the periphery on the part of the elites when he states:

> [The Sheikh] works *to bring the Kurds, who are inclined toward idolatry, onto the straight path of Islam*. The township [*nahiye*] of Shamdinan where the Sheikh lives is on the path of tribal migration routes and on the border [i.e., on the periphery of the Ottoman domains]. The *order and security of this locality* would have required three or four battalions. However, *because of the Sheikh's presence and help … only a local supervisor* [*mudir*] *and eight police forces* [*zabtiye*] are enough to govern and collect all … [the] taxes on time.[47] (Emphasis added)

Such views and perceptions about the Kurds become even worse when expressed by Persian elites. For instance, an Iranian bureaucrat, Askandar Qurians, describes the Sheikh as "the religious leader of the nomadic tribes that are ignorant of any tradition and religion."[48] Qajar officials viewed the Kurds as a group of people who lived "on the borders of the sublime Qajar and Ottoman states." To those officials, the Kurds were "imprudent, ignoramus-like, vile, and ungodly people…nomadic *Sunni*s, residing in high and unreachable mountains, most of whom blindly follow[ed] the misguided Sheikh Ubeydullah."[49]

Existing documents from the period above all show that the Kurdish community and its religious leaders too were mostly oblivious to the Ottoman Sultan's proclaimed religious status.[50] A document from the era, a petition written in Persian by Kurdish refugees in the city of Van to the Russian Consul in 1880, demonstrates that the *Sunni* Ottoman Caliph and the *Shiʿi* Qajar king were equally hated by the *Sunni* Kurds.[51] Save for the *Shiʿi*-populated city of Kermanshah, the petition shows not only the signatories representing almost every major Kurdish town in Persia, it also bears witness to the religious notables' abhorrence to both states. The document was signed by the Friday prayers' *Imam*s, high-ranking clerics, judges, *mufti*s and merchants (*tüccâr;* sing. *tacir*) from different Kurdish cities and towns in East Kurdistan/Iran.[52] The petitioners cite their war with the state as their reason for fleeing Iran. However, they claim to have halted their war with the Qajar state due to their fear of Ottoman interference. They also claim to represent about 500,000 refugees who had apparently entered the Ottoman borders,[53] a number that probably constituted one fifth of the entire Kurdish population at the time.[54]

Observing this phenomenon of the reciprocal effect of religious views and ethnicity, Basil Nikitin, who spent a considerable time among the Kurds as a Russian dignitary, states that

> the Kurds show as much resistance to the *Romis*[55] (*Sunni* Ottoman/Turks) as they do to the *Ajams* (non-Kurdish Iranian *Shi'i*es). Because what makes

> the Kurds remain attached to Islam is not new modernist interpretation. The Kurds are attached to a type of Islam that is the legacy of the tribes and mountaineers that has always separated them for a *stubborn will to independence and rebelliousness* against the *foreign forces* from the plains that *strove to civilize and to urbanize* them in order to make them obedient to the new laws and regulations required by the urban life.[56] (Emphasis added)

Although Nikitin takes notice of the depth of these differences, he tries to explain such religious differences by connecting them to the "immutability" of the Kurdish rural worldview. Of course, Nikitin later contradicts himself by making another generalization when asserting that the Kurds "are lacking religious prejudice."[57] He also points to the important role of Sufi orders (*tariqat*) in obstructing foreign political influence in Kurdistan.[58] Nikitin rightly shows that the anti-foreign attitudes of these orders created a type of buffer zone against Kurdish absorption by ruling ethnic groups. However, the very emergence of those orders in itself evidences the instability of religious elements among the Kurds, which in van Bruinessen's phrasing corresponds with "a period of great upheaval and important political changes in Kurdistan."[59] In the eighteenth century, the Khalidi branch of the Naqshbandi, for instance, began to grow and would later become the dominant order in Kurdistan.[60] It was a reformist movement in the sense that it introduced a new interpretation of Islam.[61] The Khalidi, unlike some other Sufi orders, was not a quietist Sufi group and concerned itself greatly with politics.[62]

It was part of the revivalist movement in "the pre-modern Muslim world." Khalidi revival was part of the general "orthodox revival" branded by Islamic modernist thinker Fazlur Rahman, as a revival "against the corruption of religion and the moral laxity and degeneration prevalent in Muslim society in the outlying provinces of the Ottoman Empire and in India."[63] What is at stake here is not to shed a positive or negative light on these movements but to draw attention to the complexity and volatility of the Islamic religious traditions and the way they came to be understood. Labeling them as the religious views of the tribes and mountaineers does not explain how they came about and developed, but reflects the center's influence on the studies of the periphery. This possibility of religious reforms should in itself be an indication of a more complex situation than mere loyalty to the tribe and to the mountain dwellers' religious traditions. However, stereotypes about "tribalism" and the impact of mountains on the Kurdish Islamic beliefs aside, one can identify a type of Kurdish ethnic bent when it comes to their religiosity and their skepticism about their

others' religious sincerity.[64] Kurdish religious leaders have generally shown traces of ethnocentrism in comparing their own religiosity with the forms prevalent among the *Sunni* Turks and *Shi'i* Iranians. It was indicated earlier that Sheikh Ubeydullah without any hesitation claimed a distinct Kurdish religiosity in his letters to the foreign Consuls.

A Kurdistan-Centered Islamic Revivalism

Having discussed Islam as a condition of difference between the center and the periphery, now we shall take up the influence of ethnic perceptions on Sheikh Ubeydullah's revivalist project. Aside from his *Mesnewi*, there is not much literature available to provide us with the specifics or particularities of his revivalism. The Sheikh's *Mesnewi* is supposed be a religious revivalist project. He claims that he wrote his own *Mesnewi* to present a key to the understanding of or to revive that of Rūmi.[65] The Sheikh's *Mesnewi*, however, mostly concentrates on the Naqshbandi branch of Islamic Sufism. The book is a poetic detailing of the history of the Order and a guidebook for the followers of this *Tariqat*. His new poetic account in a sense was a reconstruction of the Naqshbandi Order's history to differentiate "its original and uncontaminated teachings" from the existing and prevalent misrepresentations of it by the contemporary generation.[66] According to the Sheikh, the distance of people's knowledge about the Order from its original teachings had reached a point where one could hardly find any resemblance between the two.[67]

Sheikh Ubeydullah's views in many ways resembled those of other Muslim revivalists. He was disturbed by the general direction of the contemporary state of affairs. He had very pessimistic views of the Ottoman state. It is clear that the Sheikh believed that the Ottoman state's deficiencies were rooted in its indifference toward Islamic laws and its teachings. He considers Ottoman laws to be in direct opposition to Islam, or counter-*Shari'a* (*khelaf-e shar'*).[68] To him, Islamic laws are nothing more than the Qur'anic verses and the Prophetic tradition and therefore anything incompatible with them is *bid'a* (forbidden innovation).[69] This illustrates a somewhat 'Abduh and Rida-type *Salafi*-ism conflated with Sufi teachings in the Sheikh's approach to the religious revival. He even invokes the idea of commonality of the Islamic *umma*'s laws when he contends that "the laws of this *umma*—which are the best of all laws—are grounded in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition."[70]

It seems, however, that his brand of revivalism differed from that of figures like 'Abduh and Riḍa in the sense that Ubeydullah was solely focused on reviving religion among the ethnic Kurds. Sheikh Ubeydullah was mostly concerned with the state of affairs in Kurdistan, and this is an area that separates him from other Muslim revivalists. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the Arab revivalists too had their own nationalistic agenda. 'Abduh as well believed that "the Ottomans had usurped caliphate and the Turks were unable to grasp the spirit of the Muhammadan message since they were late converts."[71] Yet unlike Sheikh Ubeydullah, they at the same time concerned themselves with the Muslim world in general. However, the Sheikh does not pay much attention to the Muslim world beyond Kurdistan.

Sheikh Ubeydullah particularly holds positive views about Muslim Kurds' religious devotion but simultaneously he is highly critical of the Sufi Orders, including his own Naqshbandi Order. He sees the degeneration in Kurdistan as the degeneration of the Sufi Orders. This is why he thinks that he is obliged to revive the previous generations' Sufi tradition[72] for two reasons: (a) the degeneration of the Sufi Orders and (b) the existence of an exceptional degree of religious enthusiasm in Kurdistan, which requires guidance and spiritual leadership.[73] Without real guidance, asserts Ubeydullah, all this religious enthusiasm and excitement could lead down a wrong path.[74] He claims that the obligatory nature of the religious (or *tariqat*'s) following necessitates writing a second *Mesnewi* to abide by the first and revive it.[75]

From the Sheikh's perspective, the Sufi tradition in Kurdistan was losing its meaning and internal dynamism. Instead of achieving higher stages of spirituality through required training and obtaining the necessary knowledge, it was becoming a matter of inheritance. To pass the stages of Sufism, a Sufi no longer needed long years of study and deep personal spiritual endeavors.[76] Therefore, despite their religious passion, the Kurds were roaming in the plains of religion (*sahra-ye din*).[77] According to Ubeydullah, to the contrary of what has been the tradition of the *Salaf* (pious forebears), which comprises being critical of oneself and tolerant of others' shortcomings, the contemporary Sufis perceived themselves as paragons of piety and charged others with mischief.[78]

Another area that sets the Sheikh apart from other Muslim revivalist groups and figures is his approach to the Islamic past and its golden age. To the Sheikh who believed in the constancy of *tajdid* (renewal),[79] Islamic history, along with the exceptional era of the Prophet and *Rashidun*,

presented many golden ages as one that was located in Kurdistan's recent past. The Sheikh called for the return to a pristine Islam, defined in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, which was practiced and revived in "the great Sufi tradition" even by the previous generation in Kurdistan. The memories of it were still fresh, just a few decades earlier when "*Hazrat* " or Mawlana Khalid, the founder of the Khalidi branch of the Naqshbandi Order was still around. Again, to the contrary of the more universalistic visions of those revivalists like Afghani or 'Abduh, the Muslim "degeneration"[80] in Kurdistan was what mostly disturbed the Sheikh, which started not with the Umayyad's rule.[81] It started with the death of his father and of Mawlana Khalid Naqshbandi in the first half of the nineteenth century. He believed Kurdistan was going through a process of degeneration in two senses: First, Kurdistan's loss of vigor that began over a half a century earlier—at which time, according to the Sheikh, Kurdistan was a center of learning which attracted all those who were in pursuit of knowledge from around the world.[82] Kurdistan was a garden of knowledge; people "from every region and every ethnic origin (*qawm*, Arabic, and *qowm:* Persian])" came to Kurdistan to harvest its fruits of knowledge.[83] The Sheikh laments that in contrast to this, now "those seas of knowledge and illumination" have faded away and what is left is nothing but a façade.[84] He claims that the spirit of the previous generation's legacy has been lost[85] and accuses many of the existing Sheikhs and *khalifa*s of ignorance and indulging in "nonsensical claims of having access to the unseen world."[86] From the Sheikh's perspective, they were lacking in any real mystical experience or spiritual acquisitions. This is how, according to the Sheikh, Kurdistan had lost its vibrancy and "its seas of light are dried up."[87]

The second aspect of this process of degeneration, to which Jwaideh devoted close attention, is the absence of a sovereign Kurdish state and the overall deterioration of the sociopolitical situation. The Sheikh does not say much about whether or not the first situation was caused by the second. However, scholarship on nineteenth-century Ottoman Kurds unveils the devastating impact of the destruction of the Kurdish principalities on the sociopolitical conditions in Kurdistan.[88]

The Sheikh not only views the state as an institution that could establish order and security but also as a civilizing or modernizing agent. To him, one of the most important roles that a state could play is to educate the populace. This aspect of the state's role is almost always alluded to in the Sheikh's statements, letters, and poems. It is one of the most important factors to sway the Sheikh in his drive for an independent Kurdish state.[89]

This approach to the state becomes evident particularly in the following excerpt from the Sheikh's letter to the American missionary Dr. Cochran when he writes:

> Among other evil things, you have probably heard of the [Kurdish] tribe of … Shkak, who are famous for their evil and ruin-causing deeds… and [who] will *remain in their savage state*… The Ottoman Government also, like the Persian, either *has not the means of civilizing*[90] *these people or else neglects them*. Kurdistan has got *a bad reputation* and *has been disgraced, distinction is not made* between *peaceable and evil-disposed persons*.[91] (Emphases added)

In this letter's preceding paragraph, the Sheikh contends that the Ottoman and the Persian governments intentionally avoid educating those Kurds since "their savage state" helps the two governments to justify their policies in Kurdistan. Therefore, he accuses the Ottoman and Qajar state of doing two things at once against the Kurds. On the one hand, they refrain from educating the Kurds and even allow some tribes to commit all kinds of crimes; on the other, they use this to paint all the Kurds as savage. This is why, argues the Sheikh, all Kurds are infamously known as savages. Thus,

> Be it known to you for certain that this has all been caused by the laches of the Turkish and Persian authorities, for Kurdistan is in the midst between these two countries, and both Governments, for their own reason, do not distinguish between good and evil characters. It is thus that bad characters remain unreformed, respectable people get an ill repute and become ruined.[92]

It seems the Sheikh saw the creation of a state as instrumental to the success of his revivalist project as well. He not only thought of the state as the provider of the law and order but also as the grantor of an educated nation. It is evident that to the Sheikh, education was a panacea for the Kurdish plight. In addition, to him, the lack of public education in Kurdistan was the principal reason for Kurdish exclusion.[93] In his letter to Iqbal ad-Dowla,[94] the Sheikh writes, "we admit that there are bad Kurds along with the good ones but there is no one who even thinks of educating … [the bad and therefore it is impossible] for the Kurds to right their wrongs and to have a more decent and humane society… without education."[95] To him, public education held the key to a more decent and humane life and a way for the Kurds to escape from their present miseries.

The instrumental role of education is frequently reiterated to a degree that even the Sheikh's surrogates seem to subscribe to the importance of public education. In his meeting with the British General Consul Abbott, the Sheikh's brother-in-law also echoed his concern and "declared that Ubayd Allah, if successful, undertook to suppress brigandage, restore order within the borders of Turkey and Persia, place Christians and Muslims on equal footing of equality, *promote education,*[96] and allow churches and schools to be built."[97]

It is clear the Sheikh believed that the materialization of those projects would have required a state power. Undoubtedly, he also believed those objectives must be appealing to the Europeans and by the same token they were all modern.[98] His brother-in-law, while asking for the moral support of the Europeans in creating a Kurdish state, presents these stated strategic goals. He goes as far as to say that if Ubeydullah reneged from those *promise*s he had made, "he was prepared to be judged by the tribunal of Europe, and to abide by the consequences."[99] Simultaneously, the Sheikh was making the case, through his surrogate, that neither the Persians nor the Ottomans were willing to take such important steps for the welfare of the Kurds and the Christians.

As can be inferred from the above documents, the Sheikh sees a direct correlation between the lack of public education and the existence of such a phenomenon as brigandry, which the Sheikh, if successful in creating a state, promised to eradicate. In his *Mesnewi*, in which he does not have foreign interlocutors, he does not acknowledge the existence of Kurdish brigandry. However, he asserts that no matter how great one's capabilities are or how noble one's ancestry (*ṡl-e najib*) might be, one needs a proper education to fulfill one's potential. Despite the fact that raw gold is the same substance that is made into jewelry, it needs refinement to take on luster and value.[100] To him, the Kurds are a unique ethnic group (*qovm*) in terms of their mastery in art and in their sophistication (*fazl u honer*).[101] "No one can be as talented as the Kurds if they are properly educated."[102] If they were united under one leadership, they would have had a unique state (*bi-masal va bi-nazir*).[103] Not many details are available about how the Sheikh conceptualized a modern state or what was the scope of his grasp of it. However, he clearly believed in the necessity of a state for the Kurds to become educated, to defend themselves against foreign aggression, and to ensure their internal security and safety.[104]

The Kurds Under the Gaze of Others

All signs indicate that in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Kurdistan was experiencing a great deal of unrest and its people had been generally alienated by the central states. The Tanzimat era, noted by Makdisi, introduced an interesting paradox to Ottoman society with far reaching impact. It widened the chasm between the center and periphery. As Makdisi points out:

> Beginning with the Tanzimat, Ottoman reformers identified with these subjects as potential fellow citizens with whom they should be united in a newly defined common modern Ottoman patriotism. They also saw them as fellow victims of European intrigue and imperialism. Yet at the same time, they regarded these subjects as backward and as not-yet-Ottoman, as hindrances to as well as objects of imperial reform.[105]

This Ottoman elite's new approach to the society not only granted the people a collective status of being brigands, *haydutlar*, but also brought enormous violence and a complete disruption of law and order in Kurdistan.[106]

From the 1860s onward, the Ottoman and Qajar states, with the help and pressure of European powers, tried to demarcate the borders between the two Muslim Empires.[107] Part of this project of border demarcation was involved in population politics and the study of the people ostensibly to make the division between the borderline communities smoother.[108] The territorial demarcation was to take place for the sake of population control. As Foucault would put it, this region was to go under the control of the "State of population" from that of the "territorial State."[109] These attempts at reshaping the borderland populace were increasingly turning the Kurds into subjects of these types of studies and political projects. Consequently, it would make them even more prone to stereotypes and subjection to the central states' disciplinary policies. This situation's overall effect on Kurdish economic, cultural and social life was enormous. In cases like that of Hamza Agha[110] who had a major role in the Sheikh's uprising, the result was decades of hostility and skirmishes with the Qajar State. These studies, which aimed at dividing the Kurds—regardless of their communal ties[111] just for the sake of managing the population—rendered them as the embodiment of tribalism and as collective demons.

To come back to Kurdish perceptions and Sheikh Ubeydullah's uprising, the latter was, in a way, a response to this limbo state of being excluded

as a part of the deviant periphery and being included in the geographical and disciplinary boundaries of states. This situation unveils the distance between the periphery and center and their mutual perception of their respective "Other." Contextualizing Kurdish perceptions of their "Others" will shed a greater light on the reasons behind the Sheikh's uprising. Generally, in the studies on this uprising, this vitally important factor has been overlooked. It seems that the reason for ignoring this issue stems from the assumption that the Kurds at the time lacked any sense of belonging beyond their tribal affiliation.[112] Therefore, such studies are replete with contradictory arguments in explaining Sheikh Ubeydullah's rising.

A study striving to explain why the Sheikh first revolted against the Qajar state[113] claims that "the Ottoman and British Officials convinced the Kurdish leaders to choose Iran instead of the Ottoman territories for their uprising."[114] Based on this claim, the Kurds had determined to rise up against the Ottomans—but the Ottomans, along with British officials,[115] persuaded them to revolt against the Qajar state instead, as if the Kurds were making a minor change in their plan or in the field of operation for their revolt. Such confusions partly stem from the fact that some of the studies see the uprising from the statist point of view. From the statist perspective, the *prima causa* for any Kurdish political action is always rooted in their manipulability by foreign forces.

In the next few pages, the author of the same study points to a more profound reason or justification for the Sheikh's commencement of the revolt in the Qajar territories and he notes that "the resistance to injustice and corruption of the Qajar officials can be cited as the primary reason behind the Sheikh's uprising."[116] Again revealing his ideological conviction, just a few pages after this last remark, the author once more contradicts himself by stating that "Kurdish nationalism had no role whatsoever in the Sheikh Ubeydullah's uprising…[However] Kurdish feudalism benefited from the [Qajar] state's weaknesses and strove to divide Iranian Kurdistan as they were enticed by the Ottoman and British Officials."[117]

David McDowall and Hakan Özoğlu have also failed to see the Sheikh's religious self-differentiation. Therefore, they try to explain the Kurdish Revolt by describing it as a mere reaction to Armenian aspirations. McDowall views the Russo-Turkish War as a religious war. He claims that "Sheikh Ubayd Allah had already shown himself willing to help the Sultan[118] *against the Christian threat*.[119] He had been appointed commander of Kurdish tribal forces in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78."[120] Interestingly enough, in the endnote to the same paragraph McDowall

concedes that "In 1878 *Ubayd Allah's influence saved many Christians*[121] from massacre in Bayazid and he enjoyed the confidence of the American missionaries in Urumiya."[122] McDowall, without citing any specific evidence, calls the Sheikh's enterprise "a scheme cooked up in Istanbul which offered Sheikh Ubayd Allah undisclosed official sponsorship to form a movement that could act as a counterbalance to the Armenian threat."[123]

McDowall's account is in contradiction with the Ottoman state's records. The official records unveil a great deal of concern on the part of the Ottoman state about the possible consequences of the Sheikh's Revolt on the Ottoman side of the borders. A document from the Ottoman Ministry of Defense reports that the Sheikh, with 70,000 armed men under his command, had secured control over the entire region of West Azerbaijan and had declared Kurdish independence. The report predicted that the Persian state would be unable to defeat the Kurds. "Considering *this event's enormous impact on our side of the border*,"[124] stated the report, "local Ottoman officials must immediately take necessary measures and send and collect the required reinforcement, which *must be composed of Turks and Laz*."[125] Ottoman records also indicate that in order to spur some of the less enthusiastic Ottoman Kurds to the revolt, the Sheikh had spread rumors that the Ottoman state was approving of his revolt against the Qajar State. The Ottomans found those rumors dangerous and believed they had to repudiate the Sheikh's claim in every possible way.[126]

Furthermore, Celîli Celîl's work, which is mostly based on Russian archival documents, reveals that the Sheikh turned against the Ottoman state in 1878, when the Empire was still at war with Russia.[127] This shows that the Sheikh was quickly disillusioned after his first interaction with the Turkish army. Such disillusionment is clearly evident in the Sheikh's own poetry.[128] According to the Russian documents, the Sheikh's efforts against the Ottomans started before the Berlin Treaty (in July 1878).[129] In 1878, in a meeting with the Russian Consul in Van, one of the Sheikh's deputies declared that "instead of protecting the life and property of people, the Empire itself has become a fundamental threat to them. Thus, the Sheikh believes that he is morally obliged to protect the people since they consider him as their real protector."[130] The Sheikh did his best to garner Russian support against the Ottomans. According to Celîl, the Sheikh used to say "it is better to stand next to the lion [Russia] instead of waiting behind the fox's [the British] tail."[131]

Following a line similar to that of McDowall, Özoğlu claims that "It seems that the main reason for the revolt was the *promise*[132] made

to Armenians"[133] as, according to him, Kurdish nationalism had yet to be "created"—Özoğlu claims "that Kurdish nationalism was created at the end of World War I."[134] Özoğlu neither makes any claim nor presents any evidence about the Sheikh's mistreatment of or his antagonism toward Christians during and after the War. However, both Özoğlu and McDowall discount or belittle the Sheikh's own statements. They also fail to take note of the fact that even before his revolt against the Qajar state in 1880, the Sheikh had revolted against the Ottomans in 1879. The major problem with these types of studies is their inability to hear the dominated voice. There is a tendency to dismiss the non-state actor's voice as nonsensical. One might argue that this is a general tendency in modern historiography that regards non-state actors' actions as anomaly or a disturbance to the general flow of history. "A people or a nation lacked history, [Hegel] argued, not because it knew no writing but because lacking as it did in statehood it had nothing to write about."[135] Perhaps, this is why McDowall describes the Sheikh's statements as "such utterances" that in no way corresponded to the nature of his revolt. Since the revolt did not produce a state, to him, "the revolt bore little evidence that it was anything other than the kind of tribal disturbance, but on a larger scale, that already bedeviled the region."[136]

It should be kept in mind that perception or "imagination" is a fundamental factor in ethnic and nationalist self-differentiations. Such perceptions could motivate people's self-differentiations and decouple themselves from their coreligionist on ethnic and linguistic lines, which in turn could shape their religious interpretations. This is where the possibility of religion and nationalism's fusion becomes visible. The scant literature from the late nineteenth century shows a great deal of sensitivity on the part of Kurdish *ʿulama*, notables and learned persons to the common stereotypes and to depicting the Kurds as "savages." As discussed at the outset, the Kurds were concerned that being perceived as such could affect their fate in the political games between the states and the colonial powers.

In 1880, Kurdish leaders from Vilayet-i Van published a political statement which spoke to their fear of the political consequences of these prevalent negative views of Kurds, among other groups. The Kurdish leaders declared that "we have been stereotyped (*teşhir*) and denigrated in full view of our friends and foes, in every imaginable way."[137] They then recounted an event in which a religious figure urged the aid workers who were trying to help the victims of the famine in Kurdistan, not to help the Kurds. It is claimed that this is because the religious leader declared that

the Kurds "are savages and rebellious people—let them die from starvation."[138] The writers of the statement retort, "is it ethical to *strip an entire community (kavim) of their humanity and of their sacred civil rights (ḥukuki mukaddesey-i medeniye)*?"[139]

There are other documents in which the Kurds express their fear of the possible threat that these kinds of depictions may pose to their political survival. Heeding the documents produced by the states at the time, their fear does not seem without basis. Not only do those documents indicate a somewhat general Kurdish dissatisfaction and political awareness, they also show that the Qajar and Ottoman states were actively trying to depict them as such to legitimize their repressive policies. It is apparent that Kurds were well aware of the state's policies against them. For instance, the following Persian Foreign Ministry letter to British officials very much validates Kurdish fears of the states' civilizing discourse that could pose a threat to their very existence and serve to obliterate them:

> As their Excellencies the Representatives of the foreign Powers at the Court of Persia have become aware, savage and uncivilized Kurds, such as Abd-el-Kader and Sadeek, the sons of Sheikh Obeidullah, … accompanied by bad characters as wicked as themselves, have become guilty of acts of aggression such as *are natural to them* on the [Turco-] Persian frontier … according to secret information received by the Persian Ministers—*some people having no knowledge of the habits of savage clans and tribes and being ignorant of their natural disposition to rapacity and plunder*—have thought that this concentration of the Kurds is a source of injury to the state of this [Kurdish] nation—*it would seem that there are no grounds for suspicions such are entertained by the above-mentioned people*, like the ones to which they have often given vent, and for which they have been thoroughly punished. But now, by taking speedy measures, by the dispatch of troops, and *by energetic steps for obliterating any signs of them, these people will be very soon completely destroyed and the roots of this mischief will be entirely eradicated*.[140] (Emphasis added)

Now, since these people are savage and they have no political objective and their only motivation is pillaging and ravaging the region, it is expected from the "government of which your Excellency is the Representative will undoubtedly, out of its friendship … *in no way object to taking any necessary measures [for aid] or to giving its moral support in order to procure the return of peace and tranquility on*[141] the frontier."[142]

In the late nineteenth century, the Kurds constantly expressed that they were disturbed by the Other's language or "gaze."[143] Sartre could not be

speaking more clearly to this effect when he points out that "The Other's look touches me across the world and is not only a transformation of myself but a total metamorphosis of the world. I am looked-at in a world which is looked-at."[144] The Kurds were becoming increasingly conscious of how they were addressed and of how letting themselves be addressed as such could carry a heavy political cost. This is not to suggest that there were common philosophical reflections among Kurds at the time on the consequences of being looked at or addressed as such. However, amidst their treatment by the dominant groups and nations, they could sense and feel the profound ignominy that was entailed in being addressed as such. This is evidenced in one of Sheikh Ubeydullah's letters to the governor of Urmia when he says that "there is no nation whose *honor* has been trampled on as much as the Kurds."[145]

The way a collective self[146] is looked at or addressed, which is essentially related to mutual perception, is determinative in that collectivity's political stance and action. Being a symbol of ignobility for the Other and its injurious effect may be first felt by elites within a disgraced, oppressed community, as it threatens their own dignifying social status. "Thus the urge on the part of elites to find their own path is more than a matter of concern for their compatriots. It is also a matter of their own dignity."[147] One's dignity is determined by the nature of the Other's address.[148] In other words, "One comes to 'exist' by virtue of this fundamental dependency on the address of the Other."[149] If language has such an existential effect on the condition of one's existence or "If language can sustain the body, it can also threaten its existence."[150] Thus, these "constitutive language acts" affected Kurdish consciousness and made Kurds aware of their own Kurdishness as it had been identified in a negative light by their Others. Their distinct political collectivity came to be recognized through their Others' negative reference.[151] That they were "exposed [to themselves and to the Other] at the moment of such a shattering is precisely the volatility of one 'place' within the community of speakers; one can be 'put in one's place,' by such speech, but such a place may be no place."[152]

The Eastern/Persian Kurds' petition, which was written to request that Russia and the other Great Powers intervene and investigate how they have been subjected to all kinds of injustices by both the Qajar and the Ottoman states, shows once more this feeling of psychological and physical exclusion and uprootedness.[153] As Butler's Hegelian take unveils, the impact of the injurious language may engender awareness of one's volatile state of existence, of one's unequal sociopolitical standing and represent-

ing difference. The inflected could differentiate oneself from the one who inflects and injures her/him.

In 1880, the Kurdish refugees in Van requested that the Russians dispatch a fact-finding mission to see, in their words, who was "primitive (*bedevi*)[154] and savage by nature (*vahshi-ul-mazaj*)—the Kurds or those who have taken over Kurdistan by force?"[155] Now, the Kurds were apparently trying to reproduce and project the same stereotypes onto their Others. Therefore, the petition claims that if a "just power such as Russia" had initiated a due investigation, it would have figured out that the real "savages by nature" are "the occupying states" of Kurdistan, not the Kurds.[156] In a context in which the weak is usually stereotyped and perceived as liable, the Kurds are not only trying to create a similar image of their Others but are also declaring themselves as those whose lands were occupied and the occupiers as those who should be considered "uncivilized." Again, this is a familiar argument, that the embodiment of a certain psychology and a political thinking in which any group or entity depicted as "uncivilized" is automatically stripped of any rights whatsoever.

Aside from the anecdotal aspect of the document, it highlights that from the Kurdish religious leader's perspective, both states represented the same degree of otherness, notwithstanding the states' religious alignments. The last part of this petition is particularly revealing because it not only shows that Kurds had little sympathy for or loyalty to either of the states, it also demonstrates their consciousness of and their disturbance by the common stereotypes about them.

It is of no little significance to point out that these leaders saw their hostility to the state entirely in light of ethnic differences. They did not see the states merely as oppressive states, but as imposing oppressive policies on the Kurds due to their putative ethnic differences. The states are referred to as unjust powers that were unleashing their violence against the Kurds as a singular entity, as "a savage group,"—in this way, the states were justifying their harsh policies as falling well within the ambit of the civilizing discourse.

Furthermore, their awareness regarding the common stereotypes associated with Kurdishness seems to have been effective in the formation of Kurdish ethno-nationalist consciousness. A consciousness of "being called a name" by which "one is also, paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call."[157] This also suggests

that at the time, and in some sociopolitical contexts, ethnic self-differentiation easily overshadowed the common religious bonds among different ethnic groups. Or one's Islamic bond could not be extended easily beyond one's ethnic group or nationality. The function and saliency of self-differentiation is context specific. This was the case with Kurdish participation in Russo-Ottoman War. Although they hated the Russian army more than the Turkish army, they did not hide their abhorrence for the Muslim Ottoman Turks.[158] The Kurds knew, as discussed below, that they were suffering and being humiliated for their ethnic differences. They might have acknowledged that each of the states, at least the Ottoman state, was Muslim as well. They knew that the ruler's religious faith, however, would not deter the state from adopting exclusionary policies. Having a common religion did not help their inclusion. Perhaps, when the religious bonds prove ineffective, they are either downplayed or disavowed completely, which was the case in both (1879–1880) Sheikh Ubeydullah's and (1925) Sheikh Sa'id Revolts, as revealed in their letters. The Sheikh's threat to excommunicate some high-ranking Naqshi *ʿulama* for their objection to fighting against Persian Muslims clearly speaks to this effect.[159]

As indicated earlier, the aforementioned petition was authored by those who had studied in Kurdish religious schools, the *madrasa* [Arabic/Persian/Turkish, *medrese*, pl. *medaris*]. So it should not come as a surprise that Kurdish religious leaders showed their indifference to the existing Ottoman *Sunni* Caliphate since their Islamic views bore the marks of their general ethnic Kurds' attitudes toward the Ottoman state and vice versa. This validates Martin van Bruinessen's claim that the Kurdish religious schools initially gave birth to the idea of Kurdish nationalism.[160] In his words "not surprisingly it was in the *madrasa* environment, where students from various parts of Kurdistan met and where besides Arabic and Persian the Kurdish language was cultivated, that the idea of a Kurdish 'national' identity first emerged."[161] This unveils the junction of Kurdish and *Sunni-Shafiʿi* identity along with the Naqshbandi influence. It is the Kurdishness combined with the *Shafiʿi*-ness that separates them from the dominant Turkish *Hanafi*s as well as the ruling *Shiʿi*s in Persia.

