

DIPLOMACY, EVANGELISM AND REFORM:
ABDÜLHAMİD II AND AMERICAN PROTESTANT
MISSIONARIES, 1876 - 1890

A Master's Thesis

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of History.



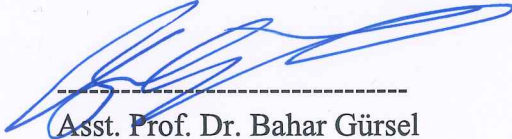
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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is an attempt to understand how the Ottoman authorities increasingly viewed the American Protestant missionaries associated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the largest American missionary body present in the Ottoman Empire, as elements threatening to the security and survival of the empire by the beginning of the Hamidian period. Making use of Ottoman and American archival materials, missionary documents, memoirs of diplomats and missionaries, this thesis offers a set of political and structural reasons for the deterioration of relations between the missionary body and the Ottoman government. This thesis also highlights the transnational nature of the ABCFM network in the Ottoman Empire. It investigates how it developed into becoming an international actor, mediating between polities and lobbying for its agenda at international forums.

Keywords: Abdülhamid II, Congress of Berlin, Reforms, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), Transnationalism

ÖZET

DİPLOMASİ, EVANJELİZM VE ISLAHAT: II. ABDÜLHAMİD VE AMERİKAN
PROTESTAN MİSYONERLER, 1876 -1890

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Bu tez Osmanlı otoritelerinin neden II. Abdülhamid dönemi başı itibariyle Amerikan Bord Heyeti (ABCFM) ile bağlantılı Amerikan Protestan misyonerlerini bir güvenlik tehdidi olarak gördüğünü incelemektedir. Osmanlı ve Amerikan arşiv malzemeleri, misyoner belgeleri ve diplomat ve misyoner anılarından yararlanan bu tezde Osmanlı hükümeti ile Amerikan misyonerleri arasındaki çatışmanın sebepleri olarak bir dizi siyasi ve yapısal neden sunulmaktadır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki ABCFM ağının ulusaşırı yapısını vurgulayan bu tez, bu ağın nasıl hükümetler arasında arabuluculuk eden ve kendi menfaatleri için uluslararası forumlarda lobi yapan bir uluslararası aktöre dönüştüğünü de incelemektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Amerikan Bord Heyeti, Berlin Kongresi, Islahat, İkinci Abdülhamid, Ulusaşırılık

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century was the greatest century of Christian missions, according to the historian Kenneth Scott Latourette.¹ This was especially the case for the Protestant missions. During this century, the Protestant churches expanded, new missionary boards and societies were formed, and they undertook social services all around the world on an unprecedented scale. Protestant missionaries crossed borders and preached among the people all around the world. They pioneered printing and libraries, engaged in public debates and polemics, and meet and wrote about new peoples and societies.²

The practice of spreading Christian faith in an attempt to win new converts, what a Christian mission is intended to do, is also called “evangelism” (derived from the verb “to evangelize”). This is not, however, what the verb “to evangelize” originally implies. The verb evangelize, which comes from two Greek words meaning “bringing good news and tidings”, actually refers to an ardent support for an idea or

¹ Kenneth S. Latourette, *The Great Century in Europe and the United States of America: A.D. 1800- A.D. 1914*. Vol. 4 of “A History of the Expansion of Christianity”. (New York: Harper, 1941), 1-7, 458.

² Right after its founding in 1810, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) five missionaries left for the British India. The ABCFM’s enterprise in the Ottoman Empire began with only two men. After a century, the same organization had 1.2 million dollars at its disposal per annum and controlled a network of hundreds of missionaries scattered all around the world. Michael C. Coleman. *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes Toward American Indians, 1837-1893*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 9.

cause.³ It follows that mission (and evangelism) is not necessarily restricted to something religious. Any organized effort intended to convey and propagate a message to a wider audience, who is thought to lack and require that specific message, can be defined as a missionary work.⁴

Taking into consideration that the nineteenth century also witnessed an extraordinary advancement in empire-building, and means of communication and transportation - like printing, steamships, railroads and telegraphs- one can argue that the nineteenth century was not only the greatest century for Christian missions, but for acts of evangelism of any kind.⁵ This was, however, not a one-way process. The missionaries and the societies they interacted with often adapt new methods and ideas from each other. Many empires, societies and religions, after hosting Christian missionaries from abroad, rapidly adopted their methods of preaching and propaganda.⁶ As soon as the American Protestant missionaries arrived the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, for example, they realized that it is impossible to convey their message without learning from and cooperating with the “heathens” they wanted to convert. Sooner or later, both sides learned many things from each

³ Oxford English Dictionary Online. "evangelism," accessed December 16, 2019. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/65201?redirectedFrom=evangelism&>; Oxford English Dictionary Online. "evangelize," accessed December 16, 2019. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/65209>.

⁴ Pels, Peter, "Missionaries," in entry in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, ed. Akira. Iriye, Pierre-Yves Saunier, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 716-9.

⁵ Daniel R. Headrick. *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁶ Christopher A. Bayly. *The Birth of the Modern World: 1780-1914 ; Global Connections and Comparisons*. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2012): 118, 330-350

other.⁷ In short, the nineteenth century missionaries were, as transnational actors, maybe the most extensive, determined and powerful champions of globalization.