The last part of this petition also indicates that the Kurds were concerned that the Qajars and Ottomans have been successful in depicting the Kurds as savages. They are not oblivious to the fact that the prevalence of the negative perception about the Kurds may have enabled the states to continue "their indiscriminate killings in Kurdistan."[162] What is interesting is

how the prevalence of these views is presumed in the available literature, notwithstanding its paucity. Sheikh Ubeydullah also reasserts the same views and blames the Ottoman and Persian states for the omnipresence of this negativity about the Kurds. As indicated earlier, he wrote that "The Kurdish nation…is known among all nations as mischievous and corrupt. This is how Kurdistan has been depicted. If one person (from among them) does an evil deed, a thousand peaceable and orderly people gain ill repute." Just like the signatories of the aforementioned petition, the Sheikh also views this issue as more than a mere cultural or ethnocentric matter. He too opines that it is a political issue. Therefore, he contends that "for certain…this has all been caused by the negligence of the Turkish and Persian authorities, for Kurdistan is in the midst between the two countries, and both Governments, for their own reasons, do not distinguish between good and evil character."[163]

It is hard to know what the Sheikh's views were about the states, particularly the Ottoman state, before the War of 1887–1888. It seems, however, that the Russo-Ottoman War was instrumental in affording him a new perspective on the Ottomans as he personally witnesses their treatment of the Kurds. If the Sheikh previously held positive views about the Ottoman state, this had to change completely after his personal interaction with the Ottomans during the War. This much can be inferred from his account of his experiences in the War. The available historical account offers little about the Sheikh's perception of the Ottoman Turks. In 1880, Dr. Cochran reports that the Sheikh:

> has seemed disposed for some years past to get into closer relations with us and the civilized world. He regards the *Turks and Persians as deceptive people, not living up to their religion,* and altogether too depraved to hope that they will ever again hold the position they once commanded among the other nations. Regarding them in the light that he does, and situated as he is between them, he wishes to have the moral, if not material, support of a better people and government. To this end, he has several times sent to us, asking that we put him in a way of getting such help from the British government. Last year [1879] before entering on a campaign against the Turks, to whom he had up to that time paid tribute, he sent confidential agents to us repeating this request.[164]

Also, Ali Afshar, who wrote his own account of the war against[165] Ubeydullah in 1880, asserts that the Sheikh's plan for the rebellion could

be traced back to five years earlier.[166] He believes that the Sheikh had a plan for occupying Persia even before the Russo-Ottoman War. Afshar claims that the Sheikh was planning to conquer Persia in its entirety and to convert the Persians to *Sunni*sm, exactly the way Shah Ismail had converted them to *Shiʿi*sm in the sixteenth century.[167] Afshar also claims that the Sheikh had notified the Kurds that he had seen his father Seyyed Taha in his dreams, telling the Sheikh to destroy the Qajar dynasty and *Shiʿi*sm, to "spread Islamic law (*Shariʿa*) and establish a just rule in Persia."[168] Then, Afshar describes the event as follows:

> After hearing this announcement, the ill-natured Kurds (*bad-bonyād*) gathered around the second son of Ubeydullah Ibn-i Ziyad.[169] Five years earlier, with the hope of becoming a ruler this ignoramus Sheikh declared himself the king of the tribes (*Sultan al-ʿashâʾer*) and that he had ever since then been making preparations and collecting weapons for an arsenal.[170]

In his *Mesnewi*, Sheikh Ubeydullah gives his own and a full account of his participation in the Russo-Ottoman War. Here, the anecdotal aspect of the Sheikh's writing is not a matter of much concern. The most significant issue is to see how the Sheikh's account reproduces the mutual Kurdish-Ottoman perception during the War, which was evidently the first direct Kurdish-Ottoman elite's interaction on a large scale. What is important here is to see to what extent Kurdish ethnicity, Kurdish Islam, and other distinguishing characteristics become an issue during this interaction. It is also important to find out to what extent this experience played a role in the Sheikh's ensuing political actions and statements.

It should be noted that it is not possible to speculate on the Sheikh's views on Ottoman state and society before the War based on these poems.[171] Those parts of his poetry in which political issues are talked about were written in the post-War era. Therefore, his views are entirely expressed in retrospect and reflect the impact of his experiences during the War.

The Sheikh dedicates over 400 couplets of his poetry to the story of Kurdish participation in the Russo-Ottoman War, under his own leadership. In this poetry book, the Sheikh attends to political issues with some degrees of hesitation since he informs us that the book is strictly about religious matters. It is supposedly an instruction for the revival of Islam in Kurdistan, with a clear Naqshbandi bent.[172] Whenever there is a discussion about worldly matters (*ahva̲l-e donya̲*), claims the Sheikh, it is

hardly void of ill intent. However, "I discuss such issues to tell the story of the Kurds and the *Romis* [Ottoman Turks]."[173] "I could be accused," he states, for backbiting, which is one of the gravest sins.[174] However, "the *mazlum* (the oppressed or the subject of injustice) has the right to talk about the oppressor (*zalem*), especially if what she/he says is identical to what actually happened (*tebq-e majara*)."[175] The Sheikh further explains his intention for relating his experience during the War, in the last two couplets of his poem (on this story) as he writes, "it is for the sake of the beloved (*vidad*) Kurds that I allowed my pen to suffer, write, and [for their story] to be inscribed on the pages of time (*ruzgar*) to become a memory (*yadgar*) for the world (*'alam*)."[176]

The Sheikh offers a detailed account of his preparation regarding the number of fighters whom he could gather, the nature of his interaction with the Ottoman army, and the reasons for the Ottoman Army's defeat. This provides us a window on the Sheikh's thinking about the Ottoman state, the Kurds and his revivalist, and ethno-nationalistic tendencies. His strict personal religious devotion comes to light as he recounts his preparation for the War. He claims that he had seen the Prophet of Islam in his dream, giving him a flag. When he goes to Gewer,[177] a town close to his residence, he is informed that such a flag existed and a family that had preserved it from the time of the 'Abbasids willingly gave it to the Sheikh.[178] Apparently, he bears the same flag when he joins the Ottoman Army to fight the Russians.[179]

Ubeydullah seems convinced that all the calamities that had befallen the Ottoman Empire were the direct result of what he viewed as the cultural and moral degeneration of the state and its subjects. Thus, he retorts that "how can there be a victory (*nusrat*) when there are no faithful (*mu'min*)."[180] To him, the Ottomans (*Romis*) had lost their moral compass and this was why they had sustained such a humiliating defeat at the hands of Russians.[181] He sees a direct correlation between the degree of people's religious devotion and their worldly failings and triumphs. It should be remembered that such an attitude was not uncommon among the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century revivalists.[182] That being said, however, the Sheikh did not believe that the whole community had become degenerate in the same way or had strayed to the same extent from the straight path. He clearly believed there were different attitudes toward Islam and morality between different ethnic groups. He was of the opinion that the Ottomans (*Romis*), notwithstanding their greater numbers, had surrendered their lands.[183] They did so because they were too

corrupt to stand their ground against the Russians' incursion.[184] To the Sheikh, the Ottoman defeat more than anything else was indicative of their moral failure. "The Muslims are controlled by thugs,"[185] he said. The Sheikh was especially harsh on the army and the bureaucrats. He had no problem calling them irreligious (*bidin*).

During the fights, from the Sheikh's perspective, the Ottoman side was composed of two opposing groups: The *Romis* (Ottoman Turks), a morally lax group; and the poised Kurds, who had strong religious convictions.[186] The Kurds were portrayed as devoted religious people, from among whom he had assembled tens of thousands[187] of fighters as he called on them to join the *jihad* against the Russians' invasion. According to the Sheikh, the Kurds were the only force who actually engaged in fights. After the Kurds' arrival and as a result of their outstanding fight, the Russian army sustained many humiliating defeats, one after another. The details and the nature of the fights are explained diligently and the fighters' motivation is linked to their ethnicity and religious devotion. Hence, the Sheikh describes the Kurds' role in the war as follows[188]:

The Kurds, just like roaring lions in the fight;
The Russians, like deer seeking a way out of sight
The Kurds' thunderous roars turned them into a [formless] cloud
Down the plains streamed Russian blood,
Russian heads, like hail began to fall
For our lions, even mountains were too small
The bright glint of Kurdish swords
Flashing like lighting, indescribable in words
The enemy forces falling as they sought safe haven
Kurdish roars echoed up to highest heaven

Then, the Sheikh refers to the Kurds as Gazis[189] whose fight against Russian is supposedly had received a divine approval. The angels showered them with their praises as the Sheikh hails

The [Kurdish] *Gazi*s'[190] roars and shouts
With the Russians' fears and self-doubts
And the Russians' bodiless souls filled the air
For their soulless bodies turned red everywhere
As the Russians' cries reached the sky
Angels praising the *Gazi*s from on high[191]

The Sheikh claims that the "*Romis* "(the Ottoman Turks) would have been unwilling to fight—even if a soldier of theirs had dared to join the Kurds[192] to fight against the Russians, he would have been severely punished by his superior upon sight. Hence

One of [the Ottoman] soldiers, brave and upright
Having joined us during the Kurdo-Russian fight,
Was beaten with a stick, gravely punished
Lost his food ration, his honor tarnished
His sin unforgivable and so grave
Having joined the Kurds, so was he brave[193]

The Ottoman role is mostly seen as a destructive one. The impression they left on the Kurds was that they were full of hate for the Kurds. The Sheikh sees the "*Romis*" as those who did nothing but squander the Kurds' support and energy. He states that the Ottoman army and its commanders awarded the Kurds' bravery and sacrifice with hatred, mockery, jealousy, and by cutting their food rations. So

Despite that spectacular fight by the *Gazi*s (the Kurds),
There was no support to come from the *Romis* (the Turks)[194]
...
The reinforcements [the Kurds] alone defeated the enemy
[Turkish] commanders awarded them with hatred and envy
They tried to get rid of the Kurds and cut their food rations
Days passed without bread, the fighters lost their patience[195]
...
The *Romis* hatred for the Kurds had no limit
The degree of their jealousy who can relate[196]

To the Sheikh, the *Romis* represented all that was wrong with the Muslim world. He sees them as the classic example of Muslim degeneration, "vile (*sofleh*), lacking a heartfelt religion, and wolves disguised as shepherds."[197] The Turkish army's mockery and ridicule of the Kurds, who are described by the Sheikh as being of the *pak din* (the people of the true religion), makes them leave the battlefield. Despite that fact, the Ottoman army had promised to provide the Kurds with food and other logistical supplies, amidst the fighting they cut even food rations for the Kurds.[198] To the Sheikh, all these were signs of Ottoman hostility toward the Kurds, who had shown a great deal of bravery and a superior morality.

The Sheikh reports that the Kurds left the Ottomans for forty[199] days and the Ottomans lacked the guts to make any brave move at all to attack the Russians even once.[200] When the Kurds responded to the Sheikh's call, as he himself claims, they recorded one victory after another until they captured the city of Yerevan:

> The Kurds once again proved their gallantry
> Just as lions cannot satiate [their hunger] without victory
> as these lions faced the enemy again toe to toe
> the Russians started fleeing, confused where to go
> …
> The Russians sustained another humiliating defeat
> the Kurds destroyed their last shred of dignity, indeed
> …
> no days could pass without a Kurdish victory
> no days would pass without another display of bravery[201]

According to the Sheikh, the Kurds, however, once again faced the hostility and mockery of the *Romis*. They were not credited for what they did. Moreover, the *Romis* did not hesitate to rub salt into the Kurds' wounds.[202] The Kurds, according to the Sheikh, had lost 900 fighters, while the Ottomans had lost none. Despite this, it was the Kurds who were being mocked and insulted for sustaining the loss.[203]

The Sheikh certainly is a lot more bitter in narrating Kurdish-Ottoman interactions during the War. To the Sheikh, the Ottoman Turks were just nominal Muslims. Deep down, in their heart, they lacked much religious feeling. He contends that the Ottomans or *Ro̱mi*s, as he calls them, were *munafiq*, lacking any real faith, while pretending to be Muslims. He recounts a *hadi̱th*, attributed to the Prophet of Islam, of whose content the Sheikh believes the Ottomans' religiosity to be the embodiment.[204] According to this *hadi̱th*, the Prophet declared that there were three criteria by which one can tell if a person is a *munafiq*: (a) if he tells untruth as he speaks; (b) if he breaks whatever promise he makes; and (c) if he deceives whenever he is trusted.[205] Then, the Sheikh goes on to explain how he feels about the Ottomans:

> No matter how much I say about their injustices, it would not be more than a tiny bit of what actually took place. The *Romi*s dishonored every single promise they made to us at the beginning of the War. They squandered all that we had done for them. They promised to take care of the Kurdish

> fighters' food rations and they broke their promise…The *Romi*s' actions rendered all the Kurdish sacrifice to be in vain.[206]

While the Ottomans' religiosity is painted by the Sheikh as almost non-existent, pretentious, and not heartfelt, the Kurdish religiosity just like their "bravery is unmatched." Only the Arabs' bravery and piety was equivalent to that of Kurds, according to the Sheikh.[207]

> They are born with natural sagacity[208]
> They are lions, symbols of bravery
> Epitomes of heroism in warfare
> They are Hatams,[209] icons of generosity
> "d" in Kurd stands for *din* (religiosity)
> "k" stands for *kamal* and perfection
> "r" for *rushd*, spiritual maturation
> Only in Kurds can you find[210]
> All these virtues combined[211]

This very stratification of people's religiosity based on their ethnicity unveils the fusion of religion and ethno-nationalism, which in turn reflects the difference between the periphery and the center in their take of Islam. The Sheikh's portrayal of the two communities—the "*Romis*" and the Kurds—as two distinct groups of people could not be any clearer. The "us" versus "them" dichotomy is defined in both religious and ethno-nationalistic terms. As shown in the foregoing chapter, the Ottomans too were generally suspicious of the nature of peripheral Islam, so was the periphery's perception of the center's brand of Islam. The Kurdish reaction to the center's religiosity as suspicious, contaminated, and inauthentic is repeatedly expressed even by people like Sa'id Nursi, as shown in the following chapter. Simultaneously, the subtexts of these claims to purity, superiority or authenticity of the interpretations were connected to each group's claim to some sort of ethnic or cultural superiority. Hence, the religious understanding and devotion of the "in-group" is celebrated and that of the "out-group" is condemned or its authenticity is strongly questioned. As shown above, the Sheikh claims that the Kurds' "superior qualities should not surprise anyone" and he connects this to their "noble origin," supposedly from the same stock as "the noble Arabs."[212] These "unique qualities" were evidently related to their community origins. Was as much true of their "true" and "sincere" practice of Islam?

The purpose of rendering these outright claims to the Kurds ethnic supremacy by the Sheikh is to demonstrate the malleability of religious interpretation that allows for a smooth elision of nationalist and ethnic discourses. This is again contrary to a dominant view,[213] which is indicative of the susceptibility of religion to be interpreted locally. The general resistance to the possibility of nationalist discourses spilling over into religious understanding stems from the belief in the idea of religion's inability to trespass into the modern world when nationalism comes into being. Remarks like "It is not only possible but also probable that Ubeydullah, a Naqshbandi sheikh, did not know the explosive meaning of the word 'nation'"[214] at best constitute an exaggerated belief in the unbridgeable gulf between nationalism and religion (or Islam in our case).

It is evident that even theoreticians of nationalism are not immune to the effect of this Manichean belief in the constancy of the space between nationalism and religion. As noted before, for instance, Greenfeld contends that "nationalism thus has been also the framework of the modern social consciousness. It was religion, by contrast, that formed the framework of social consciousness in the premodern world; nationalism has replaced religion as the main cultural mechanism of social integration."[215] Setting aside the fact that such a metaphysical take on consciousness as a pure and unmediated unitary thing is untenable, seeing the "premodern" world as a universe of the religion agent[216] versus the "modern" universe in which the religious agent is absent, is blatantly Manichean, not to mention teleological. Considering the fact that Greenfeld simultaneously acknowledges that "religion was a crucial factor in the development of nationalism … [or] it played midwife at the birth of nationalism and protected it in its infancy..."[217] the above views become particularly problematic. However, she goes a step further and cites a number of important cases in which, according to her, religion shaped and framed national consciousness. For instance, she maintains that "Pietism, was responsible for the conceptual and emotional framework of German national consciousness."[218] So if this uninterrupted dichotomy between religion and nationalism is seen as an "inert fact of nature," how can religion be both the sole framework of pre-modern social consciousness and have also framed German national consciousness—supposedly "essentially secular"?

It seems there are two reasons for these types of contradictions: (a) a rigid distinction between modernity and pre-modernity[219] and (b) a narrow and a Europe-centered definition of religion. It is apparent that Greenfeld similarly has a very narrow and Protestant-centered definition

of religion, which in modern times has lost its power to the state—another claimant of the "absolute truth."[220] It must be emphasized, however, that such a reading of Christianity too solidifies this religion in *one* phase of its historical development. Not only are all of its possible historical changes arrested, it is furthermore presumed that this dualistic religious view of life, one being under "The Kingdom of the Lord [that] was not of this world, and…[the other under] kingdoms of this"[221] world, is part and parcel of all "the great religions."[222]

Here, the genius of Chatterjee's approach becomes evident when he contends that the colonial world's nationalism is derivative in nature and not a copy of its Other.[223] This derivativeness signifies the non-universal content of nationalism. This lends nationalism a capability to emerge in various local forms that make it open to the adaptation of regional mores, cultures, and religious interpretations. As noted before, Chatterjee explains this when he critiques Benedict Anderson for his claim with regard to the existence of a type of universal "modularity" for nationalism. Chatterjee rejects this notion of universality since "nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual [as] its sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain."[224] This very domain to which the "Other" is denied access contains the nation's language, culture, and religion that is being reinterpreted and reformed,[225] not discarded, by nationalists.

The greater "need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture"[226] while deeming it susceptible to reform and reinterpretation may in many ways resemble other types of religious interpretations that exhibit both signs of continuity and context specificity. The changes and continuities entailed by nationalist discourse, based on the limit and scope of such reforms, may be called a new interpretation of religion or some type of secular reform.

To conclude this section with an example that substantiates this claim regarding the interpretability of religion, one could refer to Iqbal, the renowned Muslim philosopher's take on the transformations in the Turkish political system during the 1920s, which he considers a significant event in "the history and working of *ijtihad* in modern Islam."[227] He even goes as step further and states that

> The point of supreme interest with the Nationalist Party is above all the State and not Religion. With these thinkers religion as such has no independent function. The state is the essential factor in national life which deter-

> mines the character and function of all other factors. They, therefore, reject old ideas about the function of State and Religion, and accentuate the separation of Church and State. Now the structure of *Islam as a religio-political system, no doubt, does permit such a view*, though personally I *think it is a mistake to suppose that the idea of state is more dominant and rules all other ideas embodied in the system of Islam.*[228](Emphasis added)

Certainly, Iqbal does not represent all his coreligionists. Of course, no one does. However, this is exactly what makes any universal claim to religious interpretation unfounded, secular claims included. The inclusion[229] of the reinterpretations of regional mores and religions, which constitutes the defining elements for the alternative modernities, creates a possible context for the fusion of religion and nationalism. Or as Asad puts it, "The legitimate entry of religion into the debates results in the creation of modern 'hybrids': the principle of structural differentiation—according to which religion [is] located in autonomous social space no longer holds."[230]

"The Kurdish Nation Is a People Apart"[231]

Having discussed the influence of ethnic differences on Sheikh Ubeydullah's perception of the "Other" and similarly on his revivalism, we shall now take up the declarative aspect of the Sheikh's political statements. To borrow Judith Butler's phraseology, in what kind of politics of the performative was the Sheikh involved?[232] What did the Sheikh declare with his statements? What did he do with the words he used? Can any sense be made of his words? Did the declarative aspect of his revolt exhibit any novelty compared to previous Kurdish uprisings? What if his statements sound anomalous to commonly held views about the sociocultural context of his revolt? Can his statements be utilized to revisit the revolt or can they be ignored?

As mentioned above, some historians have raised questions as to whether the Sheikh was a nationalist. Özoğlu, for instance, denies the possibility that the Sheikh's Revolt was informed by nationalist motives when he states that "the question of the intended meaning of the phrase 'Kurdish nation'[233] immediately arises. Unfortunately, we do not know what word, the Sheikh used that was rendered as 'nation' by the translators or possibly by Cochran himself."[234] Özoğlu implies that Sheikh Ubeydullah might not have used the word nation[235] and that the translator may have interpreted another Persian[236] word that might not be this

word's equivalent. Although this could be an important observation, the context of the use of this word renders the choice of its Persian equivalent insignificant. Whether the Sheikh used *qowm* (Persian for ethnic group) or *mellat* (nation) is not perhaps even salient, given the lengths to which he finally committed himself when he declared that "the Kurds are a people apart" from others, not merely in terms of their language and costume, but even in terms of *their religion*.

Furthermore, the primary documents produced by Kurds, in Persian and Ottoman languages, testify to the use of the word "nation" in its modern sense. For instance, in Ottoman papers from the 1880s, Kurdish intellectuals did not hesitate to call the Kurds a "nation." Actually, some did so in a hyperbolic fashion, claiming that even nomadic Kurds had a unique thirst for knowledge and that in the pursuit of knowledge "no other *nation* has arrived at such an honorable stage."[237] Similar statements exist in Persian documents produced by Kurds.[238] A letter from 1880, again written in Persian by Kurdish religious leaders, indicates that Kurds, in communicating with foreigners, referred to themselves as a nation (*mellat* in Persian, *millet* in Ottoman/Turkish).[239] In addition to the use of this term, the overall content of the document reveals that they saw themselves as a separate ethno-national entity, as the letter reads:

> last year, due to various types of lawlessness, injustices and aggressions of the Persian state against us…some of us from mellat-e Kurdistan (the nation of Kurdistan) rose against this state's injustices and aggressions [but on other] side we were [also] threatened and intimidated (*takhvif*) by the Ottoman state.[240]

By carefully analyzing what Sheikh Ubeydullah had to say about Kurds, Turks, and Persians, and in particular by looking at which characteristics he portrayed more positively and negatively to ascertain which aspects he wished to incorporate, change, or discard into revivalism, we can trace a distinct outline of how he saw Kurds vis-à-vis various Others. This analysis can lead to surprising discoveries about what he saw, how he interpreted it, and what cultural and religio-political motivations may have been driving him to express those particular views at those particular times and in those particular contexts. We can thus obtain a picture of the possible reasons why he thought the way he did.

The best way to determine what the Sheikh might have meant is to look at how he used the phrase "Kurdish people" in a variety of different contexts.

The Sheikh wrote many letters, some of which have been reproduced in English, French, and Persian. Only a few of them are known well enough to be rendered in British documents. On October 5, 1880, in one of his letters to Dr. Cochran, an American missionary, the Sheikh wrote that

> The Kurdish nation, consisting of more than 500,000 families, is a people apart. Their religion is different (to that of others), and their traditions and customs are distinct. It is known among nations as mischievous and corrupt. This is how Kurdistan has been depicted…Kurdistan has got a bad reputation, and has been disgraced...The chiefs and Rulers of Kurdistan, whether Turkish or Persian Subjects, and the inhabitants of Kurdistan, one and all are united and agreed that matters cannot be carried on in this way with the two Governments, and that necessarily something must be done, so that European Governments, having understood that matter, shall inquire into our state…[241]

Also, in his letter to Iqbal ad-Dowle, governor of Urmia, the Sheikh declared that

> The Governor is, no doubt, aware that … no serious inquiry having now been made into the condition and affairs of Kurdistan, its people have always been painted in the very worst colors … The reason why complaints are made against the Kurds is that neither the Turkish nor the Persian Governments have either the power or the will to govern them properly. Through all this the Kurds get a bad reputation, and they in their turn have no respect for their Rulers. In view of this state of affairs, both the Persian and Turkish Kurds to unite and for a single nation, and keep order among themselves, and they undertake to bind themselves in writing that no disorder shall take place in their country … It will be impossible to quell the present movement by force—if the government resorts to it, they will be the losers, and great loss will result on every side. It is therefore advisable that the governments should adopt a pacific measure, otherwise there is no answering for the consequence.[242]

Since Sheikh Ubeydullah was neither a historian nor a sociologist nor an ethnographer, then the question may arise as to what his goal was in separating the Kurds from other nations. What was he attempting to accomplish by these utterances? What *we* are doing here is trying to tease apart (a) what his intentions were, and (b) what picture of his politics his words illustrate. Thus, to make sense of a speech act is to decode “the meaning of an action [which] seems equivalent, in the case of linguistic action, to understanding the nature of the illocutionary act performed by the speaker.”[243] The Sheikh addressed his letters to an official audience,

and the contents and the context of his letters are plainly political. Hence, the letters are political statements or arguments to achieve certain political goals. This political aspect of his letters, the nature of his argument, and the way he describes or "narrates" the Kurds become a matter of utmost importance to understanding his intentions. Moreover, we want to find an answer to the questions of why he made such political statements at that particular time and why he addressed those specific political figures. These questions arise since, as mentioned earlier, some scholars have raised doubts about the authenticity of the Sheikh's views and consider his language to be a counterexample or an anomaly in Kurdish tribalism/religiosity. Those who consider his views inauthentic believe that the Sheikh could not have held nationalistic views since he was a religious person and lived in tribal sociocultural context that left no room for the emergence of nationalism. My contention here is that instead of dismissing the Sheikh's letters as anomalous to a certain way of conceptualizing non-state entities, one should be open to the possibility that these documents may prove the statist approach to history to be misleading.

"Tribalism," we are told,[244] is a paradigmatic model to which the idea of nationalism is supposedly anomalous. The Sheikh's statements or utterances are therefore deemed unfit to or imposed on that paradigm of tribalism. This "set of usage" is not expected to be employed by a specific "community of language-users for purposes [that are] political, interested in and extending sometimes as far as the articulation of a world-view or ideology."[245] The attempt here is to make sense of those statements themselves with the assumption that they cannot be ignored. The utterances' illocutionary force should be enough to be treated as a piece of political literature. Instead of imposing our views on the persons who uttered them, one should let the documents speak for their author or at least take the document seriously, given that some interpretation is likely to still be necessary.

As indicated above, these letters were written for political purpose(s). Now the key question is as follows: can we make sense of the Sheikh's "intentional act" through a close reading of these letters? To what degree can these writings shed light on their own historical context? In his letters, the Sheikh tries to describe the Kurds. He attempts to convince his audience that the Kurds are a separate people or "a people apart." They are neither Persians nor Ottomans. He does so in an exaggerated language. The Sheikh goes as far as to say the Kurds believed in a distinct religion. Why did Ubeydullah want to convince Britons and others that the Kurdish

religion was different from that of their coreligionists? What was the underlying logic? Was this the only way to convince the Great Powers that the Kurds had no religious loyalty to the Ottomans?

The key issue here is that although prior to the Sheikh's uprising, the Kurdish region was known for its anti-centralist uprisings, and most likely they had not emphasized their distinct identity then.[246] It is Sheikh Ubeydullah who emphasizes the distinct ethnicity, religion, and language of the Kurds and turns these into a basis for the legitimacy of his political claims. There had been a pattern of Kurdish uprisings even before the late nineteenth century. Prior to the Sheikh's Revolt, however, the rebels had not cited Kurdishness as the reason for their uprisings. Ethnic differences and possible discriminatory policies must have played some role in the previous revolts, but they had not exhibited signs of Kurdish self-reflection nor had they made any demand based on the distinct ethnicity of the participants. What distinguishes the Sheikh's Revolt from the previous ones in Kurdistan lies in the Sheikh's tying the legitimacy of his political claims to his own description of the Kurdish community. This is exactly what is at the heart of modern nationalist claims in which the nation is presumed self-evident. This is best articulated by Billig when he notes that "nationalism, *as a way of depicting community*,[247] is a historically specific form of consciousness. On the first page of *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner asserts that 'nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.'"[248]

The Sheikh based his demands on the claim of distinct characters of the Kurdish nation. The Sheikh not only isolates Kurdish customs, traditions, and language from all others but also, as has been mentioned repeatedly, claims the existence of a distinct Kurdish religion. Even if in his original letter by the religion difference the Sheikh only meant the denominational differences among *Sunni* Muslims, which most likely was the case, the utterances' political significance is not diminished.

What needs to be emphasized is that the Sheikh saw a direct connection between his description of the Kurds and securing their rights. Believing that certain facts will produce certain rights, the Sheikh, as a political agent, described or presented his "facts." This is what Derrida, in his discussion on the American Declaration of Independence, calls "the prescription, the fact, and the right."[249] This type of phrasing is unique to the era of nationalism. It is this era's convention to present a certain human collectivity's characteristics as "facts" to use these "self-evident facts" as the bases for demanding some "inalienable" political and cultural rights. As we have

seen, in this case, the Sheikh describes the Kurds and declares them to be a single political entity, separable from other Muslim communities. Such declaration of the "facts" and the constitution of them takes place all at once. As Derrida puts it, "This obscurity, this undecidability between, let us say, a performative structure and a constative structure, is required to produce the sought-after effect."[250] Unlike that of the Americans, the Sheikh's declaration did not succeed in producing a state. However, it did summon into being a novel idea of the Kurds as a singular entity.

With the benefit of Austin's insight, one could say that with the declaration of the distinctness of the Kurds, the Sheikh did create the *nation* that he wished to create, notwithstanding his lack of success in creating the state.[251] Austin, as Skinner notes, "stressed that, in speaking about the force of an utterance, he was mainly pointing to what an agent may have been doing *in* the act of saying what was said."[252] So it is after these utterances that Kurdishness (*Kurdayeti*), not Kurdish tribes taken separately, became an issue of central concern. No matter which side of the border this invocation of Kurdishness took place on, the very invocation of Kurdishness becomes equated with a claim to sovereignty. The Sheikh, as later Kurdish history evidenced, made it natural to talk about the rights of the Kurds on the other side of the border. He used their collective suffering as a justification for this declarative act. He attempted to erase "the signature" of other states, to borrow Derrida's line, and aimed at "'dissolving the links' of their paternity or maternity.'"[253]

Without coming to terms with the possibility of the fusion of religion and nationalism, one cannot explain how an actor whose main role and function was to lead his community in its religious affairs[254] would use this language and become involved in a "politics of the performative." The expected theological stance,[255] to be drawn from a sheikh—any sheikh—is guarding the bonds of the *umma* as sacrosanct links. What is seen, however, is that these bonds are either dissolved or become secondary in the religious actor's political thoughts as he ventures on this nationalistic enterprise. This is the case since the actor is ready to go against his coreligionists to further his ethnic nationalist cause. He rethinks these bonds with his current ethnic Other in their entirety. He is, at least, undisturbed by creating a new boundary between himself and his coreligionists on ethnic lines. These changes in the religious actor's views take place along with the changes in his perception of "us" and "them." These new political stances evidently are not the result of the actor's conversion or complete abandonment of his religion. On the contrary, these political stances

are usually justified religiously. This illustrates the penetration of what is known as national consciousness, for with it "each person mirrors (*ma'kas*) his own nation,"[256] says Said Nursi, the renowned Kurdish religious leader. Thus, in studying the connection between religion (or Islam in particular) and nationalism, one has to look into how the nation-state becomes a kind of Weberian ideal type for governance.

Whether it is an "ideal type" or a "paradigm," as Billig calls it, nationalism is a modern convention, that is, the universally accepted tradition of governance. Also, it is a framework which is conventionally assumed to bring a resolution to communal conflicts, notwithstanding its bloody history.[257] As Anderson puts it, "the 'nation' proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent.[258] It became susceptible to being pirated by disparate and at times unexpected hands."[259] Thus, if Billig's insight of nationalism as a paradigm is accepted, then when one is within it, one thinks and acts nationalistically. Nationalism then provides a conventional procedure for the nationalist speech act to occur. To Billig, nationalism is a paradigm since it provides the framework for our thought, which in itself becomes invisible to us. We could all be nationalist without even being conscious of our nationalism, which is why it is "taken for granted" or "banal."[260] The "invisible force" of nationalism remains invisible to us. It must be this invisibility and omnipresence that makes it both local and universal.[261] Therefore, instead of thinking of nationalism only in terms of its connection with technological progress and industrialism's advancement, *à la* Gellner, it seems more useful to think of nationalism more as a paradigm.[262]

To come back to the Sheikh's speech act, it can be only understood within the nationalist paradigm. It is within this paradigm that a distinct national group, based on self-referential claims about itself, can demand certain political rights. It is within this paradigm that claims to nationhood are seen as rights and it becomes conventional to make such claims. In previous eras, such a convention did not exist.[263] Despite the existence of nations in pre-nationalist eras, the claim to national sovereignty and self-rule based on distinct ethnic and collective characteristics was absent. Again, it is in this nationalistic paradigm that such claims have become conventional.

We can determine whether an utterance is nationalistic, if nationalism is understood as a dominant modern convention. Hence, Austin's observation pointing out that "There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances"[264] can

be expanded and applied to nationalist utterances as well. This approach can help us determine whether or not the Sheikh's speech act took place within this paradigm or whether he was invoking this convention. Again, if Austin's conditions on speech acts are applicable to nationalist claims, their conventional efficacy becomes a reality when they are uttered "by certain persons in certain circumstances."[265] If "persons" here is replaced with "community," this community must "imagine" and claim its distinctness. This perception of in-groups' distinctness is a unique form of "imagination," which only within the current paradigm could produce legitimate claims. It constitutes the right circumstance that renders the pursuit of nationhood or declaration of it sensible. In all likelihood, if similar claims were even made in pre-nationalist eras, they did not have either any efficacy or any meaning. Also, if individuals or groups who do not speak on behalf of an "imagined community" do not follow the right procedure, their declaration of a nation would not amount to more than what Austin calls reporting "a phatic act" like stating that "the cat is on the mat."[266] Its efficacy would not go beyond a historian's writing on any given people's history.

The Sheikh backed up his declaration with a revolt. He foregrounded the legitimacy of his revolt in his own description of "the nation" as a legitimizing procedure that is only known to people in the age of nationalism. He first described the nation, which was equivalent to the declaration of its existence, and then he used these "sought-after-facts" as the bases for declaring the Kurds' right to statehood. Thus, he wrote:

> We also are a nation apart. We want our affairs to be *in our own hands*, so that in the punishment of our own offenders we may be strong and independent, and have *privileges like other nations*; and respecting our offenders, we are ready to *take upon ourselves* that *no harm or damage shall occur to any nation*. This is our object, and the reasons of my son's going to Souj Boulak, so as to obtain inquiry into the state of Kurdistan.[267]

The above statement not only illustrates the Sheikh's awareness of nationalism, but also suggests that he must have assumed that his utterances had a certain legitimacy and acceptability. Therefore, with his claim, the Sheikh must have believed that he was making a certain moral and political argument that would have turned the creation of a Kurdish state into a kind of moral imperative. The "conventional procedure" was the idea of the nation-state and the assumption that any ethnic group with a certain characteristic could claim a nation of its own. The assumption is that within the accepted conven-

tion of nationalism, such claims must have force. The Sheikh mostly used this language of morality when he addressed the Westerners. For instance, in his letter to Dr. Cochran, the Sheikh wrote that

> neither the Ottoman nor the Persian Government has purity of intention. They have not gone into any of our right…It is because of these kinds of things that Kurdistan *is obliged to be, and is, under the necessity of being united*, and can (no longer) put up with any such base and ruinous acts. We therefore earnestly beg of you that you will fully inform, and explain the matter to, the British Consul at Tabreez, so that, please God, *the case of Kurdistan being understood*, it may be inquired into.[268]

In making the case for a Kurdish state, the Sheikh tried to convince the Great Powers, especially Britain, to support him in his undertaking. He may have genuinely believed that if "the case of Kurdistan [was] understood [by them], it may be inquired into." That is, he thought that if the British government understood Kurdistan's situation and if its legitimacy for nationhood were made clear, then this would be a *necessary condition* for Kurdistan to become a sovereign nation-state. Whether or not he misinterpreted the colonial powers' intentions is secondary to the fact that he held that the time was ripe to make a case for Kurdish statehood. This signifies his consciousness of the era he lived in. The Sheikh could not have hoped for any result without assuming that his utterances could make some sense. For making such utterances "the meaning of the utterance itself, together with the context of its occurrence, are such that the speaker feels no doubt about the capacity of his or her audience to secure 'uptake' of the intended illocutionary act."[269] The Sheikh's utterances reveal the context of his utterance, which at the same time evidences the author's own familiarity with the context. Therefore, the Sheikh's arguments were modern and nationalistic.

It is instrumental to pay attention to some of his "certain references"[270] to see how these references signify the nationalist context of the Sheikh's letters. These "certain references" could not exist before their modern conceptual framework came into existence, and they could not have been available to people before the modern era—before their entry into the nationalist paradigm. The Sheikh's argument could only take place within this paradigm. Although in previous eras there may have been instances in which Kurds invoked Kurdish ethnicity, they did not or could not ask for "the national and the political" to become congruent. For instance, the seventeenth-century Kurdish poet Ahmad Xani hoped for the replacement

of non-Kurds' domination with that by the Kurds over the others. Hence, Xani wrote that "If only there were unity among us, and we would obey one another, then all the Ottomans and Arabs and *Ajam* (Persians) would become our servants. We would reach perfection in religion and politics, and we would become productive in knowledge and wisdom."[271] Xani wished the existence of a rule by a Kurdish prince or *Mir*, without arguing for the Kurdish nation's right for self-rule.[272] But Sheikh Ubeydullah argued the Kurds were a distinct nation and therefore they should rule themselves. He did not insist on the rule of others by Kurds. However, he insisted that the Kurds, too, ought to have their own separate state. It is true that Xani complained about the lack of unity among the Kurds. However, he believed their unity would have made them become the rulers of the Kurds *and* of other groups. Unlike the Sheikh, Xani did not invoke the idea of Kurdish self-rule in its modern sense. The Sheikh criticized the Ottoman and Qajar states' civilizing discourse and practices, which depicted the Kurds as lower beings and savages. He simultaneously defended the Kurds as a nation like any other nation and asserted that they should gain a status that put them on equal footing with other nations. By contrast, Xani's argument seems to have been more ethnocentric than nationalistic and therefore he saw the Kurds as those who deserved to rule others as opposed to being ruled by a non-Kurdish king.

What is worth noting about the Sheikh's argument is the centrality of the idea of self-rule entailed in it, which distinguishes his political views from those expressed in Kurdish politics prior to him. In principle, he sets Kurds on par with all other nations and contends that "we are ready to take upon ourselves that no harm or damage shall occur to any nation."[273] He even tries to convince other parties that a Kurdish state, as a repository of law and order, would be beneficial to them as well. In one of his letters to Iqbal ad-Dowle, the Sheikh writes that "the Kurds are no longer able to or wish to remain divided between Turkey and Iran and to be subjected to all these humiliations that they have endured till this day. Henceforth, they are firmly resolved to form a single nation."[274] After declaring the necessity of creating a Kurdish state, the Sheikh ends his letter by writing that "all that I have announced to you has been inspired by my love for Persia."[275] The Sheikh implied that his attempts to create a Kurdish state should not be translated as hostility toward Persia since he claimed that an independent Kurdish state would bring peace and tranquility to the region.[276]

To the Sheikh, this self-referential and self-defined nationhood of the Kurds constituted the moral ground for them to claim their own state

and to reject Ottoman and Qajar rule. As stated earlier, this argument for the necessity of the Kurdish state was in essence modern. It could not have taken place outside the modern nationalist approach to statehood. The Sheikh's letters carry a certain illocutionary force and contain certain vocabulary that belongs exclusively to "a certain construction," that is, to the nationalist paradigm.

In short, the Sheikh's use of specific language with certain references took place in a "particular occasion" or era. Emphasizing the occasion with its connection to the use of certain language is vital in reading and understanding the Sheikh's political statements and writings. Expanding on Austin's work, Skinner remarks that Austin "placed his main emphasis on the fact that we need in addition to grasp the particular *force* with which any given utterance (with a given meaning) may have been issued on a particular occasion."[277] The key terms here are "the particular force" of the utterance along with "the particular occasion" that provides the meaning and sheds light on the context of the utterance. In our case, instead of essentializing his religious adherence and the sociocultural context of his operation, which would result in a dismissal of the Sheikh's utterance, we need to see how his utterances shed light on his politics.

The Sheikh's scattered writings thusly should be read on several different levels. First, the Sheikh describes or narrates a nation and with his very narration tries to justify the Kurdish claim to statehood. Second, by setting the Kurds as a nation on par with others, the Sheikh delegitimizes or attempts to delegitimize both Ottoman and Qajar rule in Kurdistan. Third, his "claiming a nation" signifies a particular occasion of the ascendency of nationalism that the Sheikh himself influenced and was influenced by during its rise, and therefore he deemed it natural and necessary to distinguish the Kurds as a nation to gain the right to a separate state. Finally, not only was his Islamic faith no barrier to his nationalism, it accommodated and served his nationalistic views and made it even easier to imagine the Kurds as a distinct community.

Notes

1. See Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*.
2. For a discussion on Xani's attention to writing in Kurdish, see Metin Yüksel, "I Cry out So That You Wake Up: Cegerxwîn's Poetics and Politics of Awakening," *Middle Eastern Studies* (12 Aug. 2013), 3–6.

3. Cf. Amir Hassanpour, "The Making of Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Sources," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003).
4. *Mesnewî* and *Masnavî* respectively Kurdish and Persian pronunciations from Mathnawî... means "couplets" in Arabic (because the second half of the verse in Arabic, "thanî" rhymes with the first). It is the name of a type of poetry (called "mathnawî"). The following is an example of the particular mathnawi meter used by Rumi (there are other mathnawi meters used by other Persian Sufi poets): XoXX XoXX XoX.

   See Dar al-Masnavi: http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/about_masnavi.html.

   In writing his poetry, Sheikh Ubeydullah imitates and tries to reintroduce the *Masnavi* of the famous Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (d.672/1273). See Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*.
5. In his account of Kurdish participation in Russo-Ottoman War, the Sheikh appears volubly unrestrained in his exclusionary employment of the religious terminology. In his constant references to Ottoman Turks, the Sheikh identifies them as Romi [Romans, Ottoman Turks here] and further embroiders the religious imaginary with adjectives such as *Ghazi,* the faithful or the believers in his references to the Kurds. For instance, in one couplet the Sheikh states that one Ottoman Turkish commander "had no qualm in his bad treatment of the believers [i.e., the Kurds). ibid., 120.
6. Robert E. Speer, *The Hakim Sahib, the Foreign Doctor: A Biography of Joseph Plumb Cochran, M. D., of Persia* (New York: Revell, 1911), 74.
7. Jwaideh states that "the fear of the Armenian ascendency in Kurdistan appears to have been one of the most powerful reasons behind the Sheikh's attempt to unite the Kurds" (Jwaideh 2006, p. 83). It is true that "the fear of" a possible Armenian state was an important reason for the Sheikh's uprising, but it should be kept in mind this was only one among many reasons for his revolt.
8. For instance, Speer writes that the Sheikh "was very fair to the Christians. Speer, *The Hakim Sahib, the Foreign Doctor: A Biography of Joseph Plumb Cochran, M. D., of Persia*, 74–5.Also, in his letter to one of his own *Khalifa*s, Ubeydullah notes that "I trust Armenians much more than the Persians and the Turks." Celîlê Celîl, *1880 Şeyh Ubeydullah Nehri: Kürt Ayaklanması/1880 Shaykh Ubeydullah Nehri's Kurdish Uprising*, trans. M. Aras (Istanbul: Pêrî Yayaninlari, 1998), 109.
9. Cf. David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004). Also, Özoğlu, "Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?"
10. FO 195/1315; No. 23; Clayton Clayton to Trotter; Political (Confidential); Kochhannes, 2nd August 1880.

11. Clayton to Trotter; Bashkala, July 11, 1880. FO 195/1315/No. 23 Political [Confidential].
12. FO 195/1315; No. 23; Clayton to Trotter; Political (Confidential); Kochhannes, August 2, 1880.
13. Cf. McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*; Özoğlu, “Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?”
14. FO 195/1315; No. 23; Clayton Political (Confidential); Bashkala, July 11, 1880.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. FO 195/1315; No. 46; Clayton; Van November 27, 1880.
19. Ibid.
20. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab,* 108. Also, Ateş, “Empires at the Margins: Toward the History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland Peoples, 1843–1881,” 311.
21. Clayton reports that:

    Sheikh Obeyd Ullah is working hard to extend his influence. He is ingratiating himself with the Christians and large numbers of the latter have migrated from Gewer into the Sheikh’s immediate neighborhood in order to enjoy his protection from other Kurds. FO 195/1315(No. 20, Clayton to Trotter; Van, 25th May 1880).
22. Apparently, the establishment of the Kurdish league very much troubled the Armenian nationalists in Istanbul and outside the Ottoman territories. Despite the local Christian participation in the Sheikh’s revolt, the Armenian nationalist elites were trying to paint or saw it as threat to the Armenians. Therefore, the British Parliament held an official session to make an inquiry about this league and demanded the members of the British cabinet to explain the situation in Kurdistan. See *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*. No: 673 & 678 (1880).
23. *Vakit*, No: 1860. 1880.
24. It is hard to know whether Sheikh Ubeydullah was aware of the Sharif’s views on the Ottoman Caliphate. The Sharif of Mecca was not overly fond of the Ottoman Caliphate. In 1879, in talking to foreign officials, the Sharif had remarked that “the Ottoman caliphate no longer enjoy[ed] [Muslim] respect and loyalty. People ask how they could respect and follow someone [as a caliph] who can be deposed by a fatwa issued by his own appointee (*Sheikh al-Islam*).” Ali Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması/the Abolition of the Caliphate* (Istanbul: Gökkubbe Yayınları, 2008), 37.

25. Kendal Nezan, “The Kurds under the Ottoman Empire,” in *A People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, ed. Gérard Chaliand (London: Zed Press, 1993), 25.
26. Sheikh Ubeydullah to Abbas Mirza Moolkra). *Parliamentary Papers.* Inclosure 4 in No.5/61.
27. Cf. Ateş, “Empires at the Margins: Toward the history of the Ottoman-Iranian borderland peoples, 1843–1881.”; Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006).; Robert W. Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).
28. Some of these criticisms are reiterated decades later in 1925 Sheikh Sa’id’s proclamation of a Kurdish Caliphate in which he blames the Turkish state’s purposeful abandonment of Kurdish education.
29. These negative views are traceable in common Turkish expressions. For instance, “*the god of the Kurds and of dogs is one” or “there ain’t no God for Kurds and dogs (Kürt ile itin Allahı birdir); and there is a mutual hate between God and Kurds (Allah Kürdü*, Kürd *Allahı sevmez)*: Rohat Alakom, *Türk Edebiyatinda Kürtler/the Kurds in Turkish Literature* (Istanbul: Avesta, 2010), 33–34.
30. See Chap. 5.
31. Mardin, *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey*, 60.
32. In October 1880 in a letter to Dr. Cochran, an American missionary in the Hakkari region, Ubeydullah wrote that “the Kurdish nation, consisting of more than 500,000 families, is a people apart. *Their religion is different* [from that of others], and their laws and customs distinct (*Parliamentary Papers.* 1881, 5:47–48).”
33. Unfortunately, Sheikh Ubeydullah’s Mesnewi was not available to the public until 2000. As Seyid Islam Duagû explains that he was able to find only three copies of the manuscripts after years of research, each of which had been reproduced from earlier copies exclusively accessible to the Sheikh’s family and followers. The entire collection is over 6000 couplets in which the Sheikh claims to imitate and explicate Rumi’s Masnavi. The published version is a copy of the manuscript that was reproduced in 1962. This version’s differences vis-à-vis the other unpublished versions are rendered in the footnotes. See the introduction to Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab.*
34. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*, 81.
35. Ibid.
36. I am borrowing the phrasing from Wodak and others, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 4.
37. Ibid.

38. He indicates that he delayed finishing the book because of the War. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 104.
39. According to the Russian Officer, P.İ. Averyanov, the Sheikh did not believe in the legitimacy of the Ottoman claim to caliphate. Averyanov claims that according to the Sheikh "the Ottomans had taken Islamic Caliphate by force and this was a violation of the Islamic law. Therefore, the Sheikh and his ancestors used to support Iraqi Kurds' rebellion against the [Ottoman] Turks for reclaiming the caliphate." Averyanov also claims Sheikh Ubeydullah and all "the Botani Kurds held that the caliph must be a descendant of Bani Abbas, not an Ottoman. The Turks usurped caliphate, which was the right of Abbasid." P.İ. Averyanov, *Osmanlı - Rus Ve Iran Savaşlar'ında Kürtler 1801–1900/the Kurds in Persian, Ottoman and Russian Wars 1801–1900*, trans. Muhammed (Hoko) Varlı (Xani) (Istanbul: SIpan Yayincilik, 1995), 214–16. It should be noted that in one of his personal letters to the Sultan, the Sheikh uses the term *Khilafet-panahi* (the refuge of *Khilafa*) Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1525, Fon Kodu: PRK.ASK. Tarih: 7/Temuz /1296 (Hicrî) [7.19.1880]. There are other letters in which the Sheikh does not even use this term. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1492, Fon Kodu: PRK.ASK. Tarih: 20/ Haziran /1296(Hicrî) [7.1.1880].
40. Unlike *Shi'i* Muslims, *Sunnis* use the term *Imam* very loosely. Mostly, *Sunni*s consider the word *Imam* to have a general (*'aam*) application. However, the word *khalifa* (caliph) has particular (*'akhass*) applicability. Many prominent *Sunni* scholars contend that the term caliph cannot be used for anyone other than the first four successors of the Prophet Mohammad. It is worth noting that Seyyid Bey, the Turkish Justice Minister in 1924, who was very well versed in the traditional Islamic studies, made the same argument in favor of the abolishment of the caliphate. See pp. 55–65 in Tbmm Zabıtları (Turkish Grand National Assembly's Debates):, (VII, 1 Mart 1340 (1924)), http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/asw/tur/htu/data/HTU2136%28ZC%29-35/index.djvu.
41. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 130.
42. Ibid., 110.
43. Ibid.
44. (*garche sultan mayay-e fath ve zafar—did dar ejra-ye shar'-e namvar)*: ibid., 110.
45. (*zan sabab iman namandeh dar qolub—az che nasar ayad ze 'allam al-ghiyub*): ibid.
46. (*kardeh bidinan salbe ikhtiyar—bar sare mellat ze daste shariyar)*: ibid.
47. Necib Ali's report rendered in Ateş, "Empires at the Margins: Toward the History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland Peoples, 1843–1881," 333.
48. Ateş, S. (2006). *Empires at the Margins: Toward a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881.* (Doctoral dissertation). New York: New York University.

49. Alikhan Gunehkhan Afshar, *Tarikh-e Khruj Akrad va qatl va Gharat-e Ubeydullah-e Badbonyad va Eghteshash va Fitnay-e Ziyad dar Mamlakat-e Azarbayjan, 1297/the Kurdish Rebellion: The Ill-Natured Ubeydullah's Massacres and Pillage in 1880.*, trans. Mhemed Heme Baqi (Hewlir: Aras, 2007), 30 & 221.
50. Cf. Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak*, 56.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. In his letter, Sheikh Ubeydullah claims that the total population of the Kurds was around 500,000 families at the time (averaging around five per family); see Olson and Celîl.
55. The Ottoman Turks are commonly known as the Turks of Anatolia or the Turks of Rome. Nikitin also refer to the Iranian *Shiʿis* and the Ottoman Turks as Ajams and *Romis* as they were referred to by the Kurds.
56. Basil Nikitin, *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, trans. Muhammad Qazi, 2 ed. (Tehran. Nilufar Publication, 1987a), 446–47.
57. Ibid., 461.
58. Ibid., 459.
59. Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J., USA: Zed Books, 1992), 228.
60. Hamid Algar, "The Naqshbandī Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance," *Studia Islamica*, (no. 44.1976), 150–52.
61. According to Mardin, Sheikh Khalid was successful in convincing a member of important Qadiri families to change to follow his new order. This had a "considerable effect upon the subsequent history of Kurdish nationalism." Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, Suny Series in near Eastern Studies (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), 58.
62. Cf. Ateş, "Empires at the Margins: Toward the history of the Ottoman-Iranian borderland peoples, 1843–1881," 320–23. Also, Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, especially 222–34.
63. Ateş, "Empires at the Margins: Toward the history of the Ottoman-Iranian borderland peoples, 1843–1881," 196.
64. These types of religious peculiarities are not uncommon among different ethnic groups and nationalities. See, for example, Miner, *Stalin's Holy War: Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941–1945.*
65. The ultimate aim in writing his *Mesnevi*, maintains the Sheikh, was to explain the *Mesnevi* of Rūmī's since the deep meanings in the poetry of the prince

(Amir) of this *tariqat* had yet to be revealed to the 'avâm—the common people. See Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab,* 133.
66. Ibid., 130.
67. The people who currently adhere to the Order, hardly know anything about it (*ghaleb az ahl-e tariqat dar zaman–mi nadanest as tariqat yak neshan*). Ibid.
68. Ibid., 110.
69. Ibid., 111.
70. Ibid.
71. Hamid Enyat quoted in Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması/the Abolition of the Caliphate*, 39.
72. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 131.
73. (*layk chun mi bo kodestan hame–taleb-e in 'ishq o shur o zamzame*). Ibid., 130.
74. (*har kas migasht dar sahra-ye din*) ibid.
75. If it were not obligatory first [to follow masters], *Masnavi* [by Rumi] would not have been emulated. (*gar nabudi zarurat pey-ravi—khod namigashti mosanna masnavi*. Ibid., 129.
76. Ibid., 130.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., 131.
79. Muhammad Iqbal claims the idea that a *mujaddid* (renovator) appears at the head of every century popularized by Jalāl-ud-Dīn Suyūti in sixteenth century. See chapter V in: Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.
80. Even when it is not explicitly stated, the idea of degeneration is embedded in attempts for the revival. In the nineteenth century, the sense of Muslims' digression from the right path was one of the major explanations for the European military, technical and scientific superiority. In the 1940s, Abu al-Hassan al-Nadavi wrote a book on the same subject, which well represents such views on decadence and Muslims' distance from the golden age of Islam. Sayyid Quṭb wrote a forward for al-Nadavi's book in which Qutb states that this book was the best work he had ever read on the subject. See Abu al-Hassan Al-Nadawi, *Madha Khasare Al-'Alim Bi Inḥitati Al-Mulismiin/Muslim Degeneration and the World's Loss* (Cairo: al-Iman, 1945), 10.
81. For the representation of this approach to Islamic history, which tries to locate "the genesis of Muslim decadence," see Maududi, *Khilafat va Mulukiyyat*.
82. Undoubtedly, the Sheikh's claim contains some elements of truth about Kurdistan being a center of scholarship in Islamic world. The renowned Ottoman historian, Kâtib Çelebi, points to this reality when he writes that

"I, the humble writer of these lines, in the course of discussion and study, was encouraged by ['*ulama* or Kurdistan], as Plato was encouraged by Socrates, to acquire knowledge of the truths of things. (Kâtib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth;* quoted in: Yuksel, "Dengbej, Mullah, Intelligentsia: The Survival and Revival of the Kurdish-Kurmanji Language in the Middle East, 1925–1960. Unpublished Dissertation.")

83. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 128.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Cf. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*. Also, Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*.
89. Cf. The Sheikh's letters to Iqbal ad-Dowleh in: Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak,* 38–43.
90. Instead of civilizing, education is used in the Turkish translation, which in turn was a translation of the French rendition of the Sheikh's letter.
91. A letter from Ubeydullah to Dr. Cochran dated October 5, 1880. *Correspondence. Turkey. Enclosure 3.* No: 5/61 (1881).
92. Ibid.
93. The lack of public education is one the repeated themes in *Kurdistan*. See Mehmed Emin Bozarslan, Kurdistan: Rojnama Kurdi Ya Pêşin/the First Kurdish Newspaper.
94. The governor of Urmia in the 1880s.
95. Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak,* 42.
96. Emphasis added.
97. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its origins and development*, 85.
98. All the evidences indicate that the Sheikh was much interested and had a fair understanding of the changing world. Dr. Cochran remarks that the Sheikh "seemed to enjoy conversing on all subjects with me. During the week that I stayed at his house, I had many very pleasant talks with him. He was very much interested in hearing about the new inventions and other wonders of the Western world." Speer, *The Hakim Sahib, the Foreign Doctor: A Biography of Joseph Plumb Cochran, M. D., of Persia*, 80.
99. *Correspondence. Turkey.* No. 5/55(1881); quoted in: Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*, 85.
100. (*zar-e dast afshar key bitarbiyemishavad az—khak-e m 'dantasfiye*). Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 121.
101. Ibid.
102. (*gar morabbi minkonad tarbiya-ye an—kordhara dar har honar chon kas madan*). Ibid.

103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 770.
106. Cf. van Bruinessen, *Agha, Sheikh, and state: the social and political structures of Kurdistan*. Also, Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its origins and development*.
107. For an extensive study of this subject, see Ateş, "Empires at the Margins: Toward the history of the Ottoman-Iranian borderland peoples, 1843–1881."
108. Cf. ibid.
109. See Agamben's discussion on this issue in: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Meridian (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 10–12.
110. There is not much written about Hamza Agha. There are some scattered references to his activities in *British Parliamentary Papers* and *Foreign Offices* documents (Cf. Turkey no: 5 & FO: 78/2728) as well as in the Ottoman state records. Based on the above sources, the Ottoman had imprisoned Hamza Agha in Istanbul for fifteen years. He was the head of Mangours, populated in the vast region between the city of Mahabad, Piranshahr (in the Eastern part of Kurdish region/Iran) and Pashdar (in the South/Iraq). He was involved in intermittent fight with the Persians (Ateş, 2006, 292). Hamza Agha spoke Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, and Persian languages. He seems to have been the author (signed by him) of a fake pro-Ottoman Friday prayer sermon, in Arabic language, supposedly delivered in Mahabad. In some passages, the sermon rebukes the Kurds and spurs them to rise against the Qajars by calling them out: "O! Kurdish people! How genuine and dependable (*asahh*) were your pedigrees; they were audacious, wise, far-sighted and broad minded people; and how corrupt (*asqam*) has become their progeny. How misled and ignorant you have become by following the *'Ajams* state and by your avoidance to support the Ottomans [in their past war against Russians]." See: BOA: Dosya No: 2, Fon Kodu: Y.PRK. EŞK. Tarih: 1298 [1882].
111. For more on how these studies were conducted and also how they impacted the borderline communities, see, Ateş, "Empires at the Margins: Toward the History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland Peoples, 1843–1881."
112. Even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Kurds were aware of their own ethnic difference with their neighboring communities. See Martin van Bruinessen fascinating article on this issue Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurdistan in the 16th and 17th Centuries, as Reflected in Evliya Çelebi's Seyahatname," *The Journal of Kurdish Studies*, no. 3 (2000).
113. Actually as mentioned earlier the Sheikh had already revolted against the Ottomans in the previous year, 1879. Cf. *Mulla, Sufis and Heretics: The Role*

of Religion in Kurdish Society: Collected Articles, Analecta Isisiana (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000), 201 & 40.

114. Mujtaba Borzuei, *Avza'-e Kordestan Az 1258–1325/the Situation in Kurdistan from 1879 to 1946*, 74.
115. British records clearly show that the British Officials did their best to convince the Ottomans and Persians to take a unified stance against the Kurds. See *Correspondence. Turkey* No. 5/3(1881). Yet, at the time, as Dr. Cochran sister indicates, the common people generally accepted the rumors that Briton was behind the Sheikh's uprising. Speer, *The Hakim Sahib, the Foreign Doctor: A Biography of Joseph Plumb Cochran, M. D., of Persia*, 78–90.
116. Borzuei, *Avżâº-E Kordestan az 1258–1325*, 83.
117. Ibid., 89.
118. According to the Russian officer P. I. Averyonov, the Sheikh believed that the Kurds had only instrumental significance to the Ottomans in order to be used against the Christian subjects in Anatolia. Averyanov, *Osmanlı - Rus Ve İran Savaşlar'ında Kürtler 1801–1900/the Kurds in Persian, Ottoman and Russian Wars 1801–1900*, 85.
119. Emphasis added.
120. David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 65.
121. Emphasis added.
122. McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 65.
123. McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 58.
124. (*halen bizim tarafe olacak sui tesirati pek büyüktir*). BOA: Dosya No: 5; Gömlek No: 99/2; Fon Kodu: Y..PRK.ASK. 10/21/1880.
125. (*Hic olmaz ise dörder yüze iblağ olunmak uzere kura neferati cedidesinden Laz ve Turk olarak 2500 neferin serian tertipi... ahamiyetiyle rica olunur*). Ibid.
126. BOA: Dosya No: 486; Gömlek No: 62; Fon Kodu: A.}MKT.MHM Tarih: 29/Ca/1298 (Hicrî) [28.04.1881]
127. Celîl, *1880 Şeyh Ubeydullah Nehri: Kürt Ayaklanması*.
128. See Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 104–32.
129. Celîl, *1880 Şeyh Ubeydullah Nehri: Kürt Ayaklanması*, 110–15.
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid.
132. By "the promise," Özoğlu means the Article 61 in Berlin Treaty, which stipulated the state's obligation to protect the Armenians' security. "The Sublime Porte will periodically render accounts of the measures taken with this intent to the Powers who will supervise them."

133. Hakan Özoğlu, “Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?” in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Ayse Kadioglu and Emin Fuat Keyman (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 203.
134. Ibid., 203.
135. Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 9.
136. McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*: 53.
137. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*. No: 591, (June 2, 1980).
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid.
140. *Correspondence. Turkey* No: 5/60 (1881).
141. Emphasis added.
142. *Correspondence. Turkey* No: 5/60 (1881).
143. See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 340–400. Sartre’s concern is mostly philosophical and individualistic. However, the impact of the Other’s gaze and how it conditions our being could be easily expanded and employed to explain the ways in which a dominant group’s gaze conditions the social existence of the dominated.
144. Ibid., 360.
145. Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak*, 42 (Emphasis added).
146. Here, I employ C.S. Peirce’s insight about “self,” explained by Singer as: Peirce’s general theory of signs, or semiotic [*personal*] *identity, in this theory, is also a social and cultural identity and is not confined to the individual organism* (Emphasis added). Milton Singer, “Signs of the Self: An Exploration in Semiotic Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist, New Series* 82, No. 3 no. 3 (Sep., 1980): 482.
147. Taylor, “Nationalism and Modernity,” 234.
148. For an important psychoanalysis of the oppressed, see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann (England. Pluto Press. 2008).
149. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York; London: Routledge, 1997), 5.
150. Ibid.
151. Cf. Mesut Yeğen, “The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (2001).
152. Butler, *Excitable Speech: A politics of the performative*, 4. *I should note that here I am applying Butler’s general remarks to a particular historical context.*
153. Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak*, 56.
154. *Bedevi* is a term commonly used to refer to nomads and nomadic life. However, here it is used along with the word *bedeviyet* to connote primitiveness and savagery.
155. *ya anha ke tasahob Kurdistan mikonand*. Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak*, 56.

156. Ibid.
157. Butler, *Excitable Speech: A politics of the performative,* 2.
158. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab,* 117–19.
159. M. Şefik Korkusuz, *Nehri'den Hazne'ye Meşayihi Nakşibendi/from Nehri to Haze Naqshbandi Sheikhs* (Istanbul: Kilim Matbaacılık, 2010), 91.
160. Martin van Bruinessen, "The Kurds and Islam," *Les Annales de l'Autre Islam*, no. 5 (1998, pp. 13–35).
161. Ibid.
162. Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak,* 56.
163. Ibid.
164. Speer, *The Hakim Sahib, the Foreign Doctor: A Biography of Joseph Plumb Cochran, M. D., of Persia*, 75.
165. Afshar personally participated in the war, against the Sheikh. See his account: Alikhan Gunehkhan Afshar, *Tarikh-e Khruj Akrad va qatl va Gharat-e Ubeydullah-e Badbonyad va Eghteshash va Fitnay-e Ziyad dar Mamlakat-e Azarbayjan, 1297.*
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid., 22 & 219.
168. Ibid., 24 & 220.
169. The author here likens the Sheikh to Ubeydullah Ibn-i Ziyad who was one of the perpetrators in the killing of Hussein, the Third *Shiʿi Imam* and the grandson of the Prophet of Islam.
170. Alikhan Gunehkhan Afshar, *Tarikh-e Khruj Akrad va qatl va Gharat-e Ubeydullah-e Badbonyad va Eghteshash va Fitnay-e Ziyad dar Mamlakat-e Azarbayjan*, *1297*, 24 & 220.
171. Celîlê Celîl claims that during the War, the Sheikh had some political plans. Yet, the Sheikh himself indicates that, at least initially, he had joined the *jihad* against the Russians since they "out of sheer arrogance had attacked the Muslim land and were trying to annex it to that of their own." Also, van Bruinessen's writings imply that the Sheikh was not much active politically before the Russo-Ottoman War. Bruinessen points out that the War "spurred [the Sheikh] on to political activism." See Celîl, *1880 Şeyh Ubeydullah Nehri: Kürt ayaklanması/1880 Sheikh Ubeydullah Nehri's Kurdish Uprising*: 41.; Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 114.; and van Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society: Collected Articles*, 201.
172. See Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 126.
173. Ibid.
174. Ibid.
175. Ibid.
176. Ibid., 127.
177. The town's name is Turkified and now it is called Yüksekova.
178. Ibid., 113–14.

179. Afshar mockingly recounts this event. Alikhan Gunehkhan Afshar, *Tarikh-e Khruj Akrad va qatl va Gharat-e Ubeydullah-e Badbonyad va Eghteshash va Fitnay-e Ziyad dar Mamlakat-e Azarbayjan, 1297*, 24–25 & 220.
180. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 109.
181. There can't be a victory without faith—how something can be if the conditions for its existence are not? Ibid.
182. See, for example, S. Qutb's introduction to Abu al-Hassan al-Nadawi, *Madha Khasare al-ʿAlim bi Inhitati al-Mulismiin/Muslim Degeneration and the World's Loss* (Cairo: al-Iman, 1945), especially, pp. 10–11.
183. *Kardesh taslim bedun karzar. Nehri, Tuhfetul Ehbab, 114.*
184. Ibid., 113.
185. Ibid., 111. The affairs of this great *umma* are now in the hands of thugs and oppressors (*ikhtiyar-e kar-e khair al-omam—dar kaf ashar o abnay zalam*)
186. Ibid., 117–23.
187. Ibid., 108.
188. Translation by the author.
189. *Ghazi* is someone who fights in the cause of religion. However, here the Sheikh uses the term exclusively for the Kurdish fighters who fought along the Ottomans during the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877–1878.
190. *Ghazi* is someone who fights in the cause of religion. However, here the Sheikh uses the term exclusively for the Kurdish fighters who fought along the Ottomans during the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877–1878.
191. Nehri, *Mesnewi Şeyx Ubeydullah Nehri; Tuhfetul Ehbab*: 116.
192. According to Celîl, the Kurds were unwilling to fight alongside the Turks, and this was the cause of constant frictions between the two groups. See Celîl, *1880 Şeyh Ubeydullah Nehri: Kürt ayaklanması*, 43.
193. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 117.
194. Ibid.
195. Ibid.
196. Ibid., 119.
197. *Az gorgan, raʿi pustin.*
198. Celîl also points to the correspondence between army commanders, Faik Pasha and Ahmat Muhtar Pasha, with regard to Sheikh Ubeydullah's fighters and their lack of food and other logistics. Although the Sheikh believed that the Ottoman Turks intentionally ignored the Kurdish fighters' needs, Celîl's account shows that the Ottoman army was in terrible shape and most likely they were unable to attend to the irregular (Kurdish) forces' basic needs. See Celîl, *1880 Şeyh Ubeydullah Nehri: Kürt ayaklanması/1880 Sheikh Ubeydullah Nehri's Kurdish Uprising*: 42–43.
199. The Valley of Zangzor has become a riddle — for forty days, the army was stuck [there] (*vadi hayrat shodehh zangzor--arba'ini lashkar mand as ʿobur*); with the Kurdish presence, this huge group of army dared not make any

bold move (*jor'ati namand az an qowm-e kasir—ke konad bi Kord da'va-ye dalir*) Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 123.