This thesis is an attempt to understand how and why, by the first half of the sultan Abdülhamid II's reign and especially after the Congress of Berlin (1878), the Ottoman authorities increasingly perceived the American Protestant missionaries as elements threatening to the security and survival of the empire. The missionaries concerned here are those associated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the largest American missionary body present in the Ottoman Empire since the 1820s. The thesis will demonstrate what sort of tools the Ottoman sultan employed to pin down and counter the American missionary activity and, along the way, adopted some missionary ideas and techniques as well. Particular attention is paid to situate the deterioration of relations between the missionary body and the Ottoman government within the internal dynamics of the Ottoman polity and society. Transnational nature of the missionary work will be highlighted and it will be shown that the emergence of ABCFM network as a significant international actor, mediating between polities, communicating with the outside world and lobbying for its interests at international forums, aggravated the concerns of the Hamidian government who tried to control and monopolize legitimate information and narrative.⁸ Due to the interwoven nature of international relations during this period,

⁷ Robert Miller, O. and Soleimani, K. (2019), The Sheikh and the Missionary: Notes on a Conversation on Christianity, Islam and Kurdish Nationalism. *Muslim World*, 109: 394-416. doi:10.1111/muwo.12299; In recent years, some scholars characterized the American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire as "American-Ottomans". Henry Gorman, "American Ottomans: Protestant Missionaries in an Islamic Empire's Service, 1820-1919", *Diplomatic History*, Volume 43, Issue 3, June 2019, Pages 544-568, <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhz005>

⁸ Miller Owen. "Sasun 1894: Mountains, Missionaries and Massacres at the End of the Ottoman Empire" Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2015.

this thesis will occasionally refer to the Ottoman relations with the so-called European Great Powers.

1.1 Historiography

American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire was not a central topic in Middle Eastern studies and Ottoman studies during the first half of the twentieth century. Mostly their presence and accomplishments in the Ottoman lands were recounted as they relate to the Great Power diplomacy and the so-called Eastern Question, the nineteenth century Eurocentric question of what to do with the declining Ottoman Empire and how to fill the power vacuum to be created by its imminent collapse.⁹ Added to these, general histories of American-Ottoman/Turkish relations written before the 1960s offered some insights into the American missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire. Leland James Gordon's comprehensive survey *American Relations with Turkey, 1830-1930*, for example, reserves a chapter for the American missionaries and declares their work as "America's Good Will Investment in Turkey".¹⁰ Works by Fuad Ezgü and Akdes Nimet Kurat present some Turkish

⁹ This often meant the way the American missionaries had a connection with the emergence and internationalization of the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878 and the Armenian Question. See, for example, William L. Langer. *The Diplomacy of Imperialism 1890-1902*. (New York, NY: Knopf, 1935), 145-166; Robert W. Seton-Watson. *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics*. (London: MacMillan, 1935): 125-133 ; A.O. Sarkissian, *History of the Armenian Question to 1885* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1938); 117-8;. Matthew S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 253-60; J A. R. Marriott, *The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 367-8.

¹⁰ Leland J. Gordon. *American Relations with Turkey, 1830-1930: An Economic Interpretation*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932). 221-251.

sources regarding the American missionary work.¹¹ Yet, these sources are not sufficient to outline a comprehensive picture of American missionary enterprise in the Ottoman Empire as they offer only minor and fragmentary information about the subject. Moreover, the relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire remained relatively understudied, which is still the case.¹²

American involvement and interests in the Middle East aroused serious interest among American historians after the 1950s as the US became more involved in the region after the Suez Crisis. Abdul Latif Tibawi, whose work was published in the 1960s, identified the missionary work historically as the primary American interest

¹¹ Fuad Ezgü, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu-Amerika Birleşik Devletleri: İktisadi, Siyasi ve Kültürel Münasebetlerin Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesi (1795-1908)”, Unpublished PhD Thesis, (İstanbul University, 1949); Akdes N. Kurat, *Türk-Amerikan Münasebetlerine Kısa Bir Bakış, 1800-1959*, (Ankara: Doğu Matbaası, 1959).

¹² Fuad Ezgü attributes the literature’s relative lack of interest in Ottoman-American relations to the following factors: (1) the relations between the two countries, consisting mainly of economic and cultural matters, were fairly good and they never went to a war; (2) the long distance between the Ottoman Empire and the United States made the two countries less connected, which also meant that they were never collectively exposed to a common threat; (3) the authors and historians working on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey spent much of their efforts to the Eastern Question, of which the United States was never a part. Fuad Ezgü, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu-Amerika Birleşik Devletleri: İktisadi, Siyasi ve Kültürel Münasebetlerin Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesi (1795-1908)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, (İstanbul University, 1949), 6-7. Şuhnaz Yılmaz also makes similar points. *Turkish-American Relations, 1800-1952: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 10. More recent works also suffers from the same problem. For example, only one-fifth of Thomas A. Bryson’s massive survey is devoted to the 130-year period before the WW1 between the Ottoman Empire and the US, while a great chunk of the book deals with the remaining 60 years. Thomas A. Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle East, 1784-1975: A Survey*. (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1977), 1-57. Similarly, Şuhnaz Yılmaz’s account of Turkish-American relations characterizes the centennial relations between the Ottomans and the Americans simply as a “long prelude” to what happens later and reserves only one chapter to the subject, while the rest of the book relates to the Turkish relations with the US before NATO, which lasts less than a half-century. Şuhnaz Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations, 1800-1952: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2015).

in the region.¹³ Merle E. Curti covers American private efforts at overseas charity in such disastrous events as famines, wars and upheavals.¹⁴ John A. DeNovo evaluates American cultural, diplomatic and economic activity in the whole Middle East region from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the eve of World War One.¹⁵ Rich and detailed accounts of early American missionary experiences and interactions in the Ottoman Empire are offered by David Finnie and James A. Field Jr.¹⁶ Although non of these books is exclusively focused on missionaries, they made extensive use of missionary documents. Their primary defect, however, is that they suffered from presentism since their primary aim is to historicize and explain the rapidly increasing American involvement in the region during the 1960s. Plus, except for Tibawi, these authors failed to tap into local sources.