200. According to the Sheikh, the Ottoman commanders once again asked him to call on the Kurds to join the fight. So for the second time the Kurds responded to his call. Once more they inflicted a great defeat on the Russians. Their victory resulted in capturing the city of Yerevan. Only after the Kurds captured Yerevan and cleared it from the Russian army, the Ottoman army entered the city. The army was jubilant and declared that they were the ones who had captured Yerevan. They, at all, did not credit the Kurds for the victory. During the operation, the Kurds lost 900 fighters among whom were six religious scholars and Naqshbandi Caliphs and the *Romîs* sustained no loss whatsoever. Yet, they continued mocking the Kurds. The "Cockled [Ismail] Pasha sarcastically shouted at me: O! Sheikh no one fights like you Kurds! You have lost 9 hundred men and I have come all the way from *Erzurum* and lost only three solders." Ibid., 121–24.
201. Ibid., 119.
202. Ibid., 121–24.
203. Ibid., 121–24.
204. Ibid., 109 & 27.
205. *Alāmātul munāfiqi thalathatuṅ: ʿidhā hadatha kadhiba, wa ʿidhā waʿada ʿakhlafa, wa idh ʿutmiʾuna khāna.*
206. Nehri, *Mesnewi Şex Ubeydullah Nehri: Tuhfetul Ehbab*, 127.
207. Ibid., 121. This is not uncommon for the Kurds to claim that they have common origin with Arabs. Even Said Nursi had a similar claim. These views, however, change among the Kurds as they face Arab nationalism, especially after the creation of Iraq.
208. *Ke fatanat ra ze kordan shood asas.*
209. Hātim al-Ṭāʾī, the symbol of generosity in Arabic literature and culture.
210. *Ke nadarad hich aqwam-e degar.*
211. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab.*
212. Bediüzzaman Nursi likewise claimed that Kurds shared a common ancestry with "the noble Arab race". Nursi, *İçtimaî Dersler*, 579.
213. For instance, Coakley claims that "unlike nationalism, the great religions are universalistic..." See Coakley, "Religion and Nationalism in the First World," 213.
214. Özoğlu, "Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?" 214.
215. Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on modern culture* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 95.
216. See Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on Modern Culture*, 95.
217. Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on modern culture*: 104.
218. Ibid.
219. For an interesting critique of this approach, see: Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (New York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

220. Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on modern culture*: 98.
221. Ibid.
222. This phrase is repeatedly used by Greenfield. For a great study of such classifications of religions, see Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*.
223. See Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*.
224. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 5.
225. Ibid., 5–13.
226. Ibid., 6.
227. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.
228. Ibid.
229. Iqbal defends the historical experience of the Muslims and believes that the spirit of their religion justifies "liberal Muslim's attempts" to rethink their religious thought in its entirety, of course without complete abandonment of their past. Thus, he asserts that "the spirit of Islam is so broad that it is practically boundless. With the exception of atheistic ideas alone, it has assimilated all the attainable ideas of surrounding peoples, and given them its own peculiar direction of development." Ibid.
230. Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, 183.
231. Sheikh Ubeydullah's letter to Dr. Cochran. *Correspondence. Turkey.* Incl. 3. No. 5/61(1881).
232. See Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*.
233. It should be noted that along with the abovementioned point, Özoğlu makes some other claims. He states that the Sheikh could not understand the "explosive meaning" of the word "nation." Nonetheless, he admits that, at least, "other primary sources contain confusing, if not contradictory, evidence about the nature of Ubeydullah's secessionist aim" (214). On the next page, Özoğlu refers to the Sheikh's use of "the vocabulary of contemporary European nationalism"—again, not with the aim of creating an independent state, but "probably [for] the resurrection of an autonomous principality as these had existed before the extension of administration under the Ottoman *Tanẓīmât*." Özoğlu, "Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?" 214–15.
234. Hakan Özoğlu, "Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?" in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Ayse Kadioglu and Emin Fuat Keyman (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 203.
235. *Mellat* is a Persian word for nation. I assume that the Sheikh wrote his letter in Persian since at the time Persian and Arabic were the lingua franca of the Kurds. The Sheikh in addition to Kurdish and Persian must have known Ottoman Turkish (a number of his letters in Ottoman are available in the Ottoman archives) and Arabic. Cochran describes him as "a man well read

in Persian and Arabic literature. He has also read most of the Bible we sent him last year" (quoted in Speer, *The Hakim Sahib*, 78). However, except for his *Masnavi* in Persian and a few Ottoman letters, it is hard to know whether he has left anything else behind, especially in Kurdish. According to Afshar, during his attack on Urmia, the Sheikh was reciting Kurdish poems to spur his followers on. See Afshar, *Tarikh-e Khruj Akrad, 130.*

236. The Sheikh writes his famous letters to the non-Turkish foreign officials in Persian.
237. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*. No: 592, (June 5, 1880).
238. See Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak*, 56.
239. Ibid.
240. (*Sabab-e be anvaʿ-e taʿaddiyt-e Iran o bi-qanuni anha na-tavanestim baishan gozaran o momashat namayim parsal … baʿzi az mellat-e Kordestan ba davlat-e Iran be-maqam rafʿ-e zolm o taʿaddiyat-e Iran amadand o az yek ṭaraf davlat-e ʿOśmaaiye tahdidat o takhvifat-e shadide bar sar-e ma kardand*). Ibid. It should be stated that neither of the authors is able to present any evidence or claim about the Sheikh's mistreatment of or his antagonism toward Christians during and after the War. However, they both discount or belittle the Sheikh's own statements. As mentioned, they also dismiss the fact that even before his revolt against the Qajar state in 1880, the Sheikh had revolted against the Ottomans in 1879.
241. Sheikh Ubeydullah to Dr. Cochran. *Correspondence. Turkey.* No. 5/61. Incl. 3 (1881).
242. Sheikh Ubeydullah to Iqbal ad-Dowleh. *Correspondence. Turkey.* No. 5/61. Incl. 5 (1881).
243. Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Regarding Method*, vol. 1 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 113.
244. Cf. McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds.* Also, Özoğlu, "Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?."
245. I am employing Pocock's definition of discourse in a different context. See J.G.A. Pocock, "Concepts and Discourses: A Difference in Culture?," in *The Meaning of Historical Concepts; New Studies on Berschiffsgechichte*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute 2004), 48.
246. It should be noted that in his book, which was published in 1870, Osman Seifi maintains that he had personally witnessed strong nationalist sentiments and desire for independence among the Kurds. See Millingen, *Wild Life among the Koords*, 210–15.
247. Emphasis added.
248. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 19.
249. Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 51.

250. Ibid., 49.
251. See J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, William James Lectures (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).
252. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 104.
253. Derrida, *Negotiations*, 50.
254. As indicated earlier, Speer states that "next to *the Sultan and the Sheriff of Mecca the Sheikh was the holiest person among the Sunni Mohammedans.* Thousands were ready to follow him as the vicar of God."
255. The boundaries of the community of the faithful were a matter of theological disputation between the Mu'tazilah and Ash'ari Schools of Islamic theology (*kalam*). See Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Ottomanists would later generally hold that nationalism in Muslim societies had remained latent in this theological stance; the belief in the unity of the Islamic *umma*. For example, see Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918.*
256. Nursi, *İçtimaî Dersler/Social lessons*, 189.
257. Cf. Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
258. The emphasis here is on the fact that the attempts for "making the political and the national congruent" are conventionality accepted, at least theoretically. Otherwise, as indicated earlier, some aspects of this approach that sees nationalism as a universal "modular" have been critiqued by Chatterjee in his various works. See Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse. The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories. The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World.*
259. Benedict R.O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed. (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 67.
260. See Billig, *Banal Nationalism.*
261. Ibid., 9–30.
262. In this way, Gellner could have overcome his own problematic conceptualization. While Gellner finds nationalism to be an outgrowth of high industrialism, he acknowledges that it could emerge in highly preindustrial societies as well. He states that "it is not denied that one may on occasion have an overlay of preindustrial structures and national sentiment." Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 138.
263. Cf. Billig, *Banal Nationalism.*
264. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 14.
265. Ibid.
266. Ibid., 95.

267. Sheikh Ubeydullah to Dr. Cochran. *Correspondence. Turkey. Incl.* 3. No. 5/61(1881).
268. Sheikh Ubeydullah to Dr. Cochran. *Correspondence. Turkey.Incl.* 2. No. 5/61(1881) (emphases added).
269. Skinner, 113.
270. Austin, *How to do things with words*, 94.
271. Martin Van Bruinessen, "Ehmedi Xani's Mem u Zin and its Role in the Emergence of Kurdish National Awareness," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 44.
272. Ethnic self-awareness should not be confused for or equated with nationalism. Amir Hassanpour (2003) also attends to the same subject. Hassanpour, however, is leaning toward a claim to the existence of some sort of ethnic nationalism prior to the nineteenth century. See Hassanpour, "The Making of Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Sources," 118–19.
273. Sheikh Ubeydullah to Dr. Cochran. *Correspondence. Turkey. Incl.* 3. No. 5/61(1881).
274. Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak/Thirteen Interesting Pages from Kurdish People's History*, 49–50.
275. Ibid.
276. Ibid.
277. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 104.

CHAPTER 7

Kurdish Nationalism and *Khilafa* in Nursi's Pre-exile Writing

Bediüzzaman Said Kurdi or Nursi (1876–1960) was a Kurdish mullah who produced a substantial body of writing. Nursi was trained at various *medreses* and had close connections with the Kurdish community.[1] His pre-exile life is another illustration of how one's ethno-nationalism can impact one's religious interpretation. Nursi was an ardent advocate of constitutionalism, a bitter enemy of the Hamidian state, and an active figure in Kurdish politics before his exile in 1925. In many ways, his works demonstrate the fears, anxieties, and ambivalence of Kurdish religious leaders of his time. Bediüzzaman's pre-exile writings (1907–1925) exhibit three central trends that substantially contributed to his thought: (a) the growth of Kurdish nationalism; (b) Ottoman Constitutionalism and anti-Hamidian politics; and (c) the increasing fusion of religion and nationalism in Muslim thought.

Contrary to commonly held views, Islam did not serve as a barrier to Kurdish or Turkish ethnic self-consciousness.[2] The writings of iconic figures such as Said Nursi are a perfect illustration of the impact of nationalism. Yet it is generally claimed that Nursi was categorically against all forms of nationalism. For instance, Mardin states that

> Said Nursi is said to have figured among the founders of this association [the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*)]. But a number of points have to be taken into account here, which, in fact, absolve Said from *the accusation of being a separatist*. Said does not figure

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> among the directorate elected at the first general meeting of the society. He is not mentioned as a founder by the scholar who has collected the most extensive information about the association (Tunaya, II, 1986, 186 f.). He claims that *he was always opposed to nationalism*, which he considered an evil doctrine because it *had created divisions among the followers of Islam*.[3] (Emphasis added)

Nursi's own writings, as will be shown below, attest that he had no qualms about dividing nationalism into two different categories: *positive* and negative. He considered nationalism to be positive as long as it did not deny others' rights or existence.[4]

In the Kurdish case, Islam became a marker of ethno-national identity. Nursi's pre-exile writing reveals this reality. Nursi attributes many of his own religious and ethnic qualities to his Kurdishness. This trend, in which one's religious authenticity was connected to one's ethnicity, may have started in the late nineteenth century. It continued and gained greater dimensions in the twentieth century.[5] In particular, the 1880 Revolt led by the Kurdish Naqshbandi Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri was a manifestation of this approach to Islam among the Kurds.[6] Ottoman administrative documents reveal that this particular revolt—which symbolized a fusion of religion and Kurdish nationalism—had a far-reaching impact on Kurdish politics in general.[7] At some levels, it made Kurdish politics more ambiguous, since it convinced some actors that without outside help, Kurdish independence would not be possible. Nonetheless, it also offered a new meaning to *Kurdishness* and became a source of inspiration and continuous discontent with the state.

Sheikh Ubeydullah's Revolt continued to influence Kurdish religious figures. The youngest son of Ubeydullah, Sheikh Abdulqadir, who later became the speaker of the Ottoman senate, emerged as an indispensable figure in Kurdish politics after his father's defeat.[8] The same Sheikh Abdulqadir[9] started his anti-caliphate propaganda after being exiled in 1882. He disseminated anti-Hamidian views by sending out letters to the Kurdish region from Mecca.[10] In 1894 in Medina, Abdulqadir held a meeting with a number of other well-known Kurdish dissidents, including Mela Selim Efendi, well known for his revolt in 1914 in Bitlis.[11] This group of Kurds renewed their pledge to struggle against the Ottoman Empire as a means of championing their desire for an independent Kurdistan.[12] Notably, considering the precariousness of the Kurdish situation in a post–WWI environment, Abdulqadir formulated Kurdish political demands in

the form of a request for autonomy rather than independence, usually in public. In secret, however, he and his nephew Seyyed Taha were known for their unyielding efforts to garner British support for the creation of an independent Kurdish state.[13] British records reveal that "in Constantinople 'Abdul Qadir of Shamdinan was ready to assume…the hypothetical post of ruler of a united Kurdistan."[14] So, in his secret meetings with Western delegates, Abdulqadir, along with Nursi and others, seems to have been more comfortable expressing the real Kurdish desire.[15] Abdulqadir also seemed to have been hopeful that if the Kurds were able to make their case, the League of Nations might recognize their right to an independent state.[16]

State records show that the 1880 Revolt had a significant effect on the mutual perceptions of the Ottoman state and the Kurds. Therefore, for almost a decade after the revolt, a major rift between the state and the Kurds continued to exist. To the extent that the Ottoman state was forced to come up with a new policy to bridge this gulf,[17] the state had to make use of Arabic.[18] Arabic was the most commonly taught language in Kurdish *medreses* and the state tried to use Arabic to propagate its policies in Kurdistan. The state's creation of *Aşiret Mektebi* (tribal schools),[19] with its "civilizing" objectives, and Hamidiya Cavalry[20] were components of new assimilatory policies in Kurdistan. It was in the same context that Abdülhamid II himself had remarked that "We can now tolerate within our borders those who share our religion and [therefore] are one of us. We need to *strengthen the Turkish element in Anatolia* and *give priority to making the Kurds part of us.*"[21] It is important to note that "*strengthen*[*ing*] *the Turkish element in Anatolia*," in the guise of religion, was to take place at the expense of assimilating the Kurds or making them "*part of us* [the Turks]." However, the state's attempt to "win over the Kurds' hearts" could not bring an end to anti-Hamidian state activities.

Antistate *Sunni* Kurdish politics were expressed in various forms, and prominent Kurdish religious figures and families were under constant surveillance by the Hamidian regime. The activist of the Barzani[22] and Berzenji sheikh[23] provide one example. In state records, those Sheikhs' activities are usually referred to as *ifsad* (dissemination of vice) and *şekavet* (brigandry).

In 1908, Sheikh Abdussalam Barzani demanded the religio-political autonomy of Kurdistan. This autonomy would have made Kurdish an official language, required that taxes levied in Kurdistan be spent locally, and that Kurdish affairs be administered by the Kurds themselves in accor-

dance with the *Shafi'i* school[24] of jurisprudence.[25] The Barzan Sheikh's discontent with Ottoman policy did not end until he was executed by the CUP government in 1914.[26] There were various other Kurdish activities, which, despite their religious leadership, remained strictly concerned with the Kurdish political fate. The 1914 uprising in Bitlis, under the leadership of the above-mentioned Mela Selim, similarly exemplified the continuity of such Kurdish ethno-religious politics.[27] Suat Parlar is right to describe *tekke* or *tekiye* (the Sufi lodge) as major "centers for the promulgation of Kurdish nationalism."[28]

With the turn of the century, the influence of nationalism on Islamic religious thought became clearer in the Muslim world in general. Even Muslim thinkers such as Sa'id Halim Pasha, the Ottoman Grand Vizier, who held that Islamic religious beliefs were universal by their nature, had become keenly aware of the impact of national and local culture on religious interpretation. Therefore, in essence, the views of such figures also signified the influence of modern nationalist discourse on Islamic interpretations. The Grand Vizier spoke to this reality when he remarked that "just as the universal character of scientific truths engenders varieties of scientific national cultures which in their totality represent human knowledge, much in the same way the universal character of Islamic verities creates varieties of national, moral and social ideals."[29] This assertion attests to the extent to which Muslim societies were grappling with the impact of nationalist ideas by the twentieth century.

Muslim activists, scholars, and politicians from various ethnic backgrounds were shaping various interpretations of Islam into the straitjackets of their own nationalistic agendas. Their assertions usually speak to the prevalent fusion of nationalist ideas with their conceptualization of religion. As such, the assumed impurity of the other's religious comprehension was tied to the ethnic character or history of the other. For instance, as noted in the previous chapters, 'Abduh was not reticent to state that Islam [originally] was a religion of the Arabs.[30]

Rashid Rida, another prominent Islamic revivalist, "held that the Arabs had better mental faculties and possessed superior scientific minds than the Turks."[31] Rida claimed that unlike Arab conquest, which brought prosperity, the Turks brought catastrophe by conquering lands. He stressed that "the greatest glory in the Muslim conquests goes to the Arabs, and that religion grew, and became great through them; their foundation is the strongest, their light is the brightest, and they are indeed the best *umma* brought forth to the world."[32] However, non-Arab think-

ers such as Gökalp believed the reverse was true. He even argued that "after their conversion to Islam, notwithstanding their strong religious faith and deep sincerity, the Turks [always] remained free from bigotry and fanaticism."[33]

What is interesting about the aforementioned Sa'id Halim Pasha's remark is the insinuation that the local character of religious interpretation, replete with elements specific to the very context of a given interpretation, simultaneously could be one form among many of Islamic universal varieties. Here, Said Pasha does not stress the universal character of the religion alone. He also acknowledges the universality of more than a single religious interpretation and by the same token the multiplicity of truths. Setting aside the paradoxical nature of his statement, Said Pasha appears to inadvertently admit that, like other forms of human knowledge, religious interpretation, or *ijtihad*, is also equally local and impure.[34] In reality, Abdülhamid II's reinvigoration of the caliphate should also be seen within the same context, in which the idea of a central state affects interpretation of Islam. Again, Islam becomes subservient to the interests of the state. Therefore, it increasingly comes to be seen as a phenomenon that has to be contained within the boundaries of state power and national interest. The culmination of this approach is very much visible in the Republican era.

Nursi was a product of the late Ottoman period. Yet, he was, in a sense, an unusual and unique personality, but in combining a firm commitment to Islam[35] with a deep concern for the Kurdish people, he reflected an attitude that was not uncommon among Kurdish mullahs and religious leaders.[36] Nursi frequently boasted about Kurdish religious sincerity, and related his own personal honesty and bravery to his Kurdish upbringing. Once, frustrated at his trial at his court martial, Nursi addressed the court by saying "without being prideful, we are Kurds; we could be deceived but we do not deceive and we do not lie for an [ephemeral] life."[37] In another occasion, he writes: "as someone who has grown up in the mountains of Kurdistan, before visiting the capital of the *Khilafa*, Istanbul, I imagined it to be filled with beauty. Now, as I see it, Istanbul is nothing other than a savage man with a fearful and vicious heart, disguised in a civilized cloak."[38] Despite his occasional harsh criticism of Kurdish culture, he usually remained boastful about the Kurds. To challenge and mock widespread negative views about Kurds, he frequently referred to himself as a "primitive, *bedevi*, Kurd" and was not averse to remarking that "the pro-constitutionalist nature (*taba-i meşurtiyetperveraneleri*) of

the Kurd laid the foundation of their [religious] studies in the form of debating [subject matters]."[39] When Nursi became disillusioned with the post-Hamidian Turkish state in 1909, he declared that he "[preferred] the high mountains of Kurdistan, the abode of absolute freedom"[40] over civilization in Istanbul.

Nursi had been involved in politics prior to his travels to Istanbul in 1907. By then, he was already acquainted with the brutality of the Hamidian rule and with the ideal of constitutionalism.[41] However, his first encounter with the Palace was in the context of Kurdish politics. In 1907, he criticized the state's education policy and offered a reform project that would have recognized Kurdish as one of the languages of instruction in the Kurdish Ottoman provinces. The Palace reacted to Nursi's proposal by sending him to a mental hospital. Abdülhamid's harsh reaction to Nursi's project is said to be due to the Sultan's belief that it would have paved the way for the eventual dismemberment of Kurdistan.[42]

Considering the enormous significance of language and its connection with the ideas of nationalism in the Ottoman political context, the importance of Nursi's attempt must not be overlooked. This is especially the case since Nursi revered those who devoted themselves to the improvement of the Kurdish language. He opined that the lack of Kurdish literacy had resulted in the exploitation of the Kurds by those who "were once inferior"[43] to the Kurds in terms of their sociopolitical status.[44] To explain the value of the Kurdish language, Nursi went as far as equating one's degree of self-worth to *one's devotion to one's mother tongue*. During his 1909–1911 trips in Kurdistan, he reproached the Kurds for their inattentiveness to the development of Kurdish, declaring that

> what is called the mother tongue (*lisan-ı maderzad denilen*) *is the mirror of the dissemination of national sentiment*, *the water for livelihood*; *and the tree grown out of the literary toil*, the measurement of knowledge, and the criterion of [the collective level of] self-worth and perfection.... I make my lamentation known to you for letting [our] language, which is a sign of civilization become dry, deficient, and dysfunctional.[45] (Emphasis added)

It was also in this context that Nursi expressed his admiration for Halil Hayalî, the most renowned northern Kurdish poet at the time.[46] Nursi referred to the poet as *an exemplary patriot* and remarked, "permit me to acquaint you with a model of patriotism,[47] Motkili Halil Hayalî Efendi, who in his linguistic efforts, as in all other patriotic fields, has obtained a pioneering role."[48]

In some Turkish nationalist historiographical works,[49] Said Nursi's efforts for the inclusion of the Kurdish language in the educational system and the Sultan's reaction to Nursi's ethnically based demand have been completely obscured. For instance, M. Hakan Yavuz fabricates an entirely different story when he recounts: "In an effort to bring the natural sciences together with Islamic sciences, Nursi visited Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1907 to seek his support for a university in Van. However, the sultan *rejected his proposal to reconcile scientific reasoning with Islam*."[50]

Nursi's reading of history is one of the most important instances that show the influence of ethno-nationalism on his religious thought. His historiographical take reveals both his ethnic pride and what he believed to be the cause of "the decline of the Muslims." It is clear that he viewed Ottoman caliphal history as the history of tyrannical rules (*istibdad*), while he tacitly honored past Kurdish disobedience to those rules.[51] Once, addressing Kurdish porters in Istanbul, Nursi declared that the Kurds must let these 600 years of the Turkish obedience to tyrannical rule be the history of their bygone generations.[52] The Kurds should demonstrate their own nobility (*asaletimiz*) and only use their wisdom and knowledge.[53]

Another instance of such an impact of ethno-nationalism can be seen in Nursi's difference with Arab revivalists over the lineage of the caliph and the caliphate itself. To Nursi, it is the nature of the state rather than its labels that determines its legitimacy. It is this approach to governance in Islam that constitutes one of the points of his disjunction with ethnically Arab revivalists such as 'Abduh and Rida. Unlike 'Abduh and his disciple, Nursi did not believe in the exclusive right of Arabs to *Khilafa*, notwithstanding that Arab revivalists influenced some important aspects[54] of Nursi's religious thought.[55] As a pro-constitutionalist religious scholar, Nursi claimed that a true *shar'i* state is a constitutionalist one and therefore it is incumbent upon all to obey such a state.[56] *Istibdad* (tyranny), a word that was used synonymously with Hamidian rule, was defined by Nursi as: "an arbitrary, a whimsical rule." *Istibdad*, argued Nursi, "turns human beings into the least dignified creatures; it is this that has poisoned the Muslim world and pushed them into internal feuds and misery.".[57]

Nursi goes so far as to call the entirety of post-*Rashidun* Muslim history (661 CE onward) the history of tyrannical rules. He attributes the emergence of a number of theo-philosophical schools to the existence of tyranny. Himself being an '*Asha'ari*, Nursi regarded Jabries and Mu'tazilies in the Abbasid era as false schools of religious thought that were the direct outgrowth of the tyrannical rule of their time. For him, tyranny could be

either political or scholastic, but both were lethal and could do the utmost harm to "true religiosity.".[58]

As indicated above, in Nursi's thought, ethnic lineage as a qualification for the caliph was a non-issue. In Nursi's view, only one principal differentiates a caliph from a king: whether or not he follows the Prophetic path (a similar idea was defended by Ibn Taymiyyah, 1263–1328 CE). If a king follows the tradition of Muhammad, he "is a caliph, a just ruler; his rule is constitutional and founded on *shar'i* precepts."[59] Despite his conflicting loyalties, unlike Arab revivalists, Nursi never concerned himself with the ethnicity or the lineage of the caliph. This indicates how one's religious views could be affected by one's sociopolitical conditions and cultural background. Certainly, Nursi was well aware of claims that regarded Quraishi or Arab lineage as a condition for the caliphate. He almost always praised Arabs "as a noble nation,"[60] also claiming that "the Kurds are racially related to the Arabs."[61] However, in Nursi's thinking Arab-ness never constituted a condition for the caliphate.

In a similar vein, Nursi argued that tyranny had various manifestations. Besides the political and scholastic type, there was communal tyranny.[62] However, he saw *meşrutiyet*, constitutionalism, as the panacea to all ills. Constitutionalism was thus not merely a political system, but a form of culture that could provide grounds for various ideas to be treated based on their inherent values and merits. If the Kurds wanted to compete with their Other, then they had to first bury the existing "communal tyranny" and adopt the culture of constitutionalism. The Kurds must "repent," says Nursi. They needed redemption, and to collectively rush "toward doors of repentance," which would be opened to them by adopting the culture of constitutionalism.[63] We are told that "every nation has a spiritual pool that constitutes and protects its national audacity, honor, and power."[64] These components of national consciousness "work like a string for [threaded] beads…. When the idea of nationhood is shattered…the nation loses its reality."[65] The Kurds needed to know, Nursi opined, that some of the Kurdish religious and community leaders were tyrannical. In fact, their tyranny was the supreme impediment to Kurdish nationhood.[66]

This classification of tyranny and strong emphasis on its degenerative impact on all aspects of life illustrates the deep influence of al-Kawakibi's celebrated work, *Tabāyi' al-Istibdād*.[67] (Al-Kawakibi's work had widespread impact on religious scholars, as is evident in the work of prominent *Shi'i* scholar, Na'ini in Iran during the constitutional era, 1906–1909.)[68] As shown above, Nursi saw the impact of "communal tyranny" as being

extremely destructive, and the principal impediment to Kurdish nationhood. He saw "holes" in Kurdish national consciousness. In his 1911 piece, *Münazarat* (debates), Nursi tried to respond to the question of why the Kurds, despite their "extraordinary bravery, zeal, and exceptional personalities," were lagging behind their neighboring nations whose populations and power were said to be no match to that of the Kurds.[69] Once again, Nursi pointed to tyranny as the *prima causa* for the deficiencies of Kurdish politics.[70]

In Nursi's Kawakibi-like approach to tyranny, every human relation is based either on tyranny or justice. However, he maintains that every beauty in any just human relation originates from religion, from the teachings of prophets—who, in Nursi's words, were masters of morality for all of humanity. Therefore, there is nothing beautiful and humane in *medeniyet*, modern civilization, that cannot be found in Islam.[71] In Nursi's political thought, no tyrannical rule could qualify as the caliphate, since he considered tyranny to be in direct opposition to Muhammad's path "that was founded on justice."[72] Thus, Nursi categorically denied Abdülhamid's rule any religious legitimacy. He stated that "the connection of the horrible and unjust tyranny with *shari'a* was no more than an illusion [created by the tyrant] to protect himself from internal and external threats."[73]

Even after WWI, Nursi referred to the demise of the Hamidian regime as the beginning of freedom (*bidayet-i hurriyet*). However, by this time, as someone who had witnessed the horrors of the modernist CUP's rule and the devastation of WWI,[74] Nursi was no longer as optimistic about *medeniyet*. He thought its destructive aspect to be almost equivalent to its benefits.[75] Nowadays, one can only think of the miseries and dilemmas of modern citizens as illustrated in Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*: *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,[76] when one senses Nursi's fears and concerns about how the modern state functions. Nursi asserted that the modern state could easily "destroy Islam or Islamic brotherhood in its entirety" in the name of "protecting Islam or the caliphate." Indeed, if a person, in an attempt to protest the state, takes refuge inside "a building as sacred and of as incalculable worth as the Ayah Sophia, this *medeniyet* can issue a *fatwa* for its destruction."[77]

Nursi's views of modern civilization could shed light on the complex relationship between people like him and the rising nation-state. On the one hand, he saw the modern state as the carrier of modern civilization that offered an extraordinary advancement in science, medicine, and technology. On the other hand, the modern state symbolized an unprec-

edented capacity for destruction and violence. At the same, for non-Turkish Muslims like Nursi, the Ottoman state represented the last remaining fortress against the full colonial takeover of the Muslim world. Like many Arabs, Kurds, and other Muslims, Nursi experienced a great dilemma. He had no problem with what he termed as *musbet miliyetcilik* (positive nationalism)[78]—a type of nationalism that refrained from *tenakür* (denying other nations' existence and rights).[79] This meant recognizing the legitimacy of the disintegration of the Ottoman state. Nevertheless, Nursi was terrified by the prospect of the disappearance of the Ottoman state, the last Muslim sanctuary against Europe. Such ambivalences and "double loyalties" reflected his concerns about the fate of his own ethnic group in the face of growing Turkish nationalism. Nursi experienced sociopolitical pressures thusly, bearing witness to ever-increasing colonial pressure upon the Muslim world, as well as the Kurdish fear of a possible Armenian return in the wake of the Turkish–Kurdish genocidal campaign against them.

Nursi's works thus reveal a complex stance on the Ottoman Caliphate that is generally overlooked by scholarship on the subject. In the post–WWI era, there was increasing pressure on Ottoman/Turkish officials to do away with any institution with an international influence. Chief among such institutions were the caliphate and *Sheikh-al-Islam*. As early as 1920, Nursi appears to have been concerned about the weakening or possible abolishment of those institutions. He believed that in their current form, those institutions had caved in to both domestic and foreign pressures and had abandoned many Islamic precepts and requirements. Nursi proposes reforming the office of *Sheikh-al-Islam*.[80] His attempts to reform such institutions indicate that, like many of his fellow Kurds, Nursi was terrified by the likelihood of the emergence of an ardent Turkish nationalist state. As a last resort, some influential Kurdish figures strove for a revival of a type of Ottomanist narrative. According to Mesut Yeğen, at the time, the survival of the caliphate as a major symbol of Ottomanism could mean "maintaining the 'status quo' which ensured that Kurds enjoy an autonomous existence."[81]

Nursi's proposal aimed at transforming the institution of *Sheikh-al-Islam* from one run by a person, the *Sheikh al-Islam*, into a type of religious legislative body with the potential for international respect and a larger following in the Muslim world. As such, this new institution would not succumb to foreign or domestic pressure when making critical decisions or issuing *fatwas*.[82] In 1921, Nursi defended the vitality of the caliphate, which he

declared to be inseparable from the Sultanate. Therefore, he argued that "our *Padişah*, as a King, oversees (*nazaret*) thirty million people [within Turkey] and, as a caliph symbolizes the sacred bond among three hundred million [Muslims]."[83] Once again, this reveals that Nursi had no problem with the ever-expanding independent Muslim state—what he characterized as the "attainment of their own rightful sovereignty."[84] Of course, Muslims' attainment of national sovereignty was a just pursuit as long as there was some level of unity among them against European colonialism; this unity was symbolized by their reverence for the institution of caliphate.[85]

It must be noted that there was another significant aspect to Nursi's proposal, which was rooted in his firm belief in constitutionalism. Nursi considered the caliphal role to be mostly ceremonial in a constitutional state. This aspect of his thought becomes particularly evident in his piece, *Munzarat*, published in 1911. It was a constitutional caliphate, after all, which resembled a constitutional monarchy. Nursi declared that "from now on, *Khilafa* will necessarily be represented by the '*ulema* (*meşheti Islamiye*)…. Since the ruler [in a constitutionalist system] *is the public opinion*, not one person."[86] Certainly, this was one of the issues that marked Nursi as an original thinker. This put him on a fussy and complicated borderline between "modernity" and "tradition" that afforded him the ability to fundamentally rethink Islamic governance. The credit of such rethinking, however, should in part be given to Hamidian tyranny as it strengthened and produced, at the very least, three antithetical models to its own version of caliphate: (a) an opposing nationalist model such as the one advocated by the exclusive right of Arabs to the caliphate; (b) a "secular" model à la CUP and later Republicans in which the parliament was seen as the real political authority; and (c) Nursi's model in which the office of *Sheikh al-Islam* was perceived to function as a clerical assembly, most likely paralleled by a more conventional form of *meclis*, parliament. That clerical assembly was supposed to consist of forty to fifty clerics from all the *Sunni* schools of jurisprudence and was to function as a national assembly for the entire Muslim world.[87]

One point of contention with regard to the pre-exile life of Nursi is whether or not he supported the 1925 Kurdish Revolt led by Sheikh Sa'id of Piran. Turkish nationalists, be they secular or Islamist, hold that Nursi would have not supported a nationalist/separatist revolt such as that of Sheikh Sa'id. They adamantly reject such a possibility because, we are told, Nursi "always condemned nationalism in his publications and

speeches."[88] Turkish Nurcus, mainly the follower of the renowned Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen, go even farther and claim that "throughout his life, [Nursi] stood against any kind of Kurdist (*Kürtçülük*) activities."[89] They note that Nursi not only opposed Sheikh Sa'id Revolt and rejected his invitation to join that revolt but also convinced many Kurds not to fight against the Turkish army.[90] This account, along with the people and the places that are cited in it, has already been debunked, rendering it incoherent and sloppy.[91] Rigorously scrutinized by Turkish academics Cemalettin Canlı and Yusuf Kenan Beysülen, the story was found to have significant inconsistencies. The source of the account is himself Nurcu, who simultaneously offered two different versions of the same story.[92]

Nursi was certainly a moderate nationalist and, as indicated above, concentrated heavily on Kurdishness, Kurdish national consciousness, and Kurdish cultural activities in his pre-exile works. Even Özoğlu who characterizes the 1925 Kurdish Revolt as a Kemalist state-manufactured event[93] admits that Nursi's

> Turkish followers try to downplay his Kurdish identity, [but] Said Nursi, particularly in his early career, paid careful attention to his Kurdishness.... Prior to his membership in the SAK [Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan], Said Nursi's articles were printed in *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi*, published by the *Kürt Teavün ve Teraki Cemiyeti* (Society for Kurdish Mutual Aid and Progress), founded in 1908. According to Tarik Zafer Tunaya, a Turkish historian, Said Nursi was a member of the *Kürt Neşri Maarif Cemiyeti* (Society for the Spread of Kurdish Education) founded in 1919 by the members of the SAK.[94]

Furthermore, as noted earlier, Nursi was a member of the Kurdish delegate that met with American and French representatives in Istanbul in 1919. The delegate's mission was to discuss Kurdish aspirations for an independent Kurdistan with those foreign officials, notwithstanding the Ottoman state's warnings against such activities.[95] Interestingly enough, it was Nursi who told the American representative that in order for Kurdistan to become a viable state, it would have to be connected to a seacoast. The American representative's response was that Nursi's suggestions would violate Wilson's points according to which an independent Armenistan should have been created.[96] The point is that Nursi was not only for an independent Kurdistan but also believed in its geographical expansion such that it could have access to international waters.[97]

Nursi's support for an independent Kurdish state did not mean that he was ready to pursue such a goal at any cost. Most likely, Nursi would have shied away from violence and an internal Muslim fight to achieve the creation of an independent state. For Nursi, fighting other Muslims for one's nationhood could be equivalent to *menfi milliyetçilik* (negative nationalism) and constituted denial of the other (*tenâkür*).[98] This pacifist stance seems to coincide with the general spiritual conditions in his inward journey.[99] According to Sheikh Sa'id grandson, A.M. Firat, by 1925, Nursi "had already given up [the fight] and accepted his defeat."[100] Firat's assessment seems to reflect the disappointment of the Revolt's leaders, including Mela Abdulmacid, Nursi's own brother.[101] Unlike Nursi, they believed in an armed struggle against the Kemalist state.[102] However, there is evidence revealing that Nursi remained sympathetic and emotionally attached to the participants in the Revolts and their relatives many years later. Over ten years after his exile, when he encountered the sons of Cebranli Halit Bey, the organizational leader of the Revolt, for the first time, Nursi hugged them and lost control of his emotions, "[bursting] into tears and [appearing] extremely saddened."[103] In a 1954 conversion with A.M. Firat, Nursi states that "I will take – I have taken the revenge of my esteemed – my most respected brother, Sheikh Sa'id Efendi."[104] The same Sheikh Sa'id had claimed that Turkish Islam and caliphate represented "400 years of misusing Islam to enslave the Kurd."[105] Furthermore, Nursi had familial and friendship ties with the leaders of Azadi (Society for Kurdish Independence) as well as the Revolt's leaders. Not only did Nursi's own brother have a leading role in Azadi, he was also in close contact with other leaders, most notably Colonel Cebranli Halit Bey, until September 1924.[106] All this indicates that Nursi did not question the legitimacy of the Revolt's goal, but the method used in pursuing it.

A close reading of Nursi's pre-exile writings reveals that Nursi not only had doubts about Kurdish unity but was also unsure of a widespread Kurdish national consciousness. Notwithstanding his deep concern for the fate of the Kurds, Nursi seemed to believe that, unlike the Armenians, the Kurds' national consciousness had yet to reach the level required for forming a nation. As indicated earlier, he claimed that "Kurdish national consciousness looks like [a bunch of] beads [threaded] with a shredded string."[107] He saw widespread Kurdish illiteracy and internal discord as major impediments to the growth of national consciousness. He believed the real formation of national consciousness came about when an individual member of a nation became the embodiment of its collectivity.[108]

In 1908, Nursi made his views clear in a Kurdish address to his people: "O! Kurdish people (*ey*! *geli kurdan*), there is power in solidarity, life in unity, blissfulness in brotherhood, and a healthy collective life in statehood."[109] Three jewels needed their protection: Islam, humanity, and nationality.[110] The Kurds still suffered at the hands of their greatest "*enemies*: *ignorance*, *poverty and discord*."[111] Kurds could learn from Armenian nationalism; Armenians could "lead us toward awakening and progress; [so] we extend our hands of friendship toward them with the utmost pleasure."[112] It should be noted, however, Nursi was simultaneously very much ambivalent about the modern state in any of its forms.

Nursi became increasingly horrified by the reckless nature of the modern state and its capability to unleash overwhelming degrees of violence.[113] It is possible to say that he thought that in the event of a war with the state, the Kurds might not fare any better than their Armenian neighbors. To add to this frightening picture, the Kurds still lived in complete despair and anxiety at the prospect of an Armenian return with European help, and a possible British retribution for their involvement in the 1915 Armenian genocide alongside the Turkish state. British documents shed light on this enormous fear; according to British records, the "Kurds who [were] in an overwhelming majority in these districts, took alarm. And the strong nationalist sentiment, which already existed among them enhanced by the fear of Western powers, contemplated putting them under the despised Armenians."[114]

Considering this complex political situation, it is most likely that Nursi preferred to wait and see instead of taking an active role in Sheikh Sa'id's Revolt.[115] Most of what is known about Nursi's connection with and remarks about the 1925 Revolt is unreliable.[116] It is an undeniable fact that Nursi was closely associated with many of the Revolt's leaders and had an organic bond with them. Indeed, he was a founding member of the Society for Kurdish Mutual Aid and Progress.[117] He founded this organization with Sheikh Abdulqadir and the members of the Bedirxan family and others who later, unlike the secular and religious Turkish groups, all supported Sheikh Sa'id.[118] Also, Nursi was well respected among both the Kurdish '*ulama* and common people. Nursi's respect and fame among the Kurds was so great that, as early as 1909, he believed a telegram from him to Kurdish tribes would have sufficed to change their attitudes toward Constitutionalism.[119] His influence on Kurds, particularly in the Van region, was indispensable. Moreover, as shown above, in his universalistic religio-political views on issues such as the caliphate and *Sheikh al-Islamate*,

Nursi did not ignore the seriousness and the reality of the nation-state.[120] Also, there is no evidence that the Kurdish '*ulama* challenged Nursi, except on his optimism about Constitutionalism and his endorsement of greater individual liberties. (Apparently, Mela Selim had criticized him for holding such views, and Nursi appears to have acknowledged the validity of Mela Selim's criticism in later life.)[121]

In summation, Nursi's pre-exile works represent a turbulent period for both Kurdish and Muslim history in general. Nursi hoped to change the attitudes of the overlords toward the Kurds through the reforms he proposed. He also strove to change the Kurds through the introduction of a new educational system. His tragic life story started with the hope of opening a university in Kurdistan and ended with the same hope. He hoped that new schools would change the fate of the Kurds, whom he called *benim cinsimdan*, of *my own kind*.[122] He ended up in a mental hospital for pursuing such a goal. He had high hopes that the 1908 Constitutional Revolution would result in many good things, highest among which was Kurdish education. Thus, he declared that "in a short time schools will be built in places where there ha[d] never been any, and the old schools will be replaced by modern ones in [every region of Kurdistan]."[123] After his disillusionment with politics, Nursi went back to Van and resumed teaching his people until he was exiled in 1925. In the 1950s, after decades of life in exile, Nursi hoped that his calls for changes to Turkish politics could mean something. Thus, he once again repeated his request for opening a university in Kurdistan. Nonetheless, in the autumn of his life, and now for the last time, Nursi was disappointed with the enduring hostility to his request to educate his own people. He saw this as his personal mission, since the Tyrant, that is, Abdülhamid II, had kept them under *tabakat-i gaflet* (multiple layers of ignorance).[124] Özdalga summarizes Nursi's lifelong effort for establishing a Kurdish university as follows:

> In 1907 he went to Istanbul in order to convince Sultan Abdülhamid to support his project, but the Young Turks' revolution of 1908 interrupted his efforts. He persisted in his campaign even after Mustafa Kemal had come to power, but his goal was impossible under the new secularist and nationalist regime. As late as 1951, after the Democratic Party had come to power, Nursi once more brought up the idea of establishing a university in eastern Turkey, but was again blankly refused.[125]

It was also in this turbulent time that the entire Muslim world dealt with the reality of the emerging nation-state and the introduction of constitu-

tionalism in the face of colonialism. Particularly for a Kurdish leader such as Nursi, these ideas caused enormously contradictory political stances, ambivalence, and dilemmas. Despite his anti-colonial and pro-Muslim unity politics, Nursi remained a believer in what he called *positive nationalism*. It must also be noted that despite his ambivalence in pre-exile writings, Nursi always remained very much attentive to the fate of Kurds as a distinct ethnicity.[126] It is true that Nursi's concerns and anxieties were not limited to the fate of the Kurds. Nursi's early writings, however, shed light on the overall context of Kurdish religious politics, and, by the same token, on the background of the Kurdish Revolt in 1925.

Notes

1. In 1908, Nursi sent telegrams to the Ottoman Kurdish tribes to inform them about the compatibility of constitutionalism with *Shari'a* (I. D. p, 158). Also, from 1909 to 1911, Nursi spent two years in Kurdistan and encouraged the Kurds there to support a constitutionalist system. At the end of his trip, Nursi was apparently satisfied with his achievement, proudly uttering: "O! The patriots, you should know that now the Kurds also are either constitutionalists or becoming increasingly receptive to the constitutionalist ideas (*fikran*)." Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 81.
2. Cf. Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*: *Ottomanism*, *Arabism*, *and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire*, *1908–1918*; Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey.*
3. Mardin, Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, 90.
4. It is important to note that the way Nursi conceptualizes (collective) rights in and of itself is an indication of how he was influenced by modern nationalist thoughts.
5. Erik Zürcher believes that there existed a continued connection between Turkish nationalism and Islam up to the 1980s. See Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State."
6. Cf. Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*: *Mesnewi Şex Ubeydullah Nehri*, 106–40.
7. Cf. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA): Dosya No: 5; Gömlek No: 99/2; Fon Kodu: Y.PRK.ASK. 10/21/1880).
8. Abdulqadir was well known and respected in all regions of Kurdistan. The following poem by a poet from Saujbolaq (now Mahabad) illustrates this reality as the poet describes Sheikh Abdulqadir as someone "from [Kurdish] notability and yet so concerned about the welfare of the helpless Kurds. He is the sea of '*irfan* (gnosis) and the very manifestation of altruism." *Jîn.* (No: 7; 1918).

9. After WWI, Abdulqadir, Nursi, and a few other like-minded figures cofounded a Kurdish political organization.
10. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 14; Gömlek No: 50; Fon Kodu: Y.PRK.ASK. Tarih: 17/Za/1299 (Hicrî) [30.09.1882]; BOA: Dosya No: 1946; Gömlek No: 91; Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 13/L /1309 (Hicrî) [10.05.1892]; Also, BOA: Dosya No: 1971 Gömlek No: 47 Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 18/Z /1309 (Hicrî) [13.07.1892].
11. Isamil Hekki Shaweys, "Nawdarani Kurd: Mela Selim Efendi/Kurdish notables Mela Selim Efendi," in *Roji Nuwê* (1960/2011).
12. Ibid.
13. Rıza Zelyut, *Dersim İsyanları Ve Seit Rıza Gerçeği/the Rebellions of Dersim and the Real Case of Seyyed Riza* (Ankara: Kripto Kitaplar, 2010), 59.
14. House of Commons Parliamentary papers online., "Mesopotamia (Review of the Civil Administration). Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia," ([Cmd. 1061]1920), 70.
15. Kadri Cemil Paşa (Zinar Silopi), *Doza Kurdistan* (*Kürdistan Davas*): *Kürt Milletinin 60 Yıllık Esaretten Kurtuluş Savaşı Hatıraları/the Kurdish Question* (Ankara: Özge yayınları, 1991), 57.
16. Ehmed Teqi and Celal Teqi, *Xebati Geli Kurd Le Yadaştekani Ehmedi Teqi Da/the Kurdish Struggle in Ahmad Taqi's Memoir* (Stockholm: Sara Bokförlag, 1988), 13–15.
17. (*Kürdistan' da halk ile hükümet arasındaki ihtilafin giderilmesi için*).
18. BOA::Dosya No: 1428 Gömlek No: 43 Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 09/L /1304 (Hicrî) [01.07.1887]; BOA: Dosya No: 1432 Gömlek No: 109 Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 25/L /1304 (Hicrî) [17.07.1887]; Also, BOA: Dosya No: 1453 Gömlek No: 73 Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 20/M /1305 (Hicrî) Tarih: 20/M /1305 (Hicrî) [08.10.1887].
19. Cf. Akpınar, *Aşiret,Mektep*, *Devlet*: *Osmanlı Devletinde Aşiret Mektebi*.
20. For more on Hamidiye Calvary, see: Klein, *The Margins of Empire*: *Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*.
21. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey*: *The Question of Assimilation*, 47.(Emphasis added)
22. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1/–2; Gömlek No: 73; Fon Kodu: DH.MUİ. Tarih: 06/N /1327 (Hicrî) [21.09.1909].;

    BOA: Dosya No: 1/–6; Gömlek No: 14; Fon Kodu: DH.MUİ. Tarih: 02/Z /1327 (Hicrî)[12.12.1909].

23. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 426; Gömlek No: 65; Fon Kodu: DH.MKT. Tarih: 22/Ra/1313 (Hicrî) [12.09.1895]. This document, for instance, indicates the state officials accuse Berzenji Sheikh for antistate activities in the last decade of the nineteenth century. (*Süleymaniye' de bulunan sadat-ı berzenciyenin harekat-ı şekavetkaraneleri nedeniyle emniyet-i umumiyyenin*

münselib olduğundan ve rüesalarının Kürdistan-ı İrani hakimine gizli nameler irsaliyle kendilerine hudud üzerinde bir mahallin tahsisi taleplerine dair, gönderilen tezkere üzerine gerekli tedbirin alınarak, tahkikat icrası gereğinin Musul Vilayeti'ne bildirildiği).

24. The great majority of *Sunni* Kurds are the followers of the Shafi'i School and the Turks follow the Hanafi School of Islamic law.
25. Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925*, 16–17. Also, Masud Barzani, *Al-Barzani Wa-Al-Hakah Al-Taharruriyah Al-Kurdiyah/Barzani and the Kuridish Libaration Movement*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Bayrut: Kawa li al-thaqafa al-Kurdiyeh, 1997), 25–27.
26. *Al-Barzani Wa-Al-Hakah Al-Taharruriyah Al-Kurdiyah/Barzani and the Kuridish Liberation Movement*, 1, 27.
27. For details, see: Shaweys, "Nawdarani Kurd: Mela Selim Efendi/Kurdish notables Mela Selim Efendi." Also, Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak/Thirteen Interesting Pages from Kurdish People's History*, 114–40. Some high-profile Kurdish activists such as Abdu al-Raziq Bedirxan from the North and Simko from the East/Iran participated in Mela Selim's Revolt. Based on Turkish state documents, while on the gallows, Mela Selim shouted at the Turkish officials who had gathered for his execution and said: "You Turks go ahead and execute me. Are you not ashamed for taking over our country while you have lost so much of your own land to others? …what would be wrong if [my hometown] Bitlis stayed in our own hands…" *Turkish Grand National Assembly's Closed Debates*, quoted in Suat Parlar, *Türkler Ve Kürtler: Ortadoğu'da İktidar Ve İsyan Gelenekleri*, (Istanbil: Bagdat Yayınları, 2005), 555–56.
28. *Türkler Ve Kürtler: Ortadoğu'da İktidar Ve İsyan Gelenekleri*, 554.
29. Quoted in: Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.
30. 'Abduh, *Al-Islam Wa Al-Nasraniyye/Islam and Christianity* 123.
31. Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate " 225.
32. Quoted in ibid., 257.
33. Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*.
34. Such views seem to have inspired well-known Muslim scholars such as Abdolkarim Soroush in Iran. See Abdolkarim Soroush, *Qabz va Bast-e Teoric Shari'at, Ya Nazariyeh-ye Takāmol-e Ma'refat-e Dini/the Theory of Evolution of Religious Knowledge or- Text in Context*, 6 ed. (Tehran: Muasesay-e Farhangiy-e Sirat, 1998).
35. Serif Mardin sheds light on the possible impact of Afghani and 'Abduh as well as Sufism in shaping Nursi's religious thoughts. See Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 141.

36. Van Bruinessen explains this complex and ambivalent relationship between religion and nationalism in Kurdistan when he states that "[m]any leading nationalist were irreligious or at least dissatisfied with the strong hold of mullahs and sheikhs on the people. It has on the other hand, *usually been the orthodox Muslims who formed the backbone of the Kurdish movement*." Bruinessen, *Mulla, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society: Collected Articles*, 14.
37. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 169.
38. Ibid., 20.
39. Ibid., 81.
40. Ibid., 177.
41. Şükran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 20–3. Also, Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 75–80.
42. *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 19; Ahmet Turran, "Said Nursi Ve Nurculuk," http://dergi.samsunilahiyat.com/Makaleler/1525073178_199810020211.pdf.
43. *Ekradın madündunda bulunanlar.*
44. *Şark ve Kürdistan Gazetesi*. (No. 1; Dec. 2, 1908). Also,Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 507.
45. Ibid., 191.
46. Before his conversion to Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp was a close friend of Hayalî. Together, they wrote a Kurdish dictionary. (Zinar Silopi), *Doza Kurdistan* (*Kürdistan Davas*): *Kürt Milletinin 60 Yıllık Esaretten Kurtuluş Savaşı Hatıraları/the Kurdish Question* 30.
47. *hamiyet-i millînin bir misali.*
48. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 191.
49. It should be pointed out that some Kurdish writers have also tried to obscure the nationalist aspect of Nursi thoughts. For instance, Malmisanij's work on Nursi exemplifies such an attempt. Malmisanij deems religion as inherently inimical to Kurdish nationalist tendencies. Cf. Malmisanij, *Said-I Nursi Ve Kürt Sorunu/Said Nursi and the Kurdish Question* (Uppsala: Jîna Nü, 1991), 12–14.
50. M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 152–53.(emphasis added)
51. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 26.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. When it comes to rereading Muslim history, Nursi seems to be echoing some views expressed in '*Urwah al-Wuthqá*, the joint work by al-Afghānī and 'Abduh. For instance, Nursi states that "history shows a direct corollary

between the degree of Muslim progress and their clinging to the faith. It is also evident that Muslims have always fallen behind whenever they have shown weakness in their religious devotion."*İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 258. See Jamāl al-Dīn Al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʻAbduh, *Al-ʻurwah Al-Wuthqá*, *Lā InfiṣāMa Lahā* (Bayrūt: Maṭbaʻat al-Tawfīq, 1328 [1910]). Also, ʻAbduh, *Al-Islam Wa Al-Nasraniyye/Islam and Christianity* 177 onward.

55. Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 141.
56. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*. It should be indicated that this speech was delivered in 1908 when Nursi was still very optimistic about the constitutional revolution.
57. Ibid., 82–83.
58. Ibid., 83–84. Here as Nursi seems to be echoing *The Nature of Tyranny* by al-Kawakibi. His views here particularly resemble al-Kawakibi belief in the negative impact of tyranny on religiosity and on the acquisition of knowledge. See Abd al-Rahman Al-Kawakibi, *TabāYiʻ Al-IstibdāD Wa MaṣāRiʻ Al-IstiʻbāD/the Nature of Tyranny and the Subjugation Struggle*, trans. Abd al-Husayn Qajar, Chap-i 1. ed., Majmuah-Yi Mutun Va Asnad-I Tarikhi (Tihran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran, 1364).
59. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 160.
60. *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 53.
61. Ibid., 578.
62. *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*.
63. *Hina meşrutiyette tevbenin kapsi açktir* ibid.
64. Ibid., 123–24.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. See Al-Kawakibi, *TabāYiʻ Al-IstibdāD Wa MaṣāRiʻ Al-IstiʻbāD/the Nature of Tyranny and the Subjugation Struggle*.
68. See Muhammad Husayn Na'ini, *Tanbih Al-Ummah Va Tanzih Al-Millah Dar Asas Va Usul-I Mashrutiyat; Ya, Hukumat Az Nazar-I Islam/the State and Islamic Perspective* (Tehran: Shirkat-i Chapkhanah-i Firdawsi 1955?).
69. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 123.
70. Ibid.
71. "Bediüzzaman Kürdinin Fihristi- Makasidi Ve Efkarinin Progmidir/the Programme of Bediüzzam Kurdi ", *Volkan*, no. 1: 2–3.
72. *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 160.
73. "Bediüzzaman Kürdinin Fihristi- Makasidi Ve Efkarinin Progmidir/the Programme of Bediüzzam Kurdi ", 2–3.
74. After his 1909 unfair trial in Istanbul, Nursi was very much disappointed with the CUP government. Nevertheless, he still joined the war alongside

the state's army. During the war, he was captured by Russian forces, and was a prisoner of war (POW) in Russia until the summer of 1918. In 1918, Nursi escaped from Russian prison to Bulgaria and from there he returned to Turkey. See Yusuf Kenan Beysülen and Cemalettin Canlı, *Zaman İçinde Bediüzzaman/Bediüzzaman through the Time* (Istanbul: İletişim 2010), 255–57.

75. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 254.
76. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.*
77. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 254.
78. As noted earlier, Nursi's own writings attest that he endorsed what he considered to be positive nationalism, namely, the type of nationalism that does not deny others' rights or existence.
79. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 243.
80. Ibid., 259.
81. Yeğen, "The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity," 221.
82. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 258–59.
83. Ibid., 258.
84. Nursi seems to have thought of the emergence of the nation-state as fertile ground for the realization of individual rights. Therefore, he maintains that "every individual Muslim will obtain his/her rightful share in the governance, since the idea of the national sovereignty (*hakimiyet-i millet*) is gaining currency in Asia (*her bir ferd-i müslman, hakimiyetin bir cüz'-ü hakikisine malik olur*)."
85. Ibid., 258.
86. Ibid., 115.
87. Ibid.
88. Umut Uzer, "The Genealogy of Turkish Nationalism," in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Ayşe Kadioğlu and Fuat Keyman (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2011), 112.
89. Ismail Çolak, *Kürt Meselesi'nin Acılımı: Said Nursî'den Teşhis Ve Çözüumler/a Solution to the Kurdish Question; Diagnosis and Solution from Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Nesil, 2009), 134.
90. This is the case, we are told, because in 1925 Nursi believed that there were "perhaps a hundred thousand saints in the Ottoman army." Vahide Şükran and Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 109.
91. For a thorough study on this subject, see Cemalettin Canlı and Yusuf Kenan Beysülen, *Zaman İçinde Bediüzzaman/over the Years Bediüzzaman* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010), 298–310.
92. Ibid.

93. See Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011).
94. Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries*, 115.
95. Zelyut, *Dersim İsyanları Ve Seit Rıza Gerçeği/the Rebellions of Dersim and the Real Case of Seyyed Riza*, 59.
96. Ibid. Also, (Zinar Silopi), *Doza Kurdistan* (*Kürdistan Davas*): *Kürt Milletinin 60 Yıllık Esaretten Kurtuluş Savaşı Hatıraları/the Kurdish Question* 57.
97. Zelyut, *Dersim İsyanları Ve Seit Rıza Gerçeği/the Rebellions of Dersim and the Real Case of Seyyed Riza*, 59. Also, (Zinar Silopi), *Doza Kurdistan* (*Kürdistan Davas*): *Kürt Milletinin 60 Yıllık Esaretten Kurtuluş Savaşı Hatıraları/the Kurdish Question* 57.
98. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 243.
99. *Özdalga observes that Nursi went through dramatic transformation after his experience as a POW and after he witnessed catastrophic events in post 1925 Turkey.* Elizabeth Özdalga, "Transformation of Sufi-Based Communities in Modern Turkey," in *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Kerem Öktem, Celia Kerslake, and Philip Robins (Basingstoke England; New York Oxford Palgrave Macmillan 2010), 81.
100. Beysülen and Canlı, *Zaman İçinde Bediüzzaman/Bediüzzaman through the Time*, 301.
101. Ibid., 296.
102. For more on Nursi's negative view about this use of violence and his difference with the other group, see: Tahsin Sever, *1925 Hareketi Ve Azadî Örgütü/Azadi and the 1925 Movement* (Istanbul: Doz Yayınları, 2010), 169–80.
103. Ibid., 172.
104. *Biraderi e'zamim, biraderi ekremim, Şeh Said Efendinin heyfini aldim, heyfini alecegim.* See Çevik, "Şex Sa'id Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih'/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do."
105. To read Shaikh's letter, see: Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes*, 89–90.
106. Sever, *1925 Hareketi Ve Azadî Örgütü/Azadi and the 1925 Movement*,: 171–72.
107. "*Istibdat…*[*kürtlerin*] *fikri milliye*[*sinin*] *ipini kesip, parça parça* [*etmiş*.]" Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 123–24.
108. Nursi, *İçtimaî Dersler/Social lessons*: 189.
109. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 160.
110. Ibid.

111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid., 254.
114. online., "Mesopotamia (Review of the Civil Administration). Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia."
115. For a detailed account on Cebranli Halit Bey's attempts to convince Nursi to join his anti-Kemalist struggle, see Sever, *1925 Hareketi Ve Azadî Örgütü/Azadi and the 1925 Movement*, 171–79.
116. Cf. Beysülen and Canlı, *Zaman İçinde Bediüzzaman/Bediüzzaman through the Time*, 298–310.
117. Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler/Political Parties in Turkey*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfi Yayinlari, 1984), 215.
118. According to the Russian archival documents, rendered in Hewrami, no Muslim Turk, be they pro-caliphate or anti-caliphate, supported the Sheikh's Revolt. See Afrasiyab Hewrami, *Şorşi Şex Sa'idi Piranu Sovyet*: *Le Belgename U Çapemeniyekani Sovyet Da/the Revolt of Sheikh Sa'id and the Soviet Union* (Suleimani: Serdem, 2002), 50.
119. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 158–59.
120. Cf. Ibid., 179.
121. Beysülen and Canlı, *Zaman İçinde Bediüzzaman/Bediüzzaman through the Time*, 173–74.
122. Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons.*
123. *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 30.
124. Ibid., 159.
125. Özdalga, "Transformation of Sufi-Based Communities in Modern Turkey," 80.
126. There are examples through which Nursi' invokes the name of Kurdish national heroes such as Salah ad-Din Ayyubi who is calling every Kurds to become the embodiment of the unity of the Kurdish nation. See Nursi, *İçtima-I Dersler/Social Lessons*, 189.

CHAPTER 8

"Fully-fledged Nationalism in Religious Garb": The Caliphate as the Site of Nationalist Rivalry

As shown in the previous chapters, Islam was not a barrier to Kurdish and Turkish ethno-nationalistic self-consciousness. In fact, in the Kurdish case, Islam functioned as a marker of Kurdish identity. This continued to be the case well into the mid-twentieth century.[1] In this chapter, special attention shall be devoted to the fusion of religion and nationalism, in continuation of this book's overall theme, but with additional specificity and development. This shall be done by way of discussing the Revolt of Sheikh Sa'id of Piran and situating it in the overall context of the climax of Caliphate politics.

My aim here is to demonstrate the continuity of the entanglement of religion and nationalism by way of discussing some Kurdish and Turkish nationalist cases in the early twentieth century. Sheikh Sa'id's movement, as the only Kurdish movement discussed below, exemplified the inseparability of Kurdishness from Muslim-ness. However, Turkish nationalist tendencies, including the Kemalist trend of the early 1920s, make up an extremely complex set of phenomena. Hence, I argue, it is a simplistic, teleological reading of historical events to assume that Turkish republicanism and the abolition of the Caliphate were mere outcomes of Kemalism's secular tendencies and agenda.

Sheikh Sa'id, as mentioned in the foregoing chapter, was the leader of the 1925 Revolt and the icon of Kurdish anti-Kemalism. He was also the embodiment of Kurdish religious nationalism. Not much is known about Sheikh Sa'id's political activities prior to the revolt. However, it is important

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to point out that initially the Turkish, British, Iranian, and Russian presses and officials confused Sheikh Sa'id with Bediüzzaman Said Nursi.[2]

According to Sheikh Sa'id's grandson, Abdülmelik Fırat, the Sheikh was well versed in Muslim and regional politics. He had traveled to neighboring countries as well as many Arab lands.[3] Moreover, Fırat informs us that since 1910, the Sheikh's mind had been very busy with the Kurdish question.[4] How does he know? Why 1910? It is said that the Sheikh had been in touch with the Southern Kurds (i.e., in Iraqi Kurdistan). Apparently, he had met with the young Mustafa Barzani in 1916–1917, who represented Sheikh Ahmad Barzani, his elder brother, in a meeting with the Kurdish leaders in the North (i.e., in Turkish Kurdistan).[5] We are also told that because of his involvement in trade and his frequent travels to Southern Kurdistan, the Sheikh had important ties of friendship with well-known Kurds there.[6]

The Sheikh had a strong background in the traditional Islamic sciences: Sufism, philosophy, and logic.[7] In addition to Kurdish, he was fluent in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.[8] He was also a reputed instructor. Although he abandoned formal teaching in the *medrese* when he was relatively young, the Sheikh remained active in Sufi instruction.[9] We are informed that "Sheikh Sa'id had sixty thousand followers and mentored twelve prominent Kurdish scholars."[10] It is said that the Sheikh would have preferred to stay out of politics if the patriotic elite and the intellectuals had done enough for the Kurds.[11]

Sheikh Sa'id was a relative of Colonel Cebranli Halit Bey, the brainchild behind Azadi, the main organizational force in the Revolt. Azadi, which held great organizational power by 1924, was created in 1921. It counted among its members many religious leaders, merchants, and army officers and soldiers.[12] Azadi was able to integrate all other Kurdish political organizations such as Kurdistan Taali Cemiyeti, Heyvi, the Democrats and Socialists of Kurdistan, as well as the Committee for Independent Kurdistan founded and led by Yusuf Ziya.[13] In its 1924 Beytu Şebab munity, Azadi demonstrated its organizational capability as it mobilized over 500 officers and soldiers.[14] Azadi came into being while the Kurdish fear of the possible emergence of an Armenian state was still looming large,[15] reports Ismail Hakki Shaweys—one of the founders of the organization.[16] For long, such a fear remained a major obstacle that deterred the Kurds from abandoning their alliance with the Turks.[17]

Shaweys alludes to two major events in early 1920s that "shook Kurdish nationalist consciousness" and brought the likes of Sheikh Sa'id to the fore-

front in the anti-Kemalist Kurdish struggle.[18] In 1921 Kâzım Karabekir, the commander of the Eastern Front, participated in the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku as the leader of the Kurdish delegation.[19] The delegation, with the goal of mystifying Kurdish identity, claimed to represent the Kurds without having a single Kurd among its members.[20] According to Shaweys, the 1923 declaration of the Turkish Republic was the second catalyzing event.[21] The Kurds regarded the founding of the Republic as an utter violation of the terms of both the Sivas and Erzurum congresses of 1919 and all other pacts that recognized the Ottoman Empire as a multinational country.[22]

In September of the following year, the unsuccessful Beyt Şebab mutiny broke out. In December, Halit Bey of Cibran, the head of Azadi, was captured. A few months later, Halit Bey's brother-in-law Sheikh Sa'id found himself at war with the state.[23] The Kemalist state's provocation disrupted the Sheikh's preparation for war.[24]

I should note that the aim here is not to recount these historical events in detail, in particular since there are a number of important works in English, Kurdish, and Turkish that have dealt with them. Here, the emphasis shall be on the connection between religious and ethno-nationalist discourses with a critical eye on the respective statist scholarship.

If Abdülmelik Fırat is right, the Sheikh had had misgivings for long time about Mustafa Kemal's intentions. Nonetheless, he could not find a way to "unmask the real Mustafa Kemal."[25] In Firat's words, the 1924 constitution made "the real Mustafa Kemal" known to the Kurds.[26] The new constitution provided the Sheikh with a fresh opportunity by giving him an excuse to call on all the Kurdish religious and community leaders to unite. The Sheikh thus declared that "since the Turks have [already] abandoned their religion and pivoted their *qible*[27] Westward [i.e., towards Europe,] we must create a state of our own on the basis of Islam."[28] Firat paraphrased the last remark. Its content, however, seems commensurate with the Sheikh's 1925 declaration of war against the Kemalist state. In his manifesto, the Sheikh declared that

> Under the pretext of religion and the Caliphate, the Turks and the Ottomans have for over 400 years been pushing us gradually toward slavery, darkness, ignorance and destruction .... They came among us as migrants. By trickery and intrigues, they occupied our country and reduced it to ruins. Never in its history has Kurdistan been in a state of such devastation.[29]

In his manifesto, the Sheikh—with an equal degree of respect—makes references to both national and religious symbols, which he believed to be under the threat of Turkism. The Kurdish and Islamic symbols are seen as inseparable. Nevertheless, they are deemed endangered by the so-called long Turkish historical plot and deception. In a way, this sense of inseparability of the national from the religious validates Bozarslan's claim that by the 1920s, "in the minds of the tribes and religious brotherhoods, defending Kurdishness meant defending Islam.".[30]

The inseparability of the Kurdish "honor from their religion" seems somewhat self-evident from the perspective of the traditional Kurdish leaders. Such a sense of the inseparability between the two is abundantly clear in some of Sheikh Sa'id's statements. For instance, in trying to spur another Naqshbandi Sheikh against the state, Sheikh Sa'id retorts "Should we not be responsible for this nation and its rights? *When a nation is not legally independent*, *who can defend its honor and religion*? We should remember that Kurdistan is not a garden that we can exploit *together with our enemies.*"[31] The fact that he ties Islam to the protection of national honor sheds light on the very reality of the entanglement of the two. It also validates the claim made in the foregoing chapters that from the late nineteenth century, Muslim communities began to redraw their religious boundaries in accordance with their ethno-nationalistic ones.

In addition to questioning Turkish Islam, Sheikh Ubeydullah (discussed in Chap. 6) made claims about the Kurdish–Turkish religious differences.[32] Sheikh Sa'id also questioned the overall authenticity of Turkish Islam. He viewed the Turkish state's abolishment of the Caliphate—mostly under foreign pressure—as a moment of truth in Turkish history, in which its real intentions—supposedly disguised in Islamic faith—were unmasked.[33] In his characterization, the Sheikh avoids any differentiation between the Turkish people and the Kemalist state.

The racial segmentation and nationalist tone in the Sheikh's language are incontestable. To the Sheikh, the Turks, as a nation, had chosen a different path. As stated above, the Sheikh does not distinguish Turkish society from the state. Similarly, in his campaign to mobilize the Kurds, the Sheikh ignored internal Kurdish religious differences. He eagerly tried to mobilize *Alevis* as well as the *Sunni* Kurds. Hence, even if the Sheikh attempted to establish a caliphate (and there is no supporting evidence that he did), it would have to be a Kurdish Caliphate. At best, it would be another case of local caliphates which—regardless of their religious denominations—would have secured Kurdish independence. This is the

case because, as mentioned—and despite his failure—the Sheikh eagerly strove to garner the support of *Alevi* Kurds.

If the Sheikh actually did envision a caliphate, all the indications are that it would be a Kurdish Caliphate. Like all other claimants of caliphates, at the time, his caliphate would be a nationalistic one. The fact that Sheikh Sa'id's prospective state was limited to Kurdistan[34] is a very significant factor and must not be overlooked. If for the sake of argument we grant that the Sheikh worked toward the establishment of a caliphate, his attempts would resemble those of revivalist and nationalist Arabs. Like nationalism was for some early Arab nationalists and revivalists, the Sheikh's nationalism was inseparable from his religion and his religious idiom.[35]

At the time, efforts to localize and redefine the caliphate within certain geographical and ethnic boundaries were not rare. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from Morocco to India, there were various caliphate movements, almost all with local and nationalistic bearings.[36] Knowing its local attraction and this contesting climate of caliphal claims, Abdulhamid once said that "in case of need one would expect the English to appoint even Lord Cromer as caliph."[37]

Provided that it was an attempt at the creation of a caliphate, Sheikh Sa'id's Revolt must not be seen any differently from other movements by his contemporaries. It is claimed that the Sheikh hoped to restore the Ottoman Caliphate and bring back Abdulhamid's son, Muhammad Selim,[38] or Sultan Vahdettin.[39] These claims are similar to those made by the general Kemalist propaganda. They are also in clear contradiction to the Sheikh's racial tone and the outright disillusionment with "Turkish Islam" expressed in his manifesto.[40] There is no credible evidence that the Sheikh attempted to restore the Ottoman Caliphate. By the same token, to suggest that the Sheikh hoped to impose a new caliph upon the Turks sounds utterly absurd. The Sheikh found Turkish Islam questionable or, to be more precise, "deceptive." Hence, the boundaries of his caliphate—provided he advocated for one—would not have extended beyond the imagined borders of Kurdistan. Such a "caliphate," as opposed to the state in Ankara, would be created to safeguard "Kurdish honor and religion." The Kurdish Revolt, as the Turkish Security Court's judge noted—during the trial of the defeated Kurdish leaders in April 1925—was "heading toward one direction: The creation of an independent Kurdistan."[41]

It needs to be reiterated that there is nothing indicating that the Sheikh hoped to create a caliphate rather than "a Muslim Kurdish state."[42] Yet a significant body of scholarship on Sheikh Sa'id's Revolt fails to even dif-

ferentiate between attempts to create a Kurdish Caliphate and a revival of the Ottoman Caliphate. It is true that the Sheikh's anti-Kemalist Revolt was partly ignited by the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate.[43] However, there is no evidence that the abolition of the Caliphate led the Sheikh to think of creating another one, be it Kurdish or Turkish.