American historian John K. Fairbank, at the 1968 annual meeting of the American Historical Association, declared the missionary as “the invisible man in American history”, and encouraged fellow historians to focus more on this subject.

Acknowledging that some historians, like Kenneth Scott Latourette, noted how the American missionaries interacted with their environments in religious contexts, he contended that the secular missionary influence at home, created during their visits or through missionary reports and letters, is still unexplored by the academic

¹³ Abdul L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

¹⁴ Merle, Curti. *American Philanthropy Abroad: A History*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963).

¹⁵ John A. Denovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1968).

¹⁶ James A. Field, *America and the Mediterranean World 1776-1882*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); David H. Finnie, *Pioneers East: The Early American Experience in the Middle East*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). Field clearly states that he is writing the American viewpoint, inferred primarily from English-language sources.

historians¹⁷. Numerous thematic works regarding the American missionary activities in the Middle East appeared after Fairbank's encouragement. Joseph L. Grabill, for example, highlights the importance of American Protestant missionary influence on the foreign policy of the United States, particularly focusing on how the leading figures of the missionary network lobbied for their interests through their high-level connections with the policy-makers in Washington D.C.¹⁸ Robert L. Daniel, who made extensive use of missionary documents, focuses on activities of private philanthropy carried out in the region by American citizens, including missionaries, educators and doctors.¹⁹ These contributions are still used as main reference books on the subject, as they are more analytical and focused than the earlier works. Yet, the language barrier persisted as they lacked local voices. In connection with this, these historians failed to properly evaluate the missionary impact on host countries

¹⁷ John K. Fairbank, "Assignment for the '70's", *The American Historical Review*, Volume 74, Issue 3, February 1969, Pages 861–879, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/74.3.861>. In this line, see for example Reed, James Eldin. "American Foreign Policy, The Politics of Missions and Josiah Strong, 1890–1900." *Church History* 41, no. 2 (1972): 230–45. doi:10.2307/3164162. James Eldin Reed notes the neglect of the American missionaries in the existing literature and highlights their impact on American foreign policy towards the Middle East. Based mostly on missionary documents, his article discusses how the ABCFM stimulated the public opinion at home and exerted influence on foreign policy-makers in the American capital for a more aggressive policy towards the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century. Another work taking Fairbank's lead is Joseph L. Grabill, The "Invisible" Missionary: A Study in American Foreign Relations, *Journal of Church and State*, Volume 14, Issue 1, Winter 1972, Pages 93–105, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/14.1.93>. For a recent contribution in this line, see David A. Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America*. (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Joseph L. Grabill. *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1870-1927*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1971).

¹⁹ Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East: 1820-1960*, (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1970).

and tended to portray the missionaries as well-educated individuals bringing enlightenment and charity to the region.²⁰

In the 1980s and 1990s, numerous Turkish historians entered into the field. Mostly their work did not relate to the American missionaries themselves, but concerned the social and political implications of their work and the impact they left over the nationalist trends within the empire.²¹ These works often suffer from overgeneralization.²² For example, almost all missionary works are presented as intrusions to the Ottoman affairs instigating nationalist sentiments, or attempts for crude imperialist penetration in the region. Still, their contribution is valuable as they introduced the use of Ottoman archival sources.

²⁰ For example, lumping together the American philanthropy in the Ottoman Empire, China, and Japan in a chapter, Merle Curti highlights how the “American generosity” enabled extensive missionary enterprise in such fields as education, printing and public health. Merle, Curti. *American Philanthropy Abroad: A History*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963).

²¹ Curiously, the earliest incarnations of this literature were penned by non-academics who had pronounced right-wing chauvinistic tendencies. See, Erol Kırşehirlioğlu, *Türkiye’de Misyoner Faaliyetleri*. (İstanbul: Bedir Yayınevi, 1963); Necdet Sevinç. *Ajan Okulları*. (İstanbul: Oymak Yayınları, 1975).

²² There is a common tendency in this literature to indicate a direct connection between the American missionary efforts in the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian revolutionary activities, with the suggestion that it was the missionary agenda to encourage the Ottoman Armenians to rebel against the state and propagate for their cause. See, for example, Seçil Akgün, “Amerikalı Misyonerlerin Anadolu’ya Bakışları”. *OTAM (Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi)*, 1992; Seçil Akgün, “Amerikalı Misyonerlerin Ermeni Meselesinde Rolü”, *A.Ü. T.İ.T.E. Dergisi*, (Ank. 1988). Another line of argument holds that the American missionary network was in collaboration with the US government officials and other European powers in their imperial project of destabilizing and penetrating the Middle East. To quote Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, the American missionary enterprise represented “the compassionate and humanistic face” of cultivating the American interests and presence in the region, whereas the US Navy displayed the “cold and tough” face of it. Uygur Kocabaşoğlu. *Kendi Belgeleriyle Anadolu’daki Amerika: 19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndaki Amerikan Misyoner Okulları*. (İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 2000), 12, 166.

Only in recent decades, as a young generation of scholars began to pay attention to the subject, American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and in the Middle East have become a major topic on its own right.²³ Although there is still little research, almost each year new contributions appear. These works often make use of both American and Ottoman primary sources, as well as diplomatic records of certain European governments. Thus, they are more balanced in expressing the American missionary experience in the Ottoman Empire as they rely on multiple observers. Moving away from simplistic schemes attaching importance to the American missionary enterprise only as it relates to Great Power diplomacy, and transcending the binary identities of missionaries either as colonialist intruders or civilized enlighteners, these works seek to offer a nuanced narrative attempting to identify the place of American missionary activity in the Ottoman context, highlighting the transnational identity of the missionaries, and drawing attention to interchange of knowledge, ideas and techniques between the missionaries and the locals. It is this literature with which this thesis will mostly refer to and attempt to be in a dialogue.

²³ Examples from this literature include Deringil, Selim. *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1999; Kieser, Hans-Lukas. *Iskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet: 1839-1938*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005); Makdisi, Ussama. *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008; Hans-Lukas Kieser. *Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010; American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters by Mehmet Ali Doğan and Heather J. Sharkey; Deringil, Selim. 2012. *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511791444.

After a general literature review on the American missions to the Ottoman Empire, let us now see how the central question of this thesis is treated in this literature: When, how and why the Ottoman authorities took a negative stance against the American Protestant missionaries who were operating in the Ottoman lands since the 1820s? What were the political and structural factors that led to this turn? What kind of policies were implemented by the Ottoman government after the American missionary presence in the empire was perceived to be a security threat?

Most authors agree that sometime between 1860s and 1880s the changes that made life difficult for American missionaries happened. Leland James Gordon dates the year 1864 for the emergence of a distinct policy change on the part of the Ottoman government.²⁴ By 1864, due to the efforts of a German Protestant missionary named Dr. Gotlied Karl Phander, a couple of Ottoman Muslim subjects converted to Protestantism. Phander had an openly anti-Islamic discourse, which was not endorsed by the American missionaries. His converts were sheltered in an inn, from where they were publicly engaging in missionary activities. In addition to this, against all the advice from his American counterparts,²⁵ Phander published a book aggressively entitled *Proofs of the Falsehood of the Mahometan Religion*.

²⁴ Gordon, *American Relations*, 222-36. Following his lead, other historians also referred to the same year as a dividing line where the Ottoman government stopped being cooperative with and tolerant towards the American missionary work. See Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 27-8; Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 102; Naomi W. Cohen, *A Dual Heritage: The Public Career of Oscar S. Straus*. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 24-6.

²⁵ Cyrus Hamlin. *Among the Turks*. (New York: R. Carter and Brothwers, 1878) 92; William Goodell. *Forty Years in the Turkish Empire, Or, Memoirs of Rev. William Goodell*, (New York: Robert Carter, 1876), 425-33.

Immediately after this, citing concerns for public order, the Ottoman authorities closed some missionary printing presses and assembly halls used by British and American missionaries, confiscated some books, and imprisoned these Ottoman subjects who converted to Protestantism from Islam. Two British missionaries were prosecuted. Soon after the converts were released, but more elaborate restrictions on the printed press followed when a new press code was introduced in the same year.²⁶ Essentially this was not a crisis that was rooted by the activities of American missionaries. The most powerful agitation came from the British missions and the British ambassador. Yet, the American missionaries closely witnessed the events and derived lessons from what happened. Hans Lukas Kieser notes the deep impact this series of events left over the American missionaries: until the year 1908, no missionary would attempt to convert a Muslim subject of the empire.²⁷

In light of all these, Gordon's argument that the year 1864 represents a dividing line does not appear plausible. What happened does not appear to be a systematic campaign strictly against the American missionaries. It rather looks like a single incident in which sudden and definite measures were taken only to limit the Protestant missionary impact on the Muslim subjects, to avoid igniting the Islamic sentiment among the Muslim subjects, and to enforce a new press code.

Roderic Davison notes that the period between 1856 and the 1870s was the most convenient time for missionary work. Quoting the leading American missionaries, he shows that, compared to earlier and later periods, less people were interfering with

²⁶ Gordon, *American Relations*, 228-236.; Jeremy Salt. *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896*. (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 34-6; Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy*, 79-83

²⁷ Kieser, *Iskalanmış Barış*, 89-90

their work and more security was provided by the Ottoman government.²⁸ Yet, a sea change happened in the 1870s when chronic social, political and financial crises led to a rise in Islamic sentiment among the Muslim subjects of the empire. As the deep-seated Muslim conviction of superiority over non-Muslims resurfaced, the Ottoman policies for ensuring more religious liberty and toleration were suspended. Suitable conditions for the missionary work, thus, ended.²⁹ Although Davison's cogent account is well-informed by the internal developments in the Ottoman bureaucracy and the missionary opinions of and expectations from the Ottoman reform, it does not speak about how this change was reflected in the field. The story ends in the 1870s and we are not informed about how the Ottoman state changed its policies vis a vis the American missionary work afterwards.