There is no doubt that some Kurds tried to use the abolition of the Caliphate to paint the Kemalists as enemies of Islam. For instance, such a tactical use of the demise of the Caliphate is evident in the 1924 statement written by a certain Kurdish community leader named Şahin Bey. Şahin Bey uses that event as a propaganda tool when he declares that "the Kurdish youth movement—that is going to liberate the sacred religion along with the sacred Caliphate from those Jewish converts in Ankara—is on the rise."[44] However, Şahin Bey's "Islamic liberation campaign" was also exclusively Kurdish. Before attending to the issue of the "sacred Caliphate," he makes references to "the glorious Kurdish history" that had begun "30 centuries earlier."[45] Yet, despite "such a long national history"—a typical Primordialist frame of reference for the pursuit of statehood—Şahin Bey wonders how the Kurds could "still live as the hostages of the Turks."[46] He adds that "very soon Ankara, like a hungry wolf, will eat out the entire Kurdish region and violate their honor and property."[47] He thus intimates to the Kurds that they should "learn from the Jews in their struggles and fight for independence. Do not stain your 3000-year-old glorious history."[48]

Sporadic references by the participants to the abolition of the Caliphate do not explain the objectives of the Kurdish Revolt. However, it is clear that leaders like Sheikh Sa'id believed that Mustafa Kemal had succumbed to British pressure and sold the Caliphate for a Turkist state.[49] To them, this was further proof of the fact that the "anti-religious agenda" of the Kemalists was directly tied to the foreign powers' (especially British) agenda and that they lacked any principle.[50] The Kemalists possessed the capability to unleash an enormous degree of violence. This also convinced the Kurdish leaders that there would be no space for non-Turkish socio-cultural and political representation as the Caliphate—supposedly the last inclusive symbol of the Muslim state—was abolished. The Sheikh seized the opportunity to create a state for the Kurds and cede the Turkish Muslims to a Western-oriented Turkish state. The Sheikh's Revolt thus should be understood as a struggle to create a "traditional Muslim state" within specific ethnic and geographical boundaries. The Sheikh made this point clear in his response to the judge in the Turkish Security Court (*İstiklal Mahkemesi*) in 1925. The Sheikh described his revolt as an attempt

for "the liberation of Kurdistan" and stated that "I did what I was obliged to do as a Muslim."[51] The minutes of the trial of the Sheikh leave no doubt that in his mind Islam and Kurdishness could not be disentangled.[52]

The Sheikh adamantly rejected what the Security Court called foreign incitement. He defended that "we had no connection to foreigners, be they inside or outside [Turkey]…We were ready to negotiate with the [Turkish] state. We repeatedly demanded *our rights* but the state ignored *us*."[53] By emphasizing "our rights," the Sheikh not only indicated the nationalistic aspect of his revolt but also blamed the state for its occurrence and the ensuing violence. In a way, he foregrounded the Kurdish right to revolt in the state's disrespect of their collective rights. The assumed self-evident nature of the Kurds' collective rights here is significant. It indicates a surprising degree of influence from modern nationalist thought, in which the very "imagining of the community" gives legitimacy to collective political demands. Yet, the Sheikh's imagined Kurdish state was, in a sense, a traditional one—with Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence) as its foundation. The Sheikh made this point clear in his answer to the question: Why "did you try to take control of Diyarbakir?[54] To cut off ... the thief's hand … do good deeds in accordance to the teaching of Islam."[55] His reply indicates that in his mind the struggle for Kurdish rights and creating a traditional Islamic state were not two contradictory acts. The Sheikh thus added: "[W]e had a national goal and were ready to sacrifice our wealth and our lives to achieve that goal. We are not traitors. We fought to liberate Kurdistan[56] and the Kurdish nation."[57] (It is worth noting that "to sacrifice with one's wealth and life, *jihād bil amwāl wal anfus*," employed here for achieving a nationalist objective, is a repeated theme in the Qur'an.)

It must be stated that the impact of ideological resistance to the possibility of the fusion of religion and nationalism on Kurdish nationalist historiography is clearly visible. In fact, Kurdish nationalist historiography has inadvertently internalized the essentialism embedded in state discourse. Therefore, Kurdish nationalist historiography also attempts to obscure the religious factor in Sheikh Sa'id's uprising. It too deems religiosity and nationalism as being essentially antithetical.[58] As such, this scholarship turns into a type of inverse Kemalism.[59] To present a more coherent narrative, this reductionist approach aims at omitting religion from Kurdish movements. "Whether a story is believable," argues Walter Fisher, in a different context, "depends on the reliability of characters, both as narrators and as actors. Determination of one's character is made by interpretations of the person's decisions and actions that reflect values."[60]

Fisher explains that the "character may be considered an organized set of actional tendencies."[61] Yet, if the "[assumed] tendencies contradict one another, [they] change significantly, or alter [the narrative]."[62] However, in our case, no matter how much alteration is made to the narrative, the incoherence remains as its birthmark because "the character" does not "behave characteristically" and "the result is a questioning of character."[63] Such alterations become particularly apparent in the later (post-1970s) Kurdish historiography, influenced by leftist tendencies. As such, generally to overcome the assumed contradiction, that is, the fusion of religion with nationalism, Kurdish historiography either downplays Sheikh Sa'id's religious tendencies or rejects his nationalism.[64]

As stated earlier, late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Kurdish politics was generally expressed within religious/Islamic discourse. *Shafiʿi-ness* and Kurdishness could not easily be separated. It is not odd to say that Kurdish religiosity, as was probably the case for other ethnic communities as well, often carried an ethnic mark. Van Bruinessen notes that "Islam in Kurdistan has a distinctive character,[65] born of the historic encounter of Kurdish society with Islamic teachings and practices and with Muslim states that incorporated parts of Kurdistan."[66] Nevertheless, the follower of *Shafiʿi* School of Law in general, and Kurdish *ʿulamā* (religious scholars) in particular, did not consider the Ottoman Sultans as legitimate Caliphs. Ironically, in his 1924 speech in defense of the abolishment of the Caliphate, Seyyid Bey, Mustafa Kemal's Justice Minister, acknowledged this fact when he stated:

> Gentlemen! Let's not deceive ourselves. We cannot mislead the Islamic world. They have many scholars and they are all more erudite than us. They have access to the Islamic sources. Do you think they do not know what the (real) Islamic caliphate is? From a religious point of view, the *"ulamā"* of India, Egypt, Najd, Yemen, and *that of Kurdistan…do not recognize our kings as caliphs. Do you* [*really*] *believe the "ulamā … in Kurdistan take the debate over the* [*Ottoman*] *Caliphate seriously*? (Bravo shouts) The '*ulama* of those regions have never *recognized our kings as caliphs.*[67]

Seyyid Bey uses the Kurdistan *"ulamā'"s* rejection of the Ottoman Caliphate as a major reason for its illegitimacy and dysfunction. Yet, Turkish nationalist narratives for the rest of the century strove to prove the opposite claim by branding the 1925 Revolt as pro-Ottoman Caliphate.

Some Turkish writers categorically deny the nationalistic aspect of the Sheikh's Revolt. They claim that the revolt took place because of the preva-

lence of a primitive life style and the lack of art, commerce, and civilization among the Kurds.[68] They inform us that "due to the absence of the modern thought in their region, [Kurdish] people saw the democratic system [i.e., Kemalism] like the plague."[69] Hence, Turkish historiography portrays early Kurdish uprisings merely as a religious urge for the revival of the Ottoman Caliphate.[70] Statist historians deny Kurdishness as a factor in those uprisings. We are told that from the perspective of the Republican elite, the "Kurds did not even have an inkling of what it means 'to be a human being.' Consequently, for [the army elite], it was out of the question to indoctrinate them into any ideology, including nationalism."[71] Thusly, Turkish nationalist historiography fervently denies the existence of Kurdish nationalism in the early twentieth century. For instance, Metin Heper retorts: "how could Inönü and [the military elite] fail to notice [nationalist] motives on the part of the rebels in question? This would, of course, be a logical question to ask; however, the facts at hand do not support the implied argument."[72]

Ironically, one important fact that does support "the implied argument" happens to be the very report provided to Inönü himself.[73] The report dismisses the overall religious aspect of the Kurdish movement when it describes "the uprising (*ayaklanma*) [a]s a fully-fledged nationalist (*milli*) movement in religious garb."[74] Of course, A.M. Renda, who prepared the report, fails to see the possibility of the Revolt being both religious and nationalist at once. Therefore, as the nationalist aspect of the Revolt becomes evident, the special investigator appears utterly incapable of spotting the coexistence of Kurdish nationalism and Islam. That is why he considers the Islamic aspect of the revolt as nothing but a façade or a political cover (*perde*).[75] In a way, the assessment of the special investigator exposes the "off-stage" discourse of the state. It is important to mention that when it comes to the contemporary Republican elite, they almost all saw the 1925 Revolt as Kurdish nationalism in the guise of Islam.[76]

Soon after the Revolt broke out, Turkish officials were able to sense a nationalist vigor behind it. Initially, the state made a great effort to hide the magnitude of the revolt and its significance. The Kemalists hoped that branding it as local "brigandry" would suffice to obfuscate the event.[77] However, the brigandry narrative turned out to be unpersuasive especially after the Istanbul papers—whose writers and owners were later tried for their "provocation"—showed some curiosity in following the story.[78] Despite their systematic attempt to hide the nature of the Revolt, the incoherent nature of the official narrative(s) made the framing of the revolt perpetually inadequate. The speech by Fethi Okyar in the Turkish parlia-

ment[79] sheds light on the difficulty the state had in explaining the event. Okyar, for instance, declared that "the real issue is Kurdism (*Kürtçülük*) that has been camouflaged with the propaganda for restoring the Sultanate, the Caliphate, and *Shariʿa*."[80]

The above statement by Okyar also shows that the officials refrained from recognizing the revolt as pro-*Shariʿa*.[81] The contemporary statements published by non-state entities also regarded the revolt as an "attack on the Turkish unity *under the guise of Shariʿa*."[82] In its domestic propaganda campaign, the state accused the Kurds of misusing *Shariʿa*. It could not afford to lend religious legitimacy to its opposition. Beginning with the Sheikh's Revolt, the Republican state has always questioned the sincerity of its religious opposition. That is how the state emerged as the sole legitimate authority for differentiating "the true followers of the Anatolian Islam" from those "who make instrumental use of religion for their political objectives." As such, the Sheikh was accused of serving foreign interests and attempting to bring back the old order in the name of *Shariʿa* (*şeriat adı altında*). However, in its international propaganda, the Kemalist state tried to emphasize the religious aspect of the revolt and minimize its nationalistic nature.

Immediately after subduing the revolt, the Kemalists became solely concerned with its international ramifications. At that juncture, they decided to formally "name the event." In May 1925, the Cabinet published a statement that offered the "true" narrative in which the revolt was regarded as "a display of backwardness (*bir irticanın görünümü*)."[83] The official statement informed the citizens that "*the Foreign Ministry* has been entrusted with the task of *disseminating* [the real story of] *the event*."[84] The state thus regulated "the proper (*munasib*) way" of discussing, remembering, and writing about the revolt. It first criminalized the existing narratives by warning that "What the press has characterized as 'the Kurdish question,' apart from 'being politically problematic,' has nothing to do with the truth."[85] Despite the awkward limitations that it created, Turkish historiography followed suit in conforming to the imperatives of the official narrative.

The "narrative paradigm"[86] of Turkish nationalism exhibits close affinity with the public discourse of the Kemalist state. It suffers from a major internal incoherence since it strives to paint the Kurdish movement as an initiative supported by Britain for the revival of the Ottoman Caliphate.[87] The incoherence of the narrative—perpetuated by Kemalists and other Turkish nationalists—stems from their compulsion to deny any agency to

the Kurds. As mentioned above, the state in its domestic public narrative characterized the Kurdish Revolt as a foreign provocation. In the early days of the revolt, Kazım Karabekir[88] declared that "it is clear that this handful of bullies (*zorba*)—with a *foreign provocation* and through the *abuse of the religious sentiments* of the people—want to achieve some [political] *objectives.*"[89] Yet, at the same time, some Turkish historians have tried to detach Sheikh Sa'id from the Revolt in its entirety.[90] Of course, they do so by employing the documents produced by their Republican spin doctors.[91] Their aim, on the one hand, is to depict the Sheikh as a symbol of the pro-Ottoman Caliphate, and on the other, to brand Azadi and the Revolt as a mere foreign plot against Turkey.

There are even absurd claims regarding the Kurdish Revolt as a Kemalist government conspiracy to purge its opposition.[92] Hakan Özoğlu advances such a claim:

> I should make my position clearer on this subject. I do not claim that such a governmental plot did not exist; instead, I do point out that we lack "conclusive evidence" to prove it. Therefore, one should regard this conspiracy theory as plausible but a theory nonetheless.[93]

Özoğlu is the only person to discover such a Kemalist plot, that is, fomenting Sheikh Sa'id's Revolt. Nonetheless, he finds something unsettling about his own claim: the lack of any credible evidence or, as he puts it, the lack of "conclusive evidence."

Özoğlu implies that his account is in contrast with other Turkish nationalist narratives. Yet, when it comes to Mustafa Kemal's purge of his opposition, be it Kurdish or Turkish, Özoğlu—without hesitation—argues

> that the political landscape of the early republic presented a dilemma for Mustafa Kemal. He would either deal with the opposition within democratic means at the expense of risking his reforms and position in power or entirely damage the opposition in a way that it could not recover in a meaningful way…*The power struggle and the political realities of the country made it impossible for Mustafa Kemal to fully commit himself to practice true democracy.*[94]

The overarching theme in the conspiracy theory—put forward by Özoğlu—is the same as that of the later Kemalist historiography. Denial of the authenticity of Kurdish politics constitutes one of the main themes in all the public Turkish nationalist narratives. They all claim that the real

agents behind the uprising were non-Kurdish: the Kurds were only tools in the hands of others, be they foreigners or the Turkish state. This served to rob Kurdish political actors of any agency.

The insistence on the suddenness of the 1925 Kurdish Revolt is another common element in Turkish nationalist narratives, for the sudden emergence of the revolt makes it reactionary, a foreign provocation, lacking ethno-nationalistic roots. Looking for non-Kurdish agents behind the revolt helps Turkish nationalist historiography to circumvent the inexplicable gaps and the incoherence in its narratives. The "suddenness" thesis unburdens them from the need to explain the pre-1925 catalyzing events: the Kemalist recognition of Kurdish autonomy prior to the Treaty of Lausanne[95] followed by the abrupt 1924 verdict on the Turkishness of the entire Muslim population of Turkey.[96]

"Non-Kurds to Foment the Kurdish Revolt"

In order to disentangle the complicated relation between the Caliphate, Islam, and Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms, there are two issues that need to be addressed at some length. First, the Kemalist regime could ill afford to foment a Kurdish or a Kurdish/religious Revolt. Second, pro-Ottoman Caliphate Kurdish politics did not correspond with British policy in the region.

Concerning the idea of "the state-fomented Kurdish revolt," no matter how opportunist they might have been, it would make no sense for the Kemalists to foment a Kurdish religious uprising. This would amount to consciously destroying their only chance to regain Mosul. Possible Kurdish support was the only card that the Kemalists could hope to use in their negotiations with Britain. Any Kurdish Revolt would have very much tied the Turks' hands in such negotiations over that strategic Kurdish region. "Mosul is extremely important for us," argued Mustafa Kemal.[97] "Firstly, as an oil-rich region it possesses an unlimited amount of wealth … Secondly, [because of] the equally important issue of Kurdism (*Kürtçülük*), Britain tries to create a Kurdish state there. If she does so, the [idea of Kurdism] will also spread among the Kurds inside our borders."[98] It was for this very reason that the Kemalists tried to tie the Kurdish Revolt to their unresolved problems with Britain over Mosul. In connecting the revolt to British policy, they tried to conceal the existence of Kurdish nationalism, manifested in the Revolt. They hoped that they could convince the Kurds that the uprising was a British conspiracy to undermine Kurdish–Turkish

"Islamic brotherhood." This way, the Kemalists strove to decouple the revolt from the Kurdish question.

In their negotiations with Britain, the Kemalists demanded that the fate of Mosul be resolved through a plebiscite.[99] They argued that if the people of Mosul were given a choice, they would choose Turkish rule.[100] Britain was against any referendum. Lord Curzon objected that holding a referendum among those people—who he thought were too ignorant and held very strong ethnic ties and religious beliefs—would not be possible.[101] Considering those political contestations, the Kurdish Revolt was one of the most unfortunate things that could happen to the Kemalist state.

As the Qajar state documents reveal, the sole reason for the Kemalists' attempt to link the revolt to British policy in the region was to save the image of the Turkish state among the Kurds.[102] A positive Kurdish view of the Turkish state would have strengthened the Turkish position in their negotiations over Mosul.[103] According to the Persian records, the Revolt and ensuing execution of Kurdish leaders had caused an unbridgeable gulf between the Kurds and the Turks. It had brought the Kurds to a point where they would stop at nothing[104] to avenge the death of their leaders.[105]

Relations between Turkey and Britain over Mosul were becoming increasingly tense, to the point where the Persians thought a war between the two countries was inevitable.[106] "Therefore," Persian state records reveal, "the Turks [make] every possible effort to avoid any conflicts with the Kurds. [They are] trying to convince the Kurds that they had killed those sheikhs [or leaders'] only because of their collaboration with Britain."[107] The Turks were compelled to win Kurdish hearts and minds since "all the Kurds are located in the surrounding region of Mosul."[108]

The Persian documents attest that Turkish propaganda proved utterly ineffective in changing Kurdish people's opinion. The Revolt and the ensuing Turkish policy toward the Kurds even pushed "the Iranian Kurds to believe that it is their religious duty (*vajibat-e mazhabi*) to rise up against the Turks, whom they consider apostates."[109] According to Persian documents, the Kemalist treatment of the Kurds and their propaganda had a reverse impact on them. Now, even the Persians were highly concerned that the Sheikh's Revolt and the Kemalists' subsequent, harsh measures would push the Iranian Kurds as well to side with Britain.[110] The Kemalist practices during and after the Revolt made the Kurds believe that their survival depended on "their following of British policy in the region."[111]

Turkish statist narratives generally characterize Sheikh Sa'id's Revolt both as pro-Ottoman Caliphate and as a British provocation.[112] Such a narrative, however, is not supported by any evidence.[113] In the early twen-

tieth century, British propagandistic attempts in the region commonly aimed at weakening the Ottoman Caliphate. Those attempts took different forms, from supporting the idea of Arab Caliphates to the spread of anti-Ottoman sentiments among Muslims. British Colonial officers saw the Ottoman Caliphate—both as an institution and as a religious–political concept—as a challenge to their colonial agenda in "the Muslim world."[114] From the British perspective, the Ottoman Caliphate was a significant religious institution that could pose a potential danger to their presence in Muslim countries. They thought it could function as a spiritual center and mobilize the masses against British colonialism. Yet, unlike any other political opposition, it could not be dealt with conventionally.

A cursory look at the pro-British propaganda in some Kurdish newspapers manifests British eagerness to differentiate Turkish Islam from its British-favored version among the Kurds. The pro-British Kurdish literature from the time portrays the Turks as a "race" that lacks "the right predisposition" to ever submit to "the true" teaching of Islam. In an article in the Kurdish journal *Tigeyshtnii Rastii*, we read that

> the Turks have *never put their hearts into the teachings of Islam*…The Turks are an oppressive nation. Behold the justice of God; behold the conditions of the Arabs in Hijaz who have liberated themselves from the Turkish yoke… In light of centuries of living under the Turkish reign, you, better than all, should know [the real] Turkish character. You need no one to introduce you to their true nature.[115]

Another article argued that if one is to learn a lesson from history, one undoubtedly realizes that in the past few centuries "the practices of the [Ottoman] Turkish state have [always] been in direct violation of the Islamic laws (*sharʿ*)…How [in the world can such a] *state be considered Islamic*?"[116]

Furthermore, from 1919 onward, the British Colonial Administration adamantly opposed any independent Kurdish political activity whatsoever. It considered any Kurdish nationalist activities as a potential danger and an obstacle to future deal-making in the region. British documents leave no ambiguity about their fear of independent political movements led by the likes of Sheikh Mahmoud Barzanji, who

> was known to be in communication with the hostile center at Shernakh [in Turkey], and it was clear that steps would have to be taken to prevent his influence spreading in the regions where it was unnecessary or objectionable and *where it offered a possible menace to peace in the future.*[117]

As indicated above, Britain viewed the Ottoman Caliphate as a hindrance to its colonial presence and for a long time it had been working toward its abolition. Azmi Özcan shows the trajectory of this change in British policy against the Ottoman Caliphate and how the change, at the time, was echoed in the British press.[118] It seems the historical debate over the Caliphate became an important subject in the world of "Oriental Studies" in order to fight the Ottoman Empire and to defuse a possible Muslim unity. As a result, British colonial officers were well aware of the Ottomans' intention to use the Caliphate against Western incursions. The British officials thus frequently reminded Muslims about the rare use of the title of Caliph by the Ottomans before late nineteenth century.[119]

Moreover, British Colonial Administrators constantly invoked the Ottoman Caliphs' lack of blood relation to Prophet Muhammad. They utilized Islamic jurisprudence and argued that the Ottoman Caliphate existed despite the lack of Muslim *ijmāʿ* (consensus).[120] They also reminded Muslims of the Ottomans' use of force in their accession to power. The British officials contended that since Britain ruled the largest Muslim population in the world they had every right to question the religious legitimacy of the Ottoman Caliphate.[121]

The Ottoman Turks too had a utilitarian approach to the Caliphate. As stated earlier, the very reinvigoration of the Caliphate in the late nineteenth century was the outcome of a certain political calculation by Abdülhamid II.[122] Certain domestic and international political conditions propelled the Sultan to revive the Caliphate. The revitalization of the Caliphate became a major feature of Abdülhamid's agenda while his ascension to power had been facilitated by his endorsement of the first constitution in the Muslim world. As stated in foregoing chapters, the 1876 Constitution marked the end of the previous traditional *Sunni* approaches to the caliphate. The constitution practically turned the Caliph into a constitutional monarch. This event historically closed a political chapter in Muslim political thought. Notwithstanding their discord, many important Muslim religious figures supported a constitutional system of governance.

Historically, there has not been a universally accepted definition of Caliphate among Muslims. Despite the lack of a uniform approach to the Caliphate, almost every Muslim community has utilized it for their own political interest.[123] Also, a similar instrumental use of the Ottoman Caliphate was followed by Ottoman Turkish statesmen in either their opposition to or support for the Caliphate. For instance, during his 1919 negotiations with Britain, the Grand Vizier Ferid Pasha was ready to use

the Caliphate as a trump card.[124] In 1922, even the Kemalists claimed that the government of King Faisal in Iraq was illegal and illegitimate. In their manifesto against Faisal, they questioned the legitimacy of his rule since they claimed that it violated "Caliphal power and Islamic unity."[125] In face of the foreign threat, the Caliphate institution was to be used for garnering Muslim support and possible leverage in colonized Muslim territories, as was the case in the Mosul question. Mustafa Kemal, later regarded as the founder of "the modern secular Turkey," was a staunch opponent of the British-proposed separation between the religious and political power vested in the Caliph.[126]

At the 1920 Paris Peace Conference, Britain was particularly eager to neutralize the political function of the Caliphate by way of turning Istanbul into a solely religious capital. If such a change was to be realized, the actual capital of Turkey would be transferred to another region in Anatolia.[127] Such a change in reality would amount to the practical imposition of a desired colonial political system on Turkey. At the same time, it would have terminated the religio-political influence of Turkey over non-Turkish Muslims because the division between "the political" and "the religious" powers would have transformed the Caliphate into a colonial caricature and the embodiment of the colonial will.

After WWI, British officials generally insisted that those religious institutions that could sway Muslims outside Turkey must be neutralized. They pressured the Turks to restructure these institutions. The "Chief Political Officer at Baghdad," for instance, had "suggested that when the Turkish Government abandons temporal sovereignty over Iraq they should at the same time renounce all claim to spiritual authority, for example, in regard to pre-war functions of *Shaikh-ul-Islam*."[128] Lord Curzon insisted on the removal of the Caliphate from Istanbul.[129] He argued that the presence of the Caliphate in Istanbul would be misconceived in the Arab world.[130] Yet, despite such pressures, the Kemalists remained great believers in the utility of the Caliphate until 1923. So did its defenders.

The Caliphate as a Dilemma

It is not a secret that Mustafa Kemal himself remained publicly pro-caliphate until after signing the *Treaty* of *Lausanne*. From 1919 to 1922, Mustafa Kemal and the Kemalists were still promoting the idea of the caliphate. In the fall of 1922, Kemal declared that "as long as we are alive and to the last drops of our blood, we will keep the caliphate alive."[131]

İnönü also announced that "we are a member of the big world of Islam… The caliphal right is reserved for the Turkish nation."[132] In this period, the Kemalists particularly appeared as major defenders of the caliphate in Kurdistan as they strove to neutralize Kurdish nationalism.

Kemal personally wrote letters to the Kurdish community leaders, warning them about Kurdish nationalist activities. In Kemal's words, those activities would destroy "the Muslim [Turkish-Kurdish] unity and rid the people of their *Padişah* (the King)."[133] Kemal claimed that Kurdish nationalist activities could result in the creation of "a Kurdish state under the British protection."[134] He warned against the spread of Kurdish nationalism since he claimed that it would end in the "confrontation between the Kurds and the Turkish army and an eventual mass killing of the pitiable (*zavallı*) Kurds, which will be the source of shame from both worlds for us."[135]

In 1918, the Kemalists created *Vilayat-i Şarkiye Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Milliye Cemiyeti* (the Association for the Defense of National Rights in Eastern Provinces), whose principal mission was combating Kurdish nationalism in the name of Islam. It was created by figures like Suleyman Nazif, well-known for oppressing the Kurds during the CUP rule as a governor of Mosul.[136] The organization was active only in the Kurdish regions. Its main task was the use of Islam and the Caliphate to create an environment in which the very invocation of Kurdishness would be regarded a "threat to the Islamic unity and Islamic identity of the people."[137]

The Kemalists invoked the Caliphate as the symbol of religious unity between the Kurds and the Turks to offset the growing Kurdish nationalism. At the same time, they cautioned the colonial powers about the unruliness and fanaticism of the Kurds. The Kemalists warned them that if it were not for the Turkish state's overwhelming power, the Kurds would have emerged as an unrestrained tribal force, ravaging the region with brigandry and pillage.[138] They advised the imperialist powers that it was in the interest of all sides to let the Kurds stay in Turkey, where they could remain on a tight leash.[139]

While the Kemalists regularly defended the caliphate in Kurdistan, they were under foreign pressure to do away with it once and for all. Britain had turned the issue of the caliphate into a litmus test for the Kemalists to show that they had no interest outside of present-day Turkey. Describing the impact of those pressures on Turkish officials, Karabekir once stated that "with his return from Lausanne, it was noticeable that Ismet Pasha had created an anti-Islamic atmosphere."[140] Rauf Bey, then Prime min-

ister, did not hide this when he said that "in his meeting with Mustafa Kemal Pasha, Ismet Pasha had convinced him that the caliphate must be abolished in order for the peace to take place."[141] That was the case since according to M.H. Kidwavi, "the abolition of the caliphate was the condition for signing the Treaty of Lausanne."[142]

With the passing of time, the institution of the caliphate became increasingly problematic. Between 1921 and 1924, in order to overcome their enormous difficulties in dealing with the caliphate, the Kemalists had a great number of strategic decisions to make. Philosophically and symbolically, the caliphate stood against their conception of modern politics and governance. From the Kemalist perspective, as long as the caliphate existed, it would expose a duality in the state, and this would threaten the Kemalists' claim to sole, centralized authority. Sheikh Safvet Efendi, a deputy in the Turkish parliament, spoke to this effect as he noted that "in face of the existence of the Caliphate [the declaration of] the Republic [alone] could not end the duality of interior and foreign policy in Turkey."[143] This was because the existence of the Caliphate, even nominally, would have required some sort of power sharing with the Ottoman family, which, in addition to the problem of oversight of Caliphal power, could have put a limit to the Kemalists' totalitarian will to power.

Mustafa Kemal himself was extremely ambitious. For the big changes to take place, insinuated Kemal, the philosophy of history necessitates the concentration of power in the hands of one leader. In his words, "history has incontestably proven the necessity of a capable leader with firm power in order to overcome big problems."[144] Mustafa Kemal's approach to political leadership shows important traces of the thoughts of the CUP ideologues such as Gökalp. In such a philosophy, non-elites were considered creatures who lacked any *ferd-i şahsiyet* (sense of individuality or content of character).[145] The imagined nation of the Young Turks would be ruled by the military elite. In a *halkçı* (populist)[146] or ideal state, the elite *guzideler*[147] (army officers and intellectuals)—who understand the people's needs—speak and rule on their behalf. Mustafa Kemal also described the ideal Turkish political system along the same lines when he announced that "our *nation's will* is the foundation of our state. In such a state, the Grand National Assembly out of which the president and the cabinet emerge, will *govern in the name of the nation*."[148] Such a state will become a reality neither by giving the supreme control to ignorant masses (*avam*) nor by ending the rule of the upper classes, but by equality before the law.[149] A *reis* (military leader) was deemed to be the most qualified person

to take up the task of saving the nation.[150] Society is seen "as the source of ideals, the supreme moral authority, and the model of highest ethical conduct."[151] Yet, the army is perceived to be the core of the nation.[152]

The religious perspective of Mustafa Kemal also was very much under the influence of the Young Turks. In their view, the state had central importance in Islam. They conceptualized "the spirits of Islam" to be compatible with "the spirit of the time." Hence, Islam is perceived to have no function other than its service to the state. As Muhmmad Iqbal observes, the Young Turks equated the function of Islam with that of the state itself.[153] Kemal speaks to this effect when he contends that "the caliphate is nothing but the state [itself]. And in its true Islamic sense the state is the only institution [whose establishment] is considered obligatory."[154] The idea of the centrality of the state in Islam was very prevalent in the 1920s. Hence, after the abolition of the Caliphate, there was some theological wrangling in the Turkish parliament questioning whether the Caliphate ended with the removal of the institution. Some members of Parliament rejected the use of the term abolition (*ilga*). They argued that the state itself embodies the Caliphate whether or not there existed a separate institution by that name.[155]

To come back to Mustafa Kemal, he did not believe in the separation of power between religious and secular authority. He called those who advocated separation of power as retrogrades (*mürteci*).[156] Kemal had a religious and a naturalist argument in favor of the fusion of power. He defended his position that "there is no separation of power in nature. What is called the national will, the national sovereignty and power cannot be divided or separated."[157] He characterized such a system as Western mimicry.[158] He asserted that "the real laws should be in complete harmony with *shar'-i mubin* (the distinct laws of Islam)... they have to be natural (*tabi'i*)."[159]

In many ways, the political system advocated by Kemal was the same as that expounded by Gökalp. It was neither democratic nor socialist. In 1921 in a speech in the Parliament, Mustafa Kemal asserted that

> our state is not democratic, it is not socialist…The truth is that in terms of its scientific nature,[160] our political system is dissimilar to all those described in the books…Yet it is the only system that represents the national sovereignty and will…If it has to be explained sociologically: It is the *halk* (the people's) state.[161]

He added that such a state "has yet to come to existence…thank God we are Muslims. If we study its real foundations, [we will realize that] the

one and only political system compatible with our religion is the one based on [the fusion of power]."[162] Whether or not the above are the sincere religious views of Mustafa Kemal is a secondary issue. What is paramount, they elucidate Kemal's approach to the efficacy of a national and nationalized Islam in the service of the state. Such an approach to Islam and the state surfaced in the Hamidian era and intensified during the rule of the CUP. Such views thus signify the impact of the Young Turks' reforms and their state-centered interpretation of Islam on Kemal.

The CUP and the Young Turks, as the ideological forefathers of early Kemalism, believed that Islam could preserve Anatolian unity the way the Hamidian regime had previously employed the discourse of "Islamic unity and brotherhood." They too believed that Islam had the potential to become modernized and take the form of national identity to better serve the state. In an interview with the foreign press, Talat Pasha (grand vizier in 1917) contended that "Islam was a great religion and it can be brought to a level that can provide answers to the needs of our time."[163] Gökalp believed that the fate of both Islam and the Turkish nation was tied together and also to modernization. They had to "fully integrate into the European[164] civilization."[165] Hence, Gökalp rhetorically asks, in their integration into European civilization, "did the Japanese lose anything: their religion, their national culture?"[166]

As a nationalist, Gökalp first nationalizes Islam by "Turanizing" God. He does so as he brings God down on earth and lands Him in Turan, the homeland.[167] Gökalp "saw religion as the foundation of a national 'collective conscience' but at the same time as an item of personal ethics. Prayers were to be said in Turkish and the 'Turkification' of ritual was to him a means of anchoring the religious commitment of the rural population."[168]

In order to turn the state into the central theme in the Islamic juridical thought, Gökalp theoretically revokes the power of *içtihat* (Arabic, *ijtihād*, the adjudication of new laws) from the clerical class. Then, he turns the *ijtihad* into an exclusive right of the state. Hence, the legislative branch functions as the real *müçtehit* (Arabic *mujtahid*, doctor of law). Gökalp blames the lack of state bureaucracy in Arabia, in the Prophetic time, for the emergence of the individual *mujtahid*s, which gave birth to the clerical class. Had, for instance, the Roman or Persian Empire accepted the invitation to Islam, claims Gökalp, the Prophet would not have made changes to their political system.[169]

In another attempt to sacralize the state, Gökalp equates the laws of the state with that of the Divine. He claims that Islam values *örf* (Arabic *ʿurf*: customary law) as much as it values the *naṣṣ* (the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* [pl. *aḥādith*]: the sayings of the Prophet). Thus, he accords an equal value to both the Divine and customary sources of law.[170] After equalizing those two sources, Gökalp suggests the separation of clerical and traditional institutions from the state. He contends that such a separation can "make it possible to maintain the fundamental values of Islam alongside European civilization and Turkish national culture."[171] After offering commentary on a Qurʾānic verse (4:59),[172] Gökalp argues that "the true Islam" neither ties the hands of the state in legislation nor commissions any special group to the task of *ijtihād*. Inspired by the above verse, in one of his poems Gökalp wrote: "Obey God, then the Prophet, and the state, instructs the Qurʾān. I, with full consciousness, am loyal to the laws, *ḥadīth* and *āyāt* [of the Qurʾān]. I do listen to the *Mufti*s. Yet, laws and religion are not identical. The laws are left to the *ʿuli al-amr*: the state."[173] As he concludes, the institution of *Sheikh al-Islam* and other religious institutions, the Caliphate included, should not have any legislative functions.[174]

The policy of turning Islam into a mere state-serving religion continued even after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. However, from 1909 onward that policy took two different directions. In the periphery, the necessity of the Caliphate was strongly defended and it was employed to defuse non-Turkish nationalism and colonial influence.[175] In the center, however, the caliphate debate generally aimed at reducing the power of the Caliphate and other traditional institutions.

In the center, the *raison d'être* and the limits of the power of the *Sheikh- al-Islam*dom and the Caliphate were subjects of constant debate. However, from 1922 until the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, these debates took a different turn. Years before Mustafa Kemal's disillusionment with the Caliphate, religious scholars such as Seyyid Bey questioned that institution. Until 1923, Kemal did not openly criticize the institution. In 1920, Kemal wrote "The Caliphate has *to be free*, *independent*, *strong*, *and authoritative since this institution* has been entrusted *with protection of all that is sacred in Islam* and because it is responsible before the entire world of Islam."[176] There were some leading religious scholars such as Elmalılı Hamdi Yazar, Sheikh Safvet Efendi, Vehbi Efendi (the Minister of religious affairs), and Seyyid Bey (the Justice Minister), all of whom had questioned the necessity of the Caliphate before the Kemalists.

The above figures' religious background and scholarly rigor were crucial for the Kemalists to justify their agenda within the Islamic framework. Sheikh Safvet, for instance, described the declaration of the Republic as "the establishment of the government of God."[177] He regarded the demise of the Caliphate as a return "to the rule of the Rightly Guided Caliphs [the first four successors of the Prophet]."[178] Seyyid Bey, Mustafa Kemal's speech writer and religious adviser, offered a lecture on the caliphate—of unquestionable historical significance—in which he argued that the caliphate was merely a product of the traditional juridical literature.[179] Seyyid Bey is particularly known for his vital role in helping Kemal to localize the caliphate and bringing it to the confines of the Turkish nation-state between the years 1920 and 1923.[180]

The above situation indicates that prominent scholars had already internalized nationalism. They defended modern forms of governance and nation-state within the Islamic framework. As such, the Turkish religious scholars and statesmen offered a new interpretation of Islam that could serve and justify their nation-state. Eventually, the Kemalists destroyed the Caliphate not for its possibly religious nature but because it "would remain the rallying point"[181] against Kemalism, it represented the duality of the state, and was a prime obstacle for the Europeans powers to recognize Turkish sovereignty.

It was against this context that Seyyid Bey characterized the abolition as "the most important revolution in the history of Islam." He went on to say that

> From the *sharʿi* (Islamic laws') perspective, the state is caliphate; [caliphate] is the establishment of a just state. The Qurʾan recommends a rule that is based on the consultation principal…And now, we are doing our best to create—we have already created—a system based on consultation…[Since our new] system [already] embodies the approval of God[182] what else we can ask for?[183]

Mustafa Kemal's speech also points to the reality of the nation-state as a prevailing political system in the Muslim world. Nevertheless, Kemal still tried to convince Muslims inside and outside Turkey that the abolition of the Caliphate was not at odds with the teachings of Islam. Thus, he tried to make a case to the Muslims that the survival of the Ottoman Caliphate was neither possible nor religiously required. He also implied that such

an institution was more in tune with Catholicism than Islam when he declared that

> The notion of a single caliph exercising supreme religious authority over all the Muslim people is one which has come out of books,[184] not reality. The caliph has never exercised over Muslims a power similar to that held by the Pope over the Catholics.[185] Our religion has neither the same requirements, nor the same discipline as Christianity.[186]

As mentioned repeatedly, the internal complexity of caliphal politics was only one part of the riddle. The Kemalists were convinced that they were becoming increasingly incapable of handling the international dimension of the politics of the caliphate. It had turned into a huge dilemma. As stated earlier, the Treaty of Lausanne that led to the recognition of Turkey as a sovereign state became a defining moment for the abolition of the Caliphate. The signing of the Treaty was predicated on the abolition of the Caliphate.[187] Then, the Kemalists waited for about nine months to declare the end of this institution. According to İnönü, the waiting period was necessary to see "what kind of reactions [the abolition] might create in Turkey."[188]

Some major political figures such as Kazım Karabekir and Hüseyin Cahid questioned the political wisdom behind the abolition.[189] Yet, Lausanne helped the Kemalists come to terms with their ambivalences with respect to the Caliphate. It was right after this conference that Mustafa Kemal regarded the Caliphate as trouble for or a calamity (*başbelası*) that had befallen Turkish nation.[190] Kemal soon came to the conclusion that in the face of burgeoning Muslim nationalism(s), even as a symbol the Caliphate had lost its significance. In a speech in the Turkish Parliament, Mustafa Kemal stressed that Afghans, Indians, or Egyptians had no serious religious bonds with the Turks. "On the contrary," he contended, "they use us as a sacrificial lamb (*kurban*) for their own nationalist ideals (*milli mefkureleri*).[191] Then he went on telling those Muslim nations that "neither do I want you to bond with me through the Caliphate nor do I want you to destroy eight million [Turks] for seventy million [Indians]."[192]

Before the Constitutional Revolution, the Ottoman statesmen viewed constitutionalism as a sign of modernity that could engender prestige and grant them a space among the "civilized nations" without abandoning their claim to caliphal leadership. Now, Lausanne made the Kemalists view that the Caliphate as some sort of Asiatic despotism.[193] At the Lausanne

Conference, Curzon instructed the Turks that in order for them "to receive European help, they must adopt Western bureaucracy and governing standards."[194] In a way, the increasing pressure on the Kemalists to end the Caliphate had also gained a psychological dimension to it, as the Europeans regarded it as a form of Asiatic political system. The Kemalists caved into foreign pressure to abolish those institutions that either had potential international influence or were considered Asiatic. The Kemalists would have delayed the abolishment for the right opportunity if the Europeans had not tied the recognition of Turkish sovereignty to the demise of the Caliphate. Nevertheless, initially there was no mention of secularism. The Kemalists tried to justify the removal of the Caliphate religiously. As mentioned earlier, Seyyid Bey went so far as to declare the abolition "a revolution that was approved by God."

It is important to note that the end of the Caliphate brought Turkish Islam even more under state control. The creation of *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (the Directorate of Religious Affairs, DRA) in March 24, 1924—the day after the abolition—was a further step toward nationalizing Islam.[195] The state designed the DRA to offer a state-sectioned interpretation of Islam. Any other interpretation of Islam would be labeled as *irticai* (backward) and had to be removed from the public space. Contrary to the commonly held views, the Kemalists did not declare Islam, per se, as *irtica*. The term *irtica* was, and still is, very crucial for the state to differentiate two interpretations of Islam and to propound its own interpretation of "the true Islam." However, the above-mentioned Sheikh Sa'id's Kurdo-Islamic nationalism, which the state regarded as the embodiment of *irtica*, added to the already complex state/religion relationship in Turkey. The Sheikh's rebellion turned Kurdish Islam into a source of mobilization and a real challenge to the Kemalist state. Thereafter, the Kemalists intensified their campaign against all possible challengers, from the still un-subdued religious centers.

In summation, the aim here is not to argue that the Kemalists were devout Muslims or the opposite. However, it is to point to the complexity of the fusion between Muslim nationalism and their religious thought in the first quarter of the twentieth century. It is clear that generally the Kurds saw Islam and Kurdishness as inseparable. Also, Turkish nationalists in general believed Islam could serve their nationalist agenda and attempted to offer a version of a Turkified Islam. This process and the new interpretations—notwithstanding the complexity and instrumental use of the debates over the caliphate—illustrate that even grand religious

concepts cannot be studied in isolation from their sociopolitical context. Also, these debates indicate that the emergence of the nation-state was more complex than a simple adaptation of ethnic politics and secularism. Contrary to the celebrated views, the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate took place under foreign pressure that was accompanied by the Kemalist attempts to unify the state power rather than straight and simple espousal of secularization.

Notes

1. Erik-Jan Zürcher documents the connection of Turkish nationalism and Islam well into the 1980s. See Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State."
2. Because of his strict reliance on British documents, Olson too confuses Sheikh Sa'id with Nursi. See Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Saîd Rebellion*, *1880–1925*. For Russian documents, see Hewrami, *Şorşi Şex Sa'idi Piranu Sovyet*: *Le Belgename U Çapemeniyekani Sovyet Da/the Revolt of Sheikh Sa'id and the Soviet Union*—And for Persians Nezamali Dehnavi, *Documents of Iran and Turkey Relations* (*1922–1937*) (The Center for Documentation and Diplomatic History: Tehran, 2007).
3. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do," 13–14.; Ferzende Kaya, *Mezopotamya Sürgünü Abdülmelik Fırat'ın Yaşamöyküsü/the Mesopotamian Exile*: *The Life Story of Abdülmelik Fırat* (Istanbul: Anka Yayınlari 2003), 33.
4. Quoted in Ahmet Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları*: *Tedip Ve Tenkil/Kurdish Revolts*: *Discipline and Repression* (Istanbul: Evrensel, 2003), 64.
5. According to Masud Barzani, Mustafa Barzani's task was to convince Sheikh Abdulqadir to take up the role of leading all the Kurds regardless of their geographical locations. See Barzani, *Al-Barzani wa-l-Hakah al-Taharruriyah al-Kurdiyah/Barzani and the Kuridish Libaration Movement*, 1, 28.
6. Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları*: *Tedip ve Tenkil/Kurdish Revolts*: *Discipline and Repression*, 63.
7. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do," 15–17. See also, Kaya, *Mezopotamya Sürgünü Abdülmelik Fırat'ın Yaşamöyküsü/the Mesopotamian Exile*: *The Life Story of Abdülmelik Fırat*, 33.
8. *Mezopotamya Sürgünü Abdülmelik Fırat'ın Yaşamöyküsü/the Mesopotamian Exile*: *The Life Story of Abdülmelik Fırat*, 33.
9. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do," 15–17.

10. Dersim, "Sorsi Sex Saidi Piran/Sheikh Sa'id's Uprising" *Roji Nuwê* 1, no. 2 (1960/2010): 59.
11. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do," 15–17.
12. Sabriya Ahmad Lafi, *Al-Akrad fi Turkiya/The Kurds in Turkey* (Baghdad: al-Jami'a al-Mustansariya, 1985), 85.
13. Ismail Hekki Shaweys, "Komitey Istiqlali Kurdistan/Society for Kurdish Independence" *Roji Nuwê* 2, no. 1 (1961/2011): 20. See also, Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları: Tedip Ve Tenkil/Kurdish Revolts: Discipline and Repression* 54–56. Yusuf Ziya was former MP from Bitlis.
14. Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925*, 91.
15. Ismail Hekki Shaweys, "Şorşî Koçgirî/Koçgirî uprising-1," in *Roji Nuwê*, ed. Sediq Salih and Refiq Salih (Suleimani: Bnkey Jin, 1961/2011), p. 93.
16. Faysal Dabbagh, *Aḍwa' 'ala al-Kitab: Al-Jam'iyat wa-l-Munaẓamat wa-l-Ahzab al-Kurdiya fi Nisfi al-Qarn (1908–1958)/Kurdish Associations, Organizations, and Political Parties in Half a Century (1908–1958)* (Arbil: Thaqafa, 1997), 53. Sever, *1925 Hareketi Ve Azadî Örgütü/Azadi and the 1925 Movement*, 133.
17. Shaweys, "Şorşî Koçgirî/Koçgirî uprising-1," p. 92. Also, Hamit Bozarslan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919–1925)," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 165.
18. Shaweys, "Komitey Istiqlali Kurdistan/Society for Kurdish Independence," 20.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 21.
21. Ibid., 21–22.
22. Ibid.
23. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do," 15.
24. For more on this, see Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925.*
25. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do," 16.
26. Ibid.
27. This is the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays.
28. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Said Did What He Was Required to Do," 16.
29. Bozarslan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919–1925)," 176–77. For the complete text, see no. 7, 1960 in "Roji Nuwê," ed. Sediq Salih and Refiq Salih (Slimani: Bnkey Jin, 2011).

30. "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919–1925)," 172, 81.
31. H. Hisyar cited in ibid., 176. Emphasis added.
32. See Chap. 6.
33. Cf. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do."
34. Ibid. See also, Hamid Bozarslan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919–1925)," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003).
35. See Chap. 4.
36. See Khalid, "Pan-Islamism in Practice: The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and Its Uses." Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*. Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*: *Indian Muslims*, *the Ottomans and Britain*, *1877–1924*. Naeem Qureshi, Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924, Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1999).
37. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*: *Reconstructing Identity*, *State*, *Faith*, *and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 251.
38. M. Hasratiyan quoted in: M.S. Lazarov, *Al-Nidal wa-l-'Ikhfaq*; *Al-Mas'alah al-Kurdiya fi Sanawat 1923–1925/Resistance and Opression*: *the Kurdish Question*: *In the Years between 1923–1945*, transl. Sadiq al-Jallab (Slimani: Bnkey Jin, 2006), 83.
39. Faik Bulut, *Devletin Gözüyle Türkiye'de Kürt Isyanları/Kurdish Rebellions in Turkey from the State's Perspective* (Istanbul: Yön Yayıncılık, 1991), 14–15.
40. Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity*: *Heroes and Patriots*, *Traitors and Foes*, 89.
41. Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları*: *Tedip Ve Tenkil/Kurdish Revolts*: *Discipline and Repression* 144.
42. Bozarslan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919–1925)," 185.
43. Bozarslan rightly notes that the abolition of the Caliphate was just one among many factors for the Kurdish opposition to the Kemalists. Ibid., 180.
44. Uğur Mumcu, *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması 1919–1925/Kurdish Islamc Revolt*, 1. baski ed. (Istanbul: Tekin Yayinevi, 1991), 58.
45. Ibid., 57.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., 58.
48. Ibid.

49. Çevik, "Şex Seîd Ew Wezîfe Ku Daye Sere Xwe Bi Ferdi U Cemaeti Aniye Cih/Sheikh Sa'id Did What He Was Required to Do."
50. Ibid.
51. Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları: Tedip Ve Tenkil/Kurdish Revolts: Discipline and Repression* 89.
52. See Ahmad Fakhri Amin, "Mıjuy Neteweket/the History of Your Nation," *Roji Nuwê* 2, no. 2 (1961/2011): 6.
53. Ibid.
54. An important Kurdish city in Northern Kurdistan/Turkey.
55. Amin, "Mıjuy Neteweket/the History of Your Nation," 6.
56. After he was forced to watch the execution of 47 or 48 of his comrades one by one, the Sheikh wrote a sentence in Kurdish stating: "I don't regret witnessing the end of my ephemeral life as it is a sacrifice for my own nation." Kaya, *Mezopotamya Sürgünü Abdülmelik Fırat'ın Yaşamöyküsü/the Mesopotamian Exile: The Life Story of Abdülmelik Fırat*, 43.
57. Amin, "Mıjuy Neteweket/the History of Your Nation," 6. According to Bulut, in the courtroom, the Sheikh declared that he "had started his movement as response to Kurdish aspirations for securing an independent Kurdistan." See Bulut, *Devletin Gözüyle Türkiye'de Kürt Isyanları/Kurdish Rebellions in Turkey from the State's Perspective*, 57.
58. For a critique of the Kemalist influence on Kurdish nationalist historiography, see Houston, *Kurdistan: Crafting of National Selves*. Also, Cemil Gündoğan, *Beytüşşebap İsyanı Ve Şeyh Sait Ayaklanmasına Etkiler/the Beytüşşebap Rebellion and Its Impact on Sheikh Said's Revolt* (Istanbul: Komal, 1994).
59. For a great study on the impact of Kemalism on Kurdish historiography, see Hamit Bozarslan, "Kürd Milliyetçiliği Ve Kürd Hareketi (1898–2000)/ Kurdish Nationalism and Kurdish Movement."
60. Walter R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*, Studies in Rhetoric/Communication (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 47.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Cf. Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları: Tedip Ve Tenkil/Kurdish Revolts: Discipline and Repression* 57–58.
65. It should be indicated that van Bruinessen's assertion is in principle applicable to non-Kurdish ethnic groups' religiosity as well. This phenomenon is not sui generis or uniquely Kurdish. It should be viewed within the general topic of reciprocal influence of religion and ethnicity that might manifest itself differently in different contexts.
66. Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds and Islam."

67. See TBMM zabıtları (Turkish Grand National Assembly's minutes): [VII, 1 Mart 1340 (1924)] p. 53. (Emphasis added.) http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/asw/tur/htu/data/HTU2136%28ZC%29-35/index.djvu.
68. See Bulut, *Devletin Gözüyle Türkiye'de Kürt Isyanları/Kurdish Rebellions in Turkey from the State's Perspective* 15–16.
69. Ibid.
70. Cf. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, 146. Also, Bulut, *Devletin Gözüyle Türkiye'de Kürt Isyanları/Kurdish Rebellions in Turkey from the State's Perspective* 13–16.
71. Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, 146.
72. Ibid., 146–47.
73. The report was prepared by Mustafa Abdühalik Renda. As indicated earlier, Inönü commissioned Renda the special investigator for a close study of the 1925 Revolt in Kurdistan. In addition to his work as the Prime Minister's special investigator, Renda held various major governmental positions at different times. He was the speaker of the National Assembly, held a number of positions in different cabinets, and was the Minister of *Şark Islahat Plani* (the Eastern Reform Plan) in Inönü's cabinet. See Bayrak, *Şark Islahat Planı Kürtlere Vurulan Kelepçe/the Eastern Reform Plan and Shackling the Kurds*, 107.
74. Ibid., 91–107.
75. Ibid.
76. Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justice System of Atatürk*, 453–58.
77. The newspaper *Vatan* was closed on August 11, 1925 allegedly for being one of the newspapers that incited Sheikh Sa'id's Revolt. In one of its short reports, *Vatan* informed its readers that there had been clashes between the gendarmerie and the supporters (*'avnesi*) of Sheikh Sa'id. The same article indicated that the day before Mustafa Kemal had a meeting with the Interior Minister and the Chief of joint forces with regard to sending a military contingent to the region. *Vatan* (No: 666. Feb. 16. 1925). In issue 669 of the same paper, there is only a single paragraph, titled "Punishing Sheikh Sa'id." In that article, *Vatan* reports that the state had created a national organization to root out such criminal activities. *Vatan* (No: 669. Feb. 19. 1925). In the ninth day of the revolt, the language of reporting about the revolt changed. The political aspect of the revolt slowly came to the open. In a news piece that is entitled "The issue of Genç is the battle of feudalism against the state", *Vatan* reported that Sheikh Sa'id made prophetic claims. The Sheikh was said to have claimed that God has been ordained him to implement *Shari'a*. The Report added that because of inaccessibility of the region and the enormous amount of snowfall, the instantaneous suppression of the revolt was not possible. Then it went on to quote a member of parlia-

mentarians claiming that "the revolt lacks any significance; Genç [where the revolt started] is located in a remote corner of the country whose residents are only about a hundred of families." Ahmad Amin, the reporter, even confuses this Sheikh with Mullah Selim whom CUP had executed eleven years earlier. *Vatan* (No: 674. Feb. 23. 1925).

78. Cf. Tahir Kodal, *Paylaşılamayan Toprak: Türk Basınına Göre (1923–1926) Musul Meselesi/the Unshareable Land: The Mosul Question in the Turkish Press (1923–1926)* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2005), 298.
79. Okyar was the Prime minster at the time and he was soon replaced by İnönü.
80. Mumcu, *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması 1919–1925/Kurdish Islamic Revolt*, 74.
81. See, for example, the official documents reproduced in ibid., 69–77.
82. Cf. Ibid.
83. For the full text, see Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları: Tedip Ve Tenkil/Kurdish Revolts: Discipline and Repression* 66.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Here I am borrowing Walter Fisher's phrase; see Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*.
87. Cf. Bulut, *Devletin Gözüyle Türkiye'de Kürt Isyanları/Kurdish Rebellions in Turkey from the State's Perspective* 42–44.
88. At the time Karabekir was the head of the Party of Progress and Freedom.
89. Mumcu, *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması 1919–1925/Kurdish Islamic Revolt*, 74. Emphasis added.
90. Cf. Abdulhaluk Çay, *Her Yönüyle Kürt Dosyası/the Kurdish File* (Ankara: Boğaziçi Yayınları 1993), 394–95.
91. See ibid.
92. See Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic*, especially Chap. 4.
93. See ibid., 93–94.
94. Ibid., 119–20. Emphasis added.
95. The minutes from the closed sessions of the Turkish Grand National Assembly show that the Kurds were perceived quite differently before the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. For instance, in one of those sessions on August 3, 1922, Mustafa Kemal was cognizant of Kurdish rights and once uttered the following:

> The principle of right to self-rule for nations is now universally accepted. We have also accepted that principle. As expected, the Kurds have perfected their local administration. If we win over their leaders and influential figures they should declare that they want their lives to be administered by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey when they express views to determine their fates (*mukadderatlarına zaten sahip olduklarını*).

TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları 6 Mart 1338 (*1922*) quoted in Yuksel, "Dengbej, Mullah, Intelligentsia: The Survival and Revival of the Kurdish-Kurmanji Language in the Middle East, 1925–1960. Unpublished Dissertation" 20–21.

96. For more on this, see Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925*; Bozarslan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919–1925)," See also Mesut Yeğen's introduction to Bayrak, *Şark Islahat Planı Kürtlere Vurulan Kelepçe/the Eastern Reform Plan and Shackling the Kurds.*
97. Mumcu, *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması 1919–1925/Kurdish Islamc Revolt*, 47.
98. Ibid.
99. *Musul Tahkik Komisyonunun Cemiyet-i Akvam'a Verdiği Rapor*, *Ayın Tarihi*, vol. 17 (Ankara 1926), 316–17.
100. Ibid.
101. F.O./9060/E 959, cited in *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması 1919–1925/Kurdish Islamic Revolt*, 31.
102. File: 21; folder: 49; no. 113, 1926 in Dehnavi, *Documents of Iran and Turkey Relations* (*1922–1937*), 154.
103. Ibid.
104. (*Tā quvveh dārand az ḫusūl intiqām nadārand*).
105. File: 21; folder: 49; no. 113, 1926 in Dehnavi, *Documents of Iran and Turkey Relations* (*1922–1937*), 152.
106. Ibid., 152–53.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid., 153–54.
110. Ibid., 154.
111. Ibid.
112. For a great survey of the literature on this subject, see Lazarov, *Al-Nidal wa-l-Ikhfaq*: *al-Mas'alah al-Kurdiya Fi Sanawat 1923–1925/Resistance and Opression*; *the Kurdish Question*: *In the Years between 1923–1945*, 72–112.
113. Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion*, *1880–1925.*; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*: *Its Origins and Development.*; Sever, *1925 Hareketi ve Azadî Örgütü/Azadi and the 1925 Movement.*
114. For instance, see the pro-British Kurdish journal *Tigeyshtnii Rastii*, which was published in 1918–1919.
115. *Tigeyshtnii Rastii*, (no. 28; May 13, 1918). Emphasis added.
116. "The Turkish rule is in direct contradiction with *Shari'a*". Ibid, (no. 29; May 20, 1918). Emphasis added.
117. Online. "Mesopotamia (Review of the Civil Administration). Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia," 64. Emphasis added.

118. See Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877–1924.*
119. Ibid., 53–58.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. See Chap. 4.
123. See Chap. 4.
124. FO 371/41,772, 13,592 quoted in Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması/the Abolition of the Caliphate*, 58.
125. FO 371/7771, E 4827/33/65 cited in ibid., 72.
126. Ibid., 62.
127. Ibid., 61.
128. IOR/L/PS/10/853 Part 4, F202, cited in Oliver-Dee, *The Caliphate Question: The British Government and Islamic Governance*, 93–94.
129. Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması/the Abolition of the Caliphate*, 60–61.
130. Ibid.
131. Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justice System of Atatürk*, 367.
132. Ibid., 368.
133. İsmail Beşikçi, *Kürdistan Üzerinde Emperyalist Bölüşüm Mücadelesi, 1915–1925/the Imperialist Fight over Dividing Kurdistan* (Ankara: Yurt Kitap-Yayın, 1992), 283–95.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. See Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak/Thirteen Interesting Pages from Kurdish People's History.*
137. Cf. Cevat Dursunoğlu, *Milli Mücadelede Erzurum/Erzurum* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2000), Especially 15–25.
138. Beşikçi, *Kürditan Üzerin Emperyalist Bölüşüm Mücadelesi, 1915–1925/the Imperialist Fight over Dividing Kurdistan.*
139. Ibid.
140. Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması/the Abolition of the Caliphate*, 185.
141. Ibid.
142. FO 371/1010, E1199/2029/65; cited in ibid.
143. Sheikh Safvet was a member of Parliament; see ibid., 210.
144. Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justice System of Atatürk*, 202.
145. Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism; the Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* ([London]: Luzac, 1950), p. 133.
146. It must be indicated that, unlike Mustafa Kemal, Gökalp did not believe in the fusion of power. See Taha Parla, *Türkiye'de Anayasalar/Constitutions in Turkey* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 2002). In his belief in the fusion of

power, Kemal was mostly influenced by Rousseau and the Jacobins of the French Revolution. See Şerafettin Turan, *Atatürk'ün Düşünce Yapısını Etkileyen Olaylar, Düşünürler, Kitaplar/the Thought, Events, and Books Affected Atatürk Views* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2006); Ahu Tunçel, *Bir Siyaset Felsefesi Cumhuriyetçi Özgürlük/Republicanism Liberty as a Political Philosophy* (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları 2010). See also Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justice System of Atatürk*, 39–65.

147. Heyd translates *halkci* as a form of democracy. I believe populism is a better rendition. *Halkci* is equivalent to Persian *khalqī* or *khalq*-garāyī, Kurdish *xelki*, or Arabic *sha'bī*: populist in a positive sense or on the side of the people or to be of the people. It is different from *qawmi* (*nationalist*).
148. Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justic System of Atatürk*, 47 (emphasis added).
149. Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism; the Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp*, pp. 131–33.
150. Ibid.
151. Handan Nezir Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris; Distributed in the U.S. by Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 71.
152. Ibid.
153. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 180.
154. Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması/the Abolition of the Caliphate*, 204.
155. Cf. Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/The Revolutionary Justice System of Atatürk*, 387–412.
156. Ibid., 46.
157. Ibid., 87–88.
158. Ibid., 46.
159. Ibid., 87.
160. (*imlî mahiyet-i itibarile*)
161. Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justice System of Atatürk*, 86.
162. Ibid.
163. Fuat Dündar, *İttihat Ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası (1913–1918)/the CUP's Resettlement Policy of Muslims* (Istanbul: İletişim 2001), 29.
164. (*Avrupa medeniyetine tam bir surette girmek*).
165. Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 48.
166. Ibid., 49.
167. Whilst I was looking for the Beloved up in,

    I did not find Him there but on earth, in Turan

For more, see Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism; the Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp*. Current Turkish history textbooks still propagate the ideas of compatibility and Universality of Islamic and European values and pre-Islamic Turkish norms. According to some recent studies, "[p]re-Islamic Turkish traditions are described as generally in accordance with Islamic principles: 'Therefore, Turks accepted Islam willingly without force.' Immediately following this assertion, it is stated that 'the Turks soon grasped the leadership of Islamic religion.'"

See Thalia Dragonas, Buşra Ersanli, and Anna Frangoudaki, "Greek and Turkish Students' Views on History: The Nation and Democracy," in *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, ed. Faruk Birtek and Thalia Dragonas (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 175.

168. Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 120.
169. Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism; the Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp*, 85–88.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid.
172. 4:59. O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey *His* Messenger and those who are in authority among you. And if you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and *His* Messenger if you are believers in Allah and the Last Day.
173. Ziya Gökalp, *Yeni Hayat, Doğru Yol/New Life, Right Path* (Ankara: Cantekin Malbaası, 2006), 30.
174. Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism; the Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp*, 85–88.
175. Cf. Seyyid Muhammed Habib al-Ubeydi, *Ḥabl al-I'tisam wa Vujub al-Khilafa fi Din al-Islam/the Necessity of Khilafa in Islam*, vol. 4, Hilafet Risaleleri (Istanbul: Klasik 2004). Also, Ismail Safayihi, *Iqaz al-Ikhwan li Dasias al- ad'a'i wa ma Yaqtadi Hal al-Zaman/Warning the Brethren* ed. Hilâfet Risaleleri (Istanbul Klasik, 2004).
176. *Hâkimiyet- Milliye* (no. 5; January 28, 1920).
177. Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justic System of Atatürk*, 426.
178. Ibid., 425.
179. For his 1924 lectures in the Turkish Parliament, see TBMM zabıtları (Turkish Grand National Assembly's minutes): [VII, 1 Mart 1340 (1924)] pp. 55–65, http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/asw/tur/htu/data/HTU2136%28ZC%29-35/index.djvu. Also, Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu/Caliphate and the Question of Ummatism (Istanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1969).

180. For his views on caliphate, see his 1915 work Seyyid Bey, *Hilafet* vol. 4, Hilafet Risaleleri (Istanbul: Klasik, 1915/2004).
181. Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*; *the Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp*, pp. 93–94.
182. (*tahsini ilâhiye mezhar olduğu halde*).
183. See TBMM zabıtları (Turkish Grand National Assembly's minutes): [VII, 1 Mart 1340 (1924)] pp. 44–69, http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/asw/tur/htu/data/HTU2136%28ZC%29-35/index.djvu
184. By books Kemal means *fiqhi*, juridical, books, not the Quran of *Hadith*.
185. This part is almost a copy of Seyyid Bey's speech in the Parliament. See TBMM zabıtları (Turkish Grand National Assembly's minutes): [VII, 1 Mart 1340 (1924)] p. 56, http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/asw/tur/htu/data/HTU2136%28ZC%29-35/index.djvu
186. Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*: *The Response of the Shi'i and Sunni Muslims to the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 53.
187. FO 371/10,110, 1199/202,965 cited in Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması/the Abolition of the Caliphate*, 185.
188. Quoted in ibid., 191.
189. Akyol, *Atatürk'ün İhtilal Hukuku/the Revolutionary Justic System of Atatürk*, 371–412.
190. Ibid., 370.
191. Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması/the Abolition of the Caliphate*, 191.
192. Ibid. It is worth mentioning that four years earlier, Kemal himself claimed that no one in his right mind could ignore the passion of the Indian Muslims for the Ottoman Caliphate. See Mustafa Kemal's article "*The Caliphate and the Muslim World*" *in Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* no. 5, (January 28, 1920).
193. See ibid., 180.
194. Ibid.
195. With the creation of this new institution that by implication outlawed any outside religious interpretations, as Houston aptly puts,

    Islam is removed from the public domain and incorporated (re-inscribed) under the control of the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs). Here Islam is re-politicized to support the state's nation-building project – a classic Hobbesian solution that immediately restricts the possibility of constructing civil society. Islam, in this sense, truly becomes an official (state) religion, although we can discern some differences in state policies between the single-party period, the rule of the populist parties, and the period after the 1980 military coup.

    Christopher Houston, *Islam*, *Kurds and the Turkish Nation State* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 85. To claim that the Turkish state excluded Islam seems to be a gross simplification of the situation. Some studies of Turkish textbooks show an interesting impact of state's re-politicization

and re-presentation of Islam as the state's religion. It is important to remember that Turkish-Islam synthesis has deep roots in Turkey's twentieth century history. It is well known that Enver Pasha, a CUP leader, gave a much Islamic bent to his nationalism when he became aware of the effectiveness of "pan-Islamism" among the Turkic communities of central Asia. The Turkish state has been keen to preserve his Islamic image among the Turkic nation to a degree that "[…] *Islam is seen as part of the Turkish political presence, particularly where today's Turkic Republics are concerned. The Turkish Republic is not treated as one of the Islamic countries, but as the best of Islamic countries, and the best Turks are believed to be in Turkey.*" Dragonas, Ersanli, and Frangoudaki, "Greek and Turkish Students' Views on History: The Nation and Democracy," 174.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

This study has attempted to problematize a number of notions, chiefly the assumed unbridgeable gulf between religion and nationalism and the absence of nationalism in Muslim (and specifically in Kurdish and Turkish) communities before 1912. Based on such assumptions, religious interpretations are stable, and nationalism is inherently secular. However, my attempt was to show that even the most celebrated religio-political concepts such as the caliphate could function as empty signifiers. A closer look at the caliphate concept alone is sufficient to demonstrate that Islam or (more precisely) Islamic interpretations cannot easily be explained in isolation from other human affairs and concerns. The caliphate, both as a concept and as an institution emerged and took shape in a contested political environment. Its form and shape thus reflected the nature of contemporary internal Muslim rivalries as much as their religious concerns. From the start, the caliphate carried both regional and communal labels. The value attached to blood lineage for occupying that office is notable. Blood lineage became a legitimizing tool that eased the accession of certain groups to power and barred others. It seems that blood lineages, ethnic, or religious ties have always served as legitimizing tools for individuals and groups to claim power or the right to govern. This is the case even in today's modern democracies.