Selim Deringil, with an abundance of Ottoman documentary material at his disposal, investigates which policies were articulated and pursued by the Ottoman government under Abdülhamid II in order to maintain the empire in his book *The Well-Protected Domains*. He shows how the sultan made sure that all decision-making mechanism was centralized in his palace at Yıldız, imitated a number of missionary methods, and employed rationalized policies supported by the recent technology in order to limit and counter the missionary activity in his empire.³⁰ Yet, the reader does not have a chance to compare and contrast, as the earlier Ottoman official attitude towards the

²⁸ Henry J. Van Lennep, *Travels in Little-Known Parts of Asia Minor* (London, 1870), I, 118-9; Goodell to Anderson, Nov. 6, 1860, ABCFM, Vol. 284, no. 382.

²⁹ Roderic H. Davison. "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century*". *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Jul., 1954), pp. 844-864; Roderic H. Davison. *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1963).

³⁰ Deringil, *Well Protected Domains*.

American missionaries was not recounted. Maybe more importantly, much of his sources deals with the years after the 1890s when the Hamidian policies were more pronounced all around the empire. Thus, for example, he leaves out such important moments like the failure of the constitutional experiment, the missionary participation in the Congress of Berlin, and the missionary collaboration on the ground with British diplomats overseeing the reform process in the Ottoman East.

Hans Lukas Kieser's book *Iskalanmış Barış*, based on his doctoral dissertation, offers a detailed and compelling account about how and why the American missionaries and the Ottoman government became sworn enemies by the reign of Abdülhamid II. According to the author, Abdülhamid II was the first sultan who seriously perceived the American missionaries as a serious threat to the imperial power. For him, the American missions were on the same side with the Great Powers and nationalist self-determination movements all around the world. The missionaries recognized the reform agenda undertaken by the *Tanzimat* bureaucracy and put their faith into it.³¹ Yet, soon after Abdülhamid II took power, they realized that the Hamidian government does not have serious intentions to implement the reforms promised. Thus, the missionaries lost their faith for a reform within the Ottoman government and began to contemplate external pressures and intervention to secure the reforms.³² In many aspects, Kieser's contribution represents the fullest picture about the missionary-state relations during the Hamidian period. The main focus of his work, however, is the identity-building processes of different ethno/religious communities

³¹ Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, 130-2; George Washburn. *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), 2; Goodell, *Forty Years in Constantinople*, 385-7.

³² Kieser, *Iskalanmış*, 25-6, 85, 132.

in the Ottoman East against a backdrop of centralizing policies that began in 1830s and lasted up until 1930s. This means that, for the purposes of our study, his geographical concentration is too specific and his time period is too broad. Plus, like Deringil, he is more concerned with the violent and chaotic nature of the second half of Abdülhamid II's rule, which eclipses the earlier and more formative period.

Emrah Şahin's PhD thesis *Responding to American Missionary Expansion*, mostly based on Ottoman archival documents, also points out that there has been a sea change in the Ottoman official approach to the American missionaries in the 1880s for worse, "partly because the missionary message conflicted with Islam—the dominant religion across the Empire—and partly because missionary activity exacerbated local proto-nationalist unrest". From this point on, the Sublime Porte fixed its attention to the ABCFM missionaries, more closely following their activities, and cautiously checking their growth.³³ Although Şahin's attempt at identifying the 1880s as a breaking point in the Ottoman-missionary relations conforms well with the main argument of this thesis, his explanation for the reasons for that break is not satisfactory. The missionary message was in conflict with Islamic teachings since the beginning of the ABCFM mission in the empire, and the missionary attitude towards Islam was almost always condescending.³⁴ Yet, Şahin does not fully explain why this led to a serious crisis only by the 1880s. Secondly, he misses in his narrative the relevant international political developments.

³³ Emrah Şahin. "Responding to American Missionary Expansion: An Examination of Ottoman Imperial Statecraft, 1880-1910". (Montreal: McGill University, 2010. Unpublished PhD Dissertation), 1-12.

³⁴ Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism*, 30-9; Stone, Frank A. *Academies For Anatolia: A Study of the Rationale, Program and Impact of the Educational Institutions Sponsored by the American Board in Turkey: 1830-2005*, Caddo Gap Press, San Francisco, 12-3.

This thesis will try to answer the question why and how a policy change took place in the Ottoman government's perception of American missionaries by the reign of Abdülhamid II, and how this change was expressed on the field. Two threads will be followed in answering this question: (1) internal workings of the Ottoman state and the Ottoman reform process, and the way the American missionaries were connected to the process; (2) the process of American Protestant missionaries becoming international actors, and the way this relates to the Ottoman government's threat perception.

By focusing on the first half of the Hamidian reign, this thesis attempts to tie together the works by Davison³⁵, Deringil³⁶ and Kieser³⁷. Davison ends his investigation at the point the Hamidian period started. Kieser is more focused on what happened after the 1890s. Deringil does not include in his narrative the transnational nature of the ABCFM network. Thus, there a gap in the narration and analysis of this particular period. This thesis hopes to fill this gap.

³⁵ Roderic H. Davison, Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century, *The American Historical Review*, Volume 59, Issue 4, July 1954, Pages 844–864, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/59.4.844>; ; Roderic H. Davison. *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1963).

³⁶ Deringil, Selim. *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1999.

³⁷ Kieser, Hans-Lukas. *İskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet: 1839-1938*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005)

1.2 Thesis Structure

This thesis is composed of three main parts. In the first part, early relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States will be covered particularly to understand the background in which the two countries formally each other, and the American missionaries began their activities in the Ottoman lands. It is important to note that the early Ottoman official attitude towards the missionary work was not necessarily negative during the *Tanzimat* era; often they were considered as carrying out good public works like education, health service, philanthropy etc., thus sharing the burden of public works that the government now promised to provide. The main rivals of the missionaries were the non-Muslim *milletbaşı*s. The second and third chapters will be devoted to the reign of Abdülhamid II. Right in the beginning of his reign, the American missionaries emerged as international actors mediating between polities. In contrast to the preceding *Tanzimat* reform program, the Hamidian project involved elements that made a clash with the American missionary interests in the Ottoman Empire almost inevitable. The last part of the thesis will provide an examination of the methods used by Abdülhamid II to contain and suppress the missionary growth in the Ottoman Empire.

CHAPTER II

REFORM

The informal relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire began out of a series of naval conflicts American ships were engaged in the Mediterranean in the late 18th century. The Barbary pirates, nominally operating under the Ottoman suzerainty, seized American merchant ships and forced the newly-founded American republic to pay tributes to stop their attacks. In 1800 the *USS George Washington*, under the command of commodore William Bainbridge, sailed to İstanbul after the Dey of Algiers forcefully demanded him to present the tributary gifts to his suzerain, the Ottoman sultan. This was the first time official and direct contact between the two countries.³⁸

The reluctant visit of this ship from the “New World” was received with astonishment in the Ottoman capital. Küçük Hüseyin Pasha, Kaptan-ı Derya (the Chief Admiral of the Ottoman Navy), took the *USS George Washington* under his personal protection, inspected the ship, and spoke of the possibility of establishing official contacts between the two countries. Admiral Bainbridge avoided entering into any negotiation for bilateral recognition, claiming that this would be outside of his authority, and left the Ottoman capital in December 1800 after presenting the tributary.³⁹

³⁸ Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations*, 11-2; Finnie, *Pioneers East*, 46-50.

³⁹ Kurat, *Türk-Amerikan Münasebetlerine*, 7-11.

2.1 American Merchants and Missionaries Among the Ottomans

It was not until the Second Barbary War in 1815 that the American government ended all the tributary payments to the Ottoman vassal in the North Africa. Only then the Mediterranean trade was secure for the American ships, and American ships of commerce frequently visited the ports of İzmir, İskenderiye and Beyrut.⁴⁰ American merchant often brought “colonial goods” like sugar, coffee, and spice, and bought raisins, dried figs and opium.⁴¹ These early acquaintances helped create the initial ideas both sides held for each other: for the Ottoman bureaucrat in the capital, the US was a great naval nation at the other side of the world. For an American merchant, the Ottoman ports were lucrative spots where goods all around the world can be found.

The 1820s were particularly eventful and tumultuous for the Ottomans. In the first part of the decade, the negotiations for a treaty between the Ottoman Empire and the United States were delayed to appease Britain whose help was expected during the Greek Rebellion, which eventually resulted in Greek independence in 1830. Later, the sultan was kept busy by the Russo-Turkish War in 1828-29, which broke out when the Ottoman efforts to reclaim authority in Serbia was by the Russian.⁴² At home, the sultan Mahmud II was involved in a violent fight the Janissaries who stubbornly resisted European-style reforms. But the highest point of this chaotic

⁴⁰ Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations*, 14.

⁴¹ Finnie, *Pioneers East*, 24-35; Avcı, Ayşegül. *Yankee Levantine : David Offley and Ottoman – American relations in the early nineteenth century*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2016, 278-9.

⁴² Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations*, 16; Anderson, *The Eastern Question*.

decade was probably the Battle of Navarino in 1827, during which the Ottoman Navy was destroyed by the united British, French and Russian fleets. The reformist faction Sublime Porte bureaucracy, anxious to rebuild the navy, turned to the US for help needed to rebuild the Ottoman Navy. After all, the bureaucrats could not expect to get assistance from the very European powers that destroyed its navy and the US stood out as a favorable alternative as it was mostly neutral to the political affairs of the Old World.

Mehmed Hüsrev Pasha, the reform-minded Kaptan-ı Derya of the Ottoman Navy, was already familiar with the American naval technology. He had paid a return visit to Commodore John Rodgers while his fleet was anchored at the port of İzmir in the 1820s. By this way, he had found an opportunity to examine the *USS Constitution* and the *USS North Carolina* in detail. The sultan was persuaded by the Pasha to ask for American naval assistance, thus, the process advanced smoothly this time. Pertev Efendi and Mehmed Hamid Efendi, two successive *reisülküttabs* (a post equivalent to minister of foreign affairs) were entrusted with the task of carrying out the negotiations.⁴³ On the other side, an American merchant named David Offley took an important role in formalizing the bilateral relations.⁴⁴ The treaty involved most-favored nation treatment for commerce. This meant that American merchants were granted by the Ottoman Empire every privileges granted to other countries. The

⁴³ Kurat, *Türk-Amerikan Münasebetlerine*, 11-19.

⁴⁴ David Offley, a prominent and enthusiastic American merchant, was actually appointed as the American consul in İzmir in the 1820s, but he was not recognized by the Ottoman authorities on the pretext that the countries did not have official relations. Yet, his entrepreneurial abilities and personal connections with the Ottoman high-office holders afforded him an opportunity to represent the United States at the highest level during the negotiations. Finnie, *Pioneers* 24-35; Avcı, Ayşegül. *Yankee levantine : David Offley and Ottoman – American relations in the early nineteenth century*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2016, 258-279.