In the aftermath of the Prophet Mohammad's death, Abu Bakr's tribal lineage (Quraishi-ness) was regarded as a qualification that other claimants to succession lacked. His very lineage was presented as a means to induce

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certain political rights, which automatically deprived non-Quraishis for their lack of such a lineage. Later, for *Shi'is*, it was charisma that could induce the right to govern.[1] Those groups that had another type of lineage, that is, direct blood ties with Prophet Muhammad were deemed charismatic—in the Weberian sense of the term.[2] The most fundamental issue to be noted is the fact of how, through accommodating blood lineage, contemporaneous social relations were reproduced in the interpretations of religion and affected both juridical and institutional forms of power. This is despite the fact that the Qur'an (as the primary source of the law) regarded piety (*taqwa*) as the single criterion for nobility (*karamah*).[3] Yet the supremacy of the privileged group and its exclusive right to govern was to be reinforced and constituted a juridical precedent even for the Arab claimants of *khilafa* in the age of nationalism. *Shi'i*, *Sunni*, and *Khariji* versions of Islam were molded by the debate over political legitimacy and related power relations. The debate over the caliphate and the institution itself was the product of these political and communal disputes and continued to carry marks of the power struggle until the end of the Ottoman Caliphate. This points to the conspicuous impact of local cultures on a given religious interpretation. The issue of the ethnicity of the caliph becomes particularly significant as religious interpretations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries visibly reflect the prevalence of the impact of the ideal of nationalism.

Until the sixteenth century no non-Arab Caliphate had a chance to emerge. There was at least one case of a non-Quraishi Caliphate, the Fatimids in Egypt, but they were ethnically Arabs. The sixteenth-century Ottoman conquest of Arab lands coincided with the transfer of power from one ethnic group to the other: Arabs to Ottoman Turks. This led some Muslims to question Ottoman Caliphal claims. Until then many Muslim groups had opposed Quraishi-ness as a condition for the caliphate. With the demise of the Arab Caliphate, the dominant group, i.e., the Ottomans or the state itself began to question the exclusive right of the Quraishis to the caliphate. Thus, the transformation of power changed some aspects of the debate over caliphate. Now it was up to an Ottoman grand vizier to defend the legitimacy of non-Quraish or non-Arab rule. In the new era, Arab-ness, or more precisely, the restriction of caliphal rule to the Quraishis' was going to be revitalized by the governed.

Lütfi Pasha, an Ottoman grand vizier, maintained that the caliphal quality and legitimacy of his rule should not be tied to his blood lineage. Instead, he claimed, the legitimacy of a ruler had to be based on the abil-

ity to establish order wherein the community of the faithful would be able to carry on with their religious duties in peace. In other words, the very establishment of order in and of itself would engender the legitimacy of any rule. Lütfi Pasha insisted that such an act alone amounted to serving Islam. According to him, it was only through creating such an order that the community could meet the requirements of the religion and this constituted sufficient cause for the ruler to be recognized as the sultan, the caliph, the *imam*, or the *imam* of all *imam*s. This line of argument in defense of Ottoman Caliphal legitimacy was revitalized by Hamidian rule as it faced both foreign pressure and internal ethnic and nationalist challenges.

In the history of Muslim political thought, there is a conspicuous and continuous change in the interpretation of concepts such as the caliphate, which testifies to the sociopolitical influence of the context. Similarly, religious interpretations also continue to bear the impact of their context in the age of nationalism. Regional claims to the caliphate in the era of nationalism testify to the influence of Islamic reinterpretations as religious actors adopted the nation state as the ideal type of governance. The fact that religious interpretation took place within the nationalist paradigm should also problematize the general attitude in excluding the presence of religious factors in modern nationalist thought. Hence, approaching religion and nationalism as perpetually opposed binaries appears simplistic.

Conversely, the outright denial of nationalism in religious discourses is also an equally simplistic approach to both Islam and nationalism. Thus, the thesis of the latency of nationalism in Ottoman domains is unpersuasive. It holds that unlike other imperial subjects, the nineteenth-century Ottoman Muslim polity remained unaffected by the growing nationalist discourse, mainly due to its Islamic identity. Like its neighboring empires, the Ottoman state, as many Ottoman scholars have argued, adopted the ongoing centralization policies in Europe. It also strove to modernize its army and bureaucratic system, and aimed at the destruction of all grounds for ethnic and religious challenges, which could not take place in a vacuum.

In addition to the measures listed above, in the early nineteenth century, in the hopes of offering a unified official interpretation of Islam, the Ottoman state moved to further incorporate the religious establishment into the state. Furthermore, in the last quarter of the century, the Ottoman state declared Turkish the official language and increasingly attempted to Turkify the language of its educational and bureaucratic system. Concurrently, it criminalized the cultural and linguistic activities of Albanian, Kurdish, and other communities. Interestingly enough the

Turkification efforts by the Hamidian state coincided with its increased focus on the religious outlook of the state. In its attempt to universalize (*ta'mim*) the Turkish language, the Hamidian regime adopted even stricter policies than the Hapsburg Empire, for instance, in its attempt to universalize German.

Immediately after the 1878 Ottoman defeat and the resultant reduction in its non-Muslim population, the Hamidian regime chose the slogan of serving Islam as the sole legitimizing means for the state's practice. What is known as Hamidian pan-Islamism signified changes in the modality of adaptation of modernist reforms along with a stronger emphasis on the Islamic-ness of state-sanctioned identity. These changes should not be viewed as the state's indifference toward Ottoman official nationalism; rather, they coincided with the intensification of official nationalism. The Muslim world was facing two phenomena: colonialism and the emergence of nationalism. Emphasizing the Islamic identity of the Ottoman state was partly a strategy to deal with both of these threats to the Ottoman/Turkish establishment. The reassertion of Islamic identity was to bring about obedience at home and some sort of universal Muslim unity against the colonial powers. Thus, both in its Ottoman context and beyond, as Khalid rightly argues, "pan-Islamism was a complex phenomenon whose various dimensions need to be understood separately. Once we do that, we find a variegated phenomenon more akin to nationalism."[4]

Foreign threats and local nationalism created a dilemma that induced a sense of double loyalty for many Muslims. In many instances, Muslims showed some sort of sympathy toward the Ottomans against the colonial powers. This, however, could not eclipse diverse Muslim communities' sense of ethnic and national belonging. Of course, even the term "double loyalty" should be taken with a grain of salt. Different Muslim groups' perception of the Ottoman state, as in the Kurdish case, did not stay the same over the course of half a century—from Abdülhamid's accession to power to the abolishment of the caliphate. Moreover, there were moments of difference in the "public and hidden transcripts"[5] of leading Muslim figures and groups.

Without trying to write an extensive history of the caliphate, my aim is to demonstrate that Islamic concepts neither carried immutable meaning throughout history nor remained unaffected by their sociopolitical contexts. Nor did attempts to render them stable—especially in the scholarship on Kurdish religio-political movements—have much of a base in reality. What needs to be pointed out is that Islam came to be understood in exclusionary

and differential terms by both Ottoman elite and statesmen and people like Sheikh Ubeydullah. Therefore, if we do not attend to the ethno-nationalistic tendencies present in modern Islamic interpretations, the diversity in Muslim political thought cannot be explained. This diversity is exemplified by the religious binaries through which Sheikh Ubeydullah describes the Kurds in general as *qowm-e pak din* (the people of true religion) and the Ottoman Turks as *munafiq* (unfaithful disguised as Muslims).[6]

By the end of the nineteenth century, different ethnic groups increasingly saw Islam through their own ethno-nationalistic prisms. Of course, rapid political changes and the overall volatility of the Muslim world affected the political loyalties of Muslim communities. There is no denying that the Islamic faith remained a fundamental factor affecting Muslim political action in general. However, there was variety of other factors affecting the political stances of Muslim groups. Sometimes Islamic faith, in the face of non-Muslim and colonial presence, as in Sheikh Ubeydullah's case, engendered the complicated issue of double loyalties. Kurdish politics, even after Sheikh Ubeydullah's Revolt, reflected this complexity. There were several factors that made the Kurdish relationship with both the Great Powers and the Ottoman state still more complicated. Unlike that of other Muslims, the Kurdish relationship with the Ottomans was very complex, having as much to do with their common history as their common religious faith. In the post-Armenian genocide era, the Kurds lived in complete despair and anxiety. They were frightened by the prospect of an Armenian return and possible British retribution for their involvement in the 1915 genocide. They had also sustained hundreds of thousands of losses at the hands of joint Armenian and Russian forces during WWI.[7] British documents shed light on their enormous fear that left them between the rock of Turkish nationalism and the hard place they thought awaited them in the event of the creation of an Armenian state in the six eastern Ottoman provinces.[8]

To add to this complexity, some of the Kurdish leaders did not hesitate to express their fear of facing the Armenian fate at the hands of Turkish nationalists.[9] A statement by Sheikh Sa'id, who was accused of attempts to revive Ottoman Caliphate, reveals the ethno-nationalism in that era's Muslim thought. Sheikh Sa'id declared that the entire Ottoman Caliphate was a symbol of "Turkish cunning and deception."[10] This shows clearly that the Kurdish Islam, granted there was only one, was no exception to the general rule of carrying the marks of its sociopolitical context.

The idea of universal Muslim obedience to the caliphate, frequently shown as a sign of the lack of nationalism among Muslims in earlier periods, is at best a myth. It is, to a great degree, an Orientalist as well as a Kemalist construct. Among the late Ottoman Sultans, Abdülhamid II enjoyed the greatest public religious persona. Those who succeeded him were hardly known to the common people of the Empire. This is because the Caliphate generally remained a ceremonial office in the post-Hamidian era, especially during the CUP reign. From the rise of Mustafa Kemal until its abolishment, the Caliphate increasingly grew weaker. The role of the successors of Abdülhamid was mostly a nominal one. However, even Abdülhamid, the best known and the most popular among the later Caliphs, was not adored. If some of the Kurdish leaders or scholars from afar had any respect for Abdülhamid, one trip to Istanbul would have sufficed for their disillusionment with his Caliphate. A great example of such cases is the famous Kurdish poet, Sheikh Riza Talabani (1842–1909) from Suleimaniye. Talabani penned a poem after visiting Istanbul that best summarizes this discussion[11]:

Kâsh ke roozi be maydân-e homâyuni rah-dahadam
Tâ Abdülhamid *Khân ra beguyam*; ***ey hamirul mu'min***
Be'sat-e to ***dar khelâf-e*** *be'sat-e peyghambar ast*
Anta mâ 'ursilta illa ***zahmatan*** *lil'âlamin*[12]

I wish, one day he allowed my entry into the imperial square
To call Abdülhamid Khan, O! **Jackass of the faithful**,
You're sent for a purpose **opposite to** that of the Prophet,
You're not being sent except as a **trouble for the world**

After hearing this poem, the Minister of Pious Foundations (*awqaf*) summoned Talabani and questioned him if he had written a poem with such content. Knowing the harsh consequences, Talabani changed a few words in his poem and read it to the Minister as:

Kâsh ke roozi be maydân-e homâyuni raham dahand
Tâ Abdülhamid *Khân ra beguyam*; ***ey amirul mu'min***
Be'sat-e to ***dar vefâq-e*** *be'sat-e peyghambar ast*
Anta mâ 'ursilta illa ***rahmatan*** *lil'âlamin*[13]

I wish, one day he allowed my entry into the imperial square
To call Abdülhamid Khan, O! **Commander of the faithful**,
You're sent for a purpose **harmonious with** that of the Prophet,
You're not being sent except as a **mercy to the world**[14]

As shown earlier, even the Kemalists acknowledged that the "*ulama* of Kurdistan had never considered that of the Ottomans" as "a true caliphate."

The aim here is to reassert that Islam did not create a unified political collectivity as Islam has historically been understood differently in different sociopolitical contexts. Islam, even within specific religious denominations such as *Sunni*s and *Shi'i*s, has never produced a universally accepted interpretation of the religion.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Ottoman state propagated its Islam among the *Sunni*s to obfuscate the Islam of Others. At the same time, Arab and Kurdish elites each defended the superiority of their own Islamic understanding and practices. In the modern era, as shown above, usually different Muslim communities tied "the superiority" of their Islam to their ethnicity. At the same time, such claims were used as the basis for the legitimacy of certain collective political demands. These types of exclusionary interpretations of Islam helped communities such as the Kurds to either downplay their religious bonds with the ethnic Other or made the religious and ethnic boundaries coterminous. Such interpretations of Islam are modern and at the same time nationalistic. In the premodern era, claims to ethnic and religious superiority neither could induce collective political demands or will to the self-rule nor could grant any legitimacy to such demands. This is precisely where exclusionary interpretations of Islam intersect with modern nationalism or become testaments to the fusion of the two. As repeatedly stated, neither nationalism nor religion(s) can be studied in isolation. Religions, whatever their origins may be, are conducive to interpretations. Any interpretation of any religion is a human endeavor that is affected by its context. As shown earlier, despite elements of continuity, generally modern interpretations of Islam carry a paradigmatic emblem of nationalism. Rethinking and reinterpretations of Islam are not homogeneous as they bear marks of their interaction with specific sociohistorical contexts. Hence, Islamic religious thought is affected by its entanglements and its reciprocal relation with nationalism. Such a situation in and of itself provides the room for the continuity of Islamic religious thought and its fusion with nationalism.

As was shown earlier, conceiving of nationalism as a modern convention, in its Austinan sense, helps us grasp the malleability of nationalism and the possibility of its fusion with religious thought. If we are able to expand the idea of convention—as illustrated in the case of Sheikh Ubeydullah—we are able to make a better sense of some religio-nationalist utterances

in the modern Muslim history. This is the case since if nationalism is a convention according to which an "imagined community" has the right to make "the national and the political congruent," then any utterance to this effect is nationalistic. Based on such a convention communal self-referentiality in and of itself constitutes the legitimate ground for communal political demands and claims to self-rule. Hence, any utterance, religious or otherwise, that ties collective rights to the communal self-referentiality is modern, nationalistic, and locatable within the paradigm of nationalism. Therefore it is also justified to claim, as this study does, that there existed competing Muslim nationalisms long before WWI in the Ottoman context.

Notes

1. See Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam*: *From the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads* (New Brunswick, N.J. (U.S.A.): Transaction Publishers, 1989).
2. See ibid.
3. The Qur'an 49/13(Trans. Pickthal): "Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct"
4. Khalid, "Pan-Islamism in Practice: The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and Its Uses," 203.
5. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
6. See Nehri, *Tuhfetul Ehbab*: *Mesnewi Şex Ubeydullah Nehri*, 106–40.
7. online., "Mesopotamia (Review of the Civil Administration). Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia," 58.
8. Ibid.
9. Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion*, *1880–1925*, 37.
10. To read the Shaikh's letter see: Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity*: *Heroes and Patriots*, *Traitors and Foes*, 89–90.
11. Translation by the author.
12. Ayhan Geverî, "*Şêx Riza Telebanî Û Siltan* '*Evdilhemîd/Shaikh Reza Talabani and the Sultan Abdulhamid*," *Nûbihar*., no. 106 (2008).
13. Ibid. I am indebted to Ayhan Geverî for sharing his insightful article on Shaikh Reza Talabani with me.
14. The last verse is inspired by a verse in the Quran (21/107) on the Prophet of Islam: "[O Muhammad] and We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds."

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Index

A
'Abd al-Jabbar, Qadi, 53
'Abduh, Muhammad, 34–5, 133, 166–8, 220, 223
Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamism/ nationalism
  1876 Constitution, 101
  educational and linguistic Turkification, 107–125
  "Islamic revivalist", 93
  nationalism and politics of Pan-Islamism, 125–38
  official language and Turkification, 93–106
  religious discourse, 96
ad-Din Sami, Şems, 4
ad-Dowla, Iqbal, 169
Afshar, Ali, 179, 180
Agha, Hamza, 171
Akçuraoğlu, Yusuf, 81–3, 85
al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya, 52
al-Aqqad, Abbas Mahmud, 132
al-Asamm, Abu Bakr, 53
al-Banna, Hassan, 34, 39
al-Dawani, Jalal al-Din, 55
al-Kawakibi, Abdurrahman, 4, 34–5, 132, 224
Allah, Ubayd, 170
al-Mawardi, 52–4
Alp, Tekin, 79–80
Anderson, Benedict, 7, 9, 12, 73, 75–6, 81, 85, 93, 112, 115, 187, 194
Anidjar, Gil, 23
anti-Christian, 159
anti-colonial nationalism, 9, 10
anti-Hamidian politics, 217, 218
anti-Kemalist Revolt, 246
Arabic language
  and culture, 97–9
  secondary role, 101
Arab nationalism, 33, 36, 39–40, 130, 133
Asad, Talal, 22, 30, 33–4
Asiret Mektebi, 219
Austin, John Langshaw, 158

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K. Soleimani, *Islam and Competing Nationalisms in the Middle East, 1876-1926*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-59940-7

B
banal nationalism, 8, 37–8
Barzani, Mustafa, 242
Barzani, Sheikh Abdul Salam, 219
Barzanji, Sheikh Mahmoud, 254
Bey, Cebranli Halit, 229, 242, 248
Bey, Seyyid, 262
Billig, Michael, 8–9, 28, 37, 40, 158, 192, 194
British Colonial Administration, 254
British policy, 253
British provocation, 253
Butler, Judith, 158, 188

C
Cahid, Hüseyin, 263
caliphal politics, 263
Caliphate, 226
caliphate, 256–265
  abolition of, 258, 259
  existence of, 258
  in Kurdistan, 257
caliphate, emergence of
  Abu Bakr and ʻUmar, 51
  al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya, 52
  era of *Rashidun,* 51–2
  issues of caliphate, 52
  khilafa, 50
  lineage-based politics, 52–3
  the *Muhājirūn,* 51
  nn-Arab ethnic tendencies *(Shuʻubiyya),* 53
  Quraishi tribal lineage, 51
  Sharīʻa, 54
  Sunni Muslim historiography, 50
Celîl', Celîli, 173
Chatterjee, Partha, 4, 8–10, 12, 23, 37, 75, 158, 187
Christianity, 24
"civilization", adoption of, 77
civilized cloak, 221
"classization", notion of, 10
Clayton, Captain, 159
Cochran, Joseph Plumb, 179
colonialism, 232
Committee for Independent Kurdistan, 242
Committee of Public Education *(Maarif-i Umumiye Meclisi),* 109
communal tyranny, 224
Confucianism, 30
1876 Constitution, 59–60, 86–7, 101, 255
constitutionalism, 224, 231
convention, 158, 192

D
dar al-Islam, 130
Democrats and Socialists of Kurdistan, 242
"derivative nationalism", 4–5
Dhahran, Sami, 133

E
educational and linguistic Turkification
  Hamidian official nationalism and language, 112–13, 121–4
  Hamidian regime's censorship policies, 108
  homo religiosus, 107
  "The Language of the State", 118–20
  new security and disciplinary measures, introduction of, 108–9
  Ottoman intelligentsia and turkification of language, 113–18
  scholarship, 107
  Turkification of language, linear trajectory, 109–12
  Turkification policies, 107–8

Efendi, Motkili Halil Hayalî, 222
Efendi, Nader, 97
Efendi, Sheikh Said, 229
Eliade, Mircea, 23, 30–31
The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 73
empire and official nationalism
  "Civilization", adoption of, 77
  French model, 78
  "missionary nationalism", 76–7
  rubric of *medeniyet* (civilization)., 77
  Turk–Ottomans (Türk-Osmanlı), 78
ethno-nationalism, 223
ethno-symbolism approach, 6, 7
Eurocentric context, nationalism
  Christianity, 24
  homo nationalis, emergence of, 24
  religion, role of, 25
  religion-secularism, 26
  religious interpretations, 25–6
European identity formation, context of, 23
Ewing, Katherine, 22, 33

F
Firat, A.M., 229

G
Geertz, Clifford, 22
Gellner, Ernest, 7, 12, 22, 25, 31, 104, 192, 194
German national consciousness, 186
Gökalp, Ziya, 81, 84–5, 221
Greenfeld, Liah, 12–13, 24–8, 186
Grosby, Steven, 22

H
hadith literature, 26
Hamidian era, 104
Hamidian official nationalism and language
  Abdülhamid's Turkification policies, 122
  based discrimination, 121
  Islamic discourse and unity, 124
  language of ruling ethnic groups, 123–4
  non-Muslim schools, 112–13
  non-Turkish cultural activity, 123
  non-Turkish languages, 121–2
  Ottoman/Turkish national consciousness, 124
  religion, instrumental use of, 124
  systematic Turkification of language domain, 122–3
  Turkish, state's official language, 122
  unified language, conception of, 112
Hamidian rule, 222, 279
Hamidian tyranny, 227
Heper, Metin, 249
Heyvi, 242
Highest Council of Judicial Regulations, 118–19
homo nationalis, 24, 28, 38
homo religiosus, 10, 24, 28–9, 107
Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Agamben, Giorgio), 225
Hutchinson, John, 6–7

I
Ibn Hisham, Abd al-Malik, 50
Ibn Taymiyya, 54–5
Ijtihad, 30–31, 187, 221, 260–261
imam, 163
Indian nationalist discourse, 12
Iqbal, Muhammad, 12, 40, 134

Islam
  Arabic culture and language, 97–9, 101
  branch of, 161
  caliphate, concept of, 13
  ethno-national identity, 218
  interpretations, 1–2, 4–5
  modern comprehension of, 161
  nationalism, 2, 4, 220
  protection, central role of Turks, 96
  "purify Islam", 30
  revolution, 262
  Sunni-Shi`i beliefs, 3–4
  umma, definition of, 13
  values, 261
Islamic civilization, 161
Islamic concepts, 280
Islamic interpretations, 277
"Islamic revivalist", 14, 32–4, 36, 93, 220
Islamic unity, 96–7, 256
"Islamism"
  and Arabic language, 34
  foreign policy, 39
  fundamentalism, 33
  Islamic revivalism, 32
  national identity, 40
  Ottoman Caliphate, 36–7
  paradigmatic requirements, 37
  religious interpretation, 37
  umma and *khilafa,* 33–6

J
jihad, 160
jurisprudence, 220
Jwaideh, 168

K
Karabekir, Kazım, 251, 263
Karabekir, Kâzım, 243
Kemalists, anti-religious agenda, 246
Kemal, Mustafa, 61, 231, 243, 246, 248, 251–2, 252, 256, 258–63, 259, 282
Kemal, Namik, 4, 86, 124
"*Khādim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*", 55
Khanaqah, 158
Khilafa, 50, 102
  Caliphate, emergence of, 50–54
  late Ottoman Caliphate, 54–63
  political discourse, 49
  rising Muslim communities' nationalist sentiments, 49–50
Khulafa' al-Rashidun, or the "Rightly Guided Caliphs", 36
Kidwavi, M.H., 258
Klein, Janet, 106
Kurdish
  constitutive language acts, 176
  cultural and social life, 171
  delegation, 243
  economic life, 171
  ethnic differences, 188
  ethno-nationalism, 157
  ethno-nationalist aspirations, 157
  immutability, 165
  language, 157
  migrants and religious leaders, 161
  mullahs and religious leaders, 221
  nationalism, 157, 172, 174
  nationalism and national identity, 162
  nationalism, growth of, 217
  political action, 172
  political organizations, 242
  political scene, 160
  political statement, 174
  religious leaders, 166
  self-rule, 197
  sociopolitical conditions, 168

Kurdish nationalist historiography, 247
Kurdish–Ottoman Turkish interaction, 157
Kurdish Revolt, 251, 252–256
Kurdish uprising, 13, 60, 62, 157, 160, 188, 192, 249
Kurdistan, 106
Kur distan-centered islamic revivalism, 162–170
Kurdistan Taali Cemiyeti, 242

L

language, enormous significance of, 222
"The Language of the State"
  Highest Council of Judicial Regulations, 118–19
  linguistic regulations, 119
  "official language", 119–20
  Ottoman Orientalism, 120
  state's linguistic Turkification polices, 120
  Turkification of bureaucratic language, 118
Lewis, Bernard, 73–5, 77, 110

M

Mesnewi, 158, 161–162
Midhat, Ahmad, 4, 98–100
millet system, 82–3
"missionary nationalism", 76–7
modern convention, 283
"modern Turkish state", 1
Mohammad, Prophet, 277, 278
Molkara, Abbas Mirza, 160
the *Muhājirūn,* 51
musbet miliyetcilik, 226
Muslim Arab revivalism, 33–4
Muslim Brotherhood, 34, 39
Muslim communities, 280
  political loyalties of, 281
Muslim, fusion of religion and nationalism, 217

N

Nader, Nacib, 97–9
narcissism, 163
"narrated nation", Homi Bhabha's, 10
narrative paradigm, 250
nation, 191, 192
national consciousness, 21, 81, 184, 186, 194, 224–5, 228–9
national identity, definition, 8
nationalism
  "derivativeness", 8
  fusion of religion, 161
  "imagined communities", 7
  institutional discourse, 11–12
  invisible force, 194
  Islam, 2
  and modern Islamic thought, 1
  "modern" national culture, 9–10
  modern paradigm of, 158
  and national identity, 162
  nationalist elite, 11
  nationalist struggle, 10–11
  "the paradigmatic nature", 8
  and politics of Pan-Islamism, 125–38
  religious identity, 8–10
  religious reinterpretations, 10–11
  and religious thought (*see* religious thought and nationalism)
  self-perception and self-description, 6
  Turkish, 1–2
non-Arab caliphate, 278
non-Islamic culture, 163
non-Quraishis, 278
Nursi. *see* Said Kurdi, Bediüzzaman

O

official language and Turkification
  Aryan-Semitic myth, 98
  dominant nationalism, 106
  Hamidian linguistic nationalism, 104–5
  hierarchal (re)interpretation, 102
  interpretation of Islam, 95
  Islamic unity, 96–7
  Kurdish language, 103, 106
  language and civilization, 98
  "language domain behaviors", 103–4
  language gap, religious and political dangers, 94–5
  national language policies, 102
  Ottoman language, 96
  Ottoman Turkish Islamic discourse, 95–6
  Russian and Hapsburg Empires, 102–3
  `the sacredness of Arabic language", 100–101
  "Semitic" people, 99–100
  single language, use of, 106
  Tanzimat period Islam, 94, 95
  as "the basis of the nation", 104
  Turkish-Islam, 93
  Turkish-language literacy, 94
Okyar, Fethi, 249
"order creating system", 22
"the original Islam", re-introduction of, 21
orthodox revival, 165
Ottoman
  elite's view, 3
  Islamic identity and unity, 2–3, 5
  scholarship, 1–2
  state records, 3
  vision and policies, 2
Ottoman Caliphate, 36–7, 41, 254
  Abdülhamid II, 54, 63
  Bai'a, concept of, 57
  caliphate or *imam*ate, 56
  ethnic self-consciousness, 60
  Islamic religious discourse, 61
  khilafa, concept of, 58
  Kurdish-Ottoman Caliph relationship, 62
  Lütfi Paşa's booklet, 54–5, 56–8
  non-Arab claimant of *Khilafa,* 55
  Ottoman Sultan, 62
  Quraishi lineage, 58
  Quraishi-ness, 55–6
  Rashidun, end of, 56
  religiosity, 61
  removal of, 14–15
  second era of Ottoman Constitutionalism, 59–60
  Selim I, 54–5
  Sultan's legitimacy, 55
  Sunni Muslim community, 59–60
  Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, 59
  "universal caliphate" claim, 55
Ottoman caliphate, 255
Ottoman colonialism, 102–3
Ottoman constitutionalism, 217
Ottoman intelligentsia and Turkification of language
  Arabic language, 116
  French instruction, replacement of, 114
  Hamidian regime, linguistic and cultural activities, 113, 118
  language learning, 117–18
  "literacy progress", 114–15
  Ottoman Orientalism, 117
  "our language", Turkish as, 116
  Takvim-i Vekayi, 115
  Tercüman-ı Hakikat Weekly, 115, 116
  Turkish instructions, 113
  Turkishness and Turkification policies, 113–14

women's education, importance of, 117
Ottomanized Islam, 94
Ottoman mezhep, 161
Ottoman Orientalism, 96, 117, 120, 137
Ottoman state's ethnic assimilationist policies, 96
Ottoman/Turkish Constitutionalism, 60
Ottoman/Turkish "Official Nationalism"
Abdülhamid II's policies, 85–6
aftermath of Constitutionalism, 84
CUP era, 79
empire and official nationalism, 76–9
era of *Türkluk* (Turkishness), 80
French type of missionary nationalism, 82
lack of nationalism, 80–81
language reform tendencies, 85
latency of Turkish nationalism, 85
millet system, 82–3
Muslim-Turk, 86
nationalist discourse, 81
non-dominant group nationalism, 83
Ottoman administrative documents, 84–5
pan-Islamist policies, 83, 87
policy of assimilating *(temsil),* 82
radical statist/nationalist generations, 81
religious identity, importance of, 80
Republican nationalism, 79–80
Tanzimat reforms, 80, 81–2, 84
Tehekkum, 81
Turkish nationalism and latency, 73–6
Özcan, Azmi, 255
Özoglu, Hakan, 251

P
pan-Arabism, 133
Pan-Islamism
Abdülhamid II Caliphate, 125–8
anti-colonial sentiment, Muslim world, 125
Arab nationalism, 130
constitutionalism and parliamentary system, 126–7
"the degeneration of Islam", 133
description, 125
Hamidiye Cavalries, 135
instrumental use of Islam, 132
Iranian reformists, 126
Istanbul's role, 137–8
Kemalist statism, 135
Lütfi Paşa's booklet, 128
nationalist and anti-colonialist sentiments, 131
official nationalism and orientalism, 138
Ottoman state-society relations, 130
racial tendencies, 131
re-establishment of Arabic Caliphate, 132–3
reformulate Ottoman identity, 125
religious discourse and legitimacy, 136
revivalist movements, 134
source of "true religiosity", 136
state religious identity, 134
state's "religious management", 136
İstikbal reports, 128–9
Sultan, revivalists' relationship, 131–2
Sultan's pan-Islamism, 127
Syrian nationalism, 130
Turkification policies, 134
uniformity of Islam, 126
unity of Islam *(İttihadi İslam)*, 137
Şura-yi Ummat, 129–30
Westernism, adoptions of, 135

Pasha, Lütfi, 278
Pasha, Talat, 260
Pasha, Toussoun, 159
Philology, 115
positive nationalism, 232
"positive nationalism", 14
pre-Community for Progress and Union (CUP) era, 79
pre-modern "ethnie", 6
"process of sacralization", 31
pro-Muslim unity *(Ittîhad-î Islam),* 76
Prophet Mohammad, 50
pro-racial unity *(Ittîhad-î Anasur),* 76

Q

Qaḍ īal-Quḍ at (chief justice), 52
Qajar rule, 160
Quraishis, 4, 53, 278

R

racial segmentation, 244
Rashid Rida, 34–5, 105, 131–3, 166–7, 220, 223
Rashidun, era of, 51–3, 56, 58, 128, 132, 167–8
religion
- definition of, 22–3, 28
- "generic religion", 23
- non-European religions, 23
- "sacred texts", 26–7, 28
- secularism, 26
- social consciousness, framework of, 26

religio-nationalist discourse, 157
religio-political autonomy, 219
religious identity, 8, 80, 101
religious interpretation, 1, 11–12, 21–2, 25, 29, 32, 37, 40, 131, 136, 174
religious thought and nationalism
- and ethnicity, 27, 38
- ethnic self-differentiation, 33–4
- Eurocentric context, 24–7
- modern Christianity, 22–23
- modern Islamic political thought and "Islamism", 32–41
- national community, 28
- "oral traditions", 23–4
- "order creating system", 22
- religion or religious interpretation, 22
- "religious" and "irrational", 31–2
- scholarship, 21, 23, 32
- secularization and religion, 27–32

Renda, A.M., 249
Russian and Hapsburg Empires, 102–3
Russo–Ottoman War, 160, 178, 179, 180
Russo–Turkish war, 172

S

sacred and profane binaries, 29–30
Said Kurdi, Bediüzzaman, 14, 60, 103, 131
- communal tyranny, 224
- Kawakibi-like approach, 225
- late Ottoman period, 221
- nationalism, 218
- pre-exile life of, 227
- pre-exile writing reveal, 218

Sebab, Beyt, 243
secularism, 23, 26, 37, 264–5
secularization, 27, 31–2, 62, 265
Selim, Muhammad, 245
Semitic and Aryan languages, 98
Serf (Arabic *Sarf:* grammar/ conjugation), 116
Sharīʿa, 54–5, 160, 166, 180
Shaweys, Ismail Hakki, 242
Sheikh al-Islam, 40, 128, 226–7

Sheikh Said's uprising, 14, 247
Sheikh Ubeydullah, case of, 2, 5–6, 13–14
Shi`i Muslims, 4, 29, 38
Shi`i- Sunni war, 160
Skinner, Quentin, 158
Smith, Anthony, 6
Smith, Huston, 23–4
society for Kurdish mutual aid and progress, 230
Sultan's pan-Islamism, 127
Sunni Muslim historiography, 50
Sunni Muslims, 158, 192
Sunni-Shi`i beliefs, 3–4
Syrian nationalism, 130

T
Taha, Seyyed, 219
Tajdid, 30–31, 167
Talabani, Sheikh Riza, 282
Tanzimat period Islam, 94, 95
Taylor, Charles, 24, 104, 119
Tercüman-ı Hakikat, 4
Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, 59
Treaty of Lausanne, 261
Treaty of *Lausanne,* 256
tribalism, 191
Turkification of language, 3, 13
  educational and linguistic history, 107–125, 110
  Hamidian state, Turkish instruction, 111– 112
  incentives, 110, 112
  non-Muslim religious private schools, 110–111
  official language and, 93–106
  Ottoman Administrative Records, 109
  Ottoman archival documents, 110
  Turkish education policy, 111
Turkish nationalism
  Habsburg and Russian Empires, 75
  Hegel's conception of history, 74
  Islamic identity, 75
  Kurdish religion, 76
  lack of Turkish "self-consciousness", 75
  national identity, 76
  non-modern characteristic of Empire, 74–5
  political movement, 75
  Republican historiography, 79
  scholarship, 73–4, 79
  state/religious establishment, 75
  Turkishness and Turkification, 75
Turkishness, definition of, 80, 96
Turkish Security Court, 246
Turkism, threat of, 244
Turk–Ottomans (Türk-Osmanlı), 78

U
Ubeydullah, Sheikh, 157, 180
  ethnic differences on, 188
  Kurdish nationalism, 172
  Muslim Kurds religious devotion, 167
  nationalism, 195
  non-Islamic culture, 163
  political statements, 191
  religion and nationalism, fusion of, 158
  religio-political project of, 157
  rise of, 158–161
  role in war, 182–183
  self-referentiality, 157
umma
  and *khilafa,* 35–6
  reinterpretation of, 33–5
unity of Islam *(İttihadi İslam)*, 137
"universal caliphate" claim, 55
Şura-yi Ummat, 129–30

V
Vatan, 95
Vilayet-i, 174
Vizier, Grand, 220

W
Westernism, adoptions of, 135
WWI era, 225, 226

X
Xani, Ahmad, 157

Z
zakat (religious tax), 51