Ottoman Empire also extended to the United States the privileges known as “capitulations”.⁴⁵ In return, the Ottomans received American assistance in ship construction.⁴⁶ In some sense, the official recognition was closely affiliated with the entrenched Ottoman impression of the US as an advanced naval nation who keeps itself away from entangling the affairs of the Old World, and with the American enthusiasm with overseas trade.

The early nineteenth century was also an age of strong Protestant enthusiasm in the US. The evangelical movement, emboldened by the revivalist theology of the Second Awakening, was expecting the imminent Christian millennium with impatience. The idea of “the restoration of the Jews to Jesus” was quite prevalent among the missionary circles and this apocalyptic orientation set the Middle East, the “Bible land”, as the primary missionary target for distributing the Gospel message. After India and China, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) sent two missionaries to the Ottoman lands in 1819.⁴⁷ By this time, there was no American diplomat in the Ottoman Empire as the two countries did not yet formally recognize each other.⁴⁸ In this way, missionaries joined merchants in forming the main and foundational pillars of the Ottoman-American relations. As the American diplomatic historian Akira Iriye put it,

⁴⁵ Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations*, 16

⁴⁶ Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, 29; Gordon, *American Relations with Turkey*, 221-251.; Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations*, 7-15.

⁴⁷ Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes*, 9.

⁴⁸ In the absence of any recognized American diplomatic agent, American merchants and missionaries often operated under the auspices of the British Embassy. Finnie, *Pioneers East*, 24-46.

*Historians of American foreign relations have published a large number of monographs dealing with cultural encounters and activities abroad. After the nation achieved independence, individual traders, missionaries, scientists, teachers, and travelers were often the first to establish contact with people in other lands, preceding even consuls and naval officers. What they saw, experienced, and reported home constituted a rich legacy.*⁴⁹

Pliny Smith and Levi Parson arrived İzmir in 1820 to establish a religious mission under the ABCFM, thereby laying the first stone of a long-lasting enterprise.⁵⁰ The Congregationalist ministers traveled inland to visit early Christian churches mentioned in the New Testament and soon reached Jerusalem. After a decade of experience around Syria and Palestine, however, the missionaries realized that “the restoration of Jews” is a much more difficult goal than they had anticipated, and that the conversion of Muslims was virtually impossible under the Islamic laws of the Ottoman Empire. In 1831, a year after the signing of the first Ottoman-American Treaty and the opening of an American Legation in İstanbul, the ABCFM network in the empire settled in the Ottoman capital with a view to reconsider the missionary agenda within the Ottoman lands.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Iriye, Akire. “Culture and International History”. Chapter. In *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, edited by Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, 2nd ed., 241-56

⁵⁰ Due to its relative openness as a port city, İzmir was a convenient place for American merchant and missionaries to establish themselves. Finnie, *Pioneers East*, 44.

⁵¹ Kieser, *Nearest East*, 37-47; Finnie, *Pioneers East*, 45-137.

Neither during their first decade in Syria and Palestine, nor when they arrived the Ottoman capital the American missionaries received serious opposition and obstruction from the Sublime Porte.⁵² Their main adversary was the non-Muslim community heads (called *milletbaşı*), as they did not want their community members converting to Protestantism.⁵³ At times, in order to establish social order and satisfy the *milletbaşıs*, the Ottoman authorities interfered to the situation often on the missionary side. In such cases, American missionaries asked protection and support either from the American Legation in İstanbul, or the British Embassy.⁵⁴ This attitude was well in line with the pre-*Tanzimat* Ottoman attitude towards foreigners. Most visitors and merchants, wrote Suraiya Faroqhi, gained an easy access into the Ottoman lands.⁵⁵

2.2 The Ottoman Reform and Missionary Work

This permissive posture of the Ottoman authorities for the foreigners was about to change. By the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire found itself under pressure not only by the emerging European powers, but also by the rapid reforms carried out by Kavalalı Muhammed Ali Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Egypt. After he arrived Egypt in 1801 as an Ottoman soldier to oust the French who occupied the region under Napoleon Bonaparte, Muhammad Ali managed to rise in the Egyptian politics and society, which experienced a serious political and economic disruption after the

⁵² Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations*, 19, Samuel S. Cox, *Diversions of a Diplomat in Turkey*. (New York: C.L. Webster & Co, 1887). 292; Finnie, *Pioneers East*, 101.

⁵³ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 10; Finnie, *Pioneers East*, 125

⁵⁴ Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations*, 19-20; Henry Otis Dwight, *Constantinople and Its Problems* (London, 1901), 249-250; H. G. O. Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey* (London, 1854), 90-99, 290-318.

⁵⁵ Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*. (London: Tauris, 2006), 213-14.

French occupation. In a short time, he was appointed as the governor of Egypt by the Ottoman sultan, and he held an undisputed and unprecedented power as the occupiers destroyed Egypt's traditional ruling family, the Mamluks, and thereby creating a huge power vacuum. He rebuilt Egypt along European lines; he centralized power in his hands after restraining the landholding aristocracy and bringing the ulama under his authority, opened Western-style schools to train specialists, sent students to Europe, and introduced modern industry and irrigation systems. After the Greek independence in 1830, Muhammad Ali Pasha, who realized that the sultan was strong enough to challenge his suzerain, marched towards Istanbul and captured the Ottoman cities of Damascus and Aleppo in the way. Only with a Russian support against his governor the Ottoman sultan managed to retain his throne. This humiliating situation revealed the weakness of the Ottoman center's power in the provinces. Soon, the Ottoman sultan accelerated European-style reforms, similar to the ones carried out by Muhammed Ali Pasha in previous decades.⁵⁶

Mahmud II's sweeping reform project first and foremost was aimed to strengthen the military: A new army, trained by European experts, was created to be kept under his strict control. He also started a postal service that helped him to gain greater contact with his provinces and made plans for a census and a land survey in order to assess the resources in his lands. Emulating Muhammed Ali, he introduced compulsory education given in Western style and sent students to Europe for getting them trained. He sent troops, armed by modern firearms, to the inland Anatolia to strengthen his personal rule by eliminating the local rulers who traditionally held

⁵⁶ Fahmy, Khaled. *All the Pasha's men: Mehmed Ali, his army and the making of modern Egypt* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); Sayyid-Marsot, Afaf Lutfi. *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge University Press, 1984)

hereditary and near autonomous power in regions remote to the Ottoman capital. The aim was to tie the provinces more directly to the capital, through appointees sent from İstanbul. This trend of centralization, which aimed to increase central control over hinterlands, can be compared to efforts experienced in France, Italy and Germany.⁵⁷

This trend was unsettling particularly in the highlands, where the inhabitants lived traditionally autonomous from the center. For example in Harput, a fortified Eastern Anatolian city located at the top of a hill, local rulers were eliminated and the governor's office was forcibly moved to a nearby plain. Other administrative offices soon joined the governor's office and, after a while, Reşid Mehmed Paşa, the governor appointed from the capital, laid the foundations of a military barrack and an accompanying arsenal.⁵⁸ In 1838, Helmut von Molthe, a Prussian military advisor to the sultan, visited Harput and noted that radical measures rearranged the power relations in the region for the benefit of the centrally-appointed officials.⁵⁹

Owen Robert Miller. "‘Back to the Homeland’ (*Tebi Yergir*): Or, How Peasants Became Revolutionaries in Muş." *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. 287–308. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jottturstuass.4.2.04.; From the point of view the local inhabitants, this period of centralization represented nothing less than a second Ottoman conquest after the first one that occurred in the 16th century. Miller Owen. "Sasun 1894: Mountains, Missionaries and Massacres at the End of the Ottoman Empire" Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2015. Chp. 2.

⁵⁸ Kieser, Hans-Lukas. *Iskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik Ve Devlet 1839-1938*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005.

⁵⁹ Kieser, Hans-Lukas. *Iskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik Ve Devlet 1839-1938*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005, 66-7; For a reaction to this often violent process, see Metin Atmaca, "Resistance to centralization in the Ottoman periphery: The Kurdish Baban and Bohtan emirates," in *Middle Eastern Studies* (February, 2019).

The process of Ottoman centralization in the provinces created a power vacuum into which Ottoman officials and local warlords flowed. It enabled the American missionaries, who were at this point contemplating which direction to take after their experiment in the “Bible land” failed, to establish missionary stations. At this point, the ABCFM missionaries were strong supporters of the Ottoman centralization, as they hoped that this way the provinces would be more secure and “civilized” for them to carry out their work.⁶⁰ The ABCFM strategy changed in the 1830s. The goal of evangelizing the Oriental Christians (Armenians, Assyrians and the Copts), whom the missionaries often called as “nominal Christians”, replaced that of the Jews. Aided by the good offices of the Ottoman authorities, the ABCFM missionaries traveled the inland Anatolia and redefined their orientation.⁶¹ Soon, new mission stations emerged in such mountainous places like Erzurum (1839), Anteb (1848), Sivas (1851), Merzifon (1852), and Harput (1855).⁶²

Yet, by the 1850s, they managed to convert only a couple of hundreds of Ottoman subjects to the Protestantism -a disappointment considering the initial hopes for a wholesale congregating under their version of Christianity.⁶³ But the main missionary contribution to the Ottoman society in the 1830s and 1840s was the introduction of the elements of modern ideas techniques like Western-style education, printing press and medical work. The Ottoman officials, very receptive to

⁶⁰ Miller and Soleimani, *The Sheikh and the Missionary*, 408.

⁶¹ Kieser, Hans-Lukas. *Iskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik Ve Devlet 1839-1938*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005, 67-8; Kieser, *Nearest East*, 57.

⁶² Joseph L. Grabill. *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1870-1927*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1971), 9, 15.

⁶³ David H. Finnie, *Pioneers East: The Early American Experience in the Middle East*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 134.

the Western influence at this juncture, expressed their interest in modern education. One day, the imperial bureaucrats requested William Goodell, the head of ABCFM, to help train officers. Goodell advised on modern ways of education, provided materials like maps and globes, and even arranged the creation and translation in Turkish of a text about geography of the empire. Soon, he was giving a series of public lectures in the Ottoman capital about scientific apparatuses like orrerys and Leyden jars. Some graduates of the American school at Bebek, İstanbul went on to serve at the Ottoman officialdom.⁶⁴ Commenting on the Ottoman curiosity and enthusiasm for all things Western, Goodell said “They imagine that we know and are able to do almost everything”⁶⁵

The reforming zeal in the Ottoman capital took a new turn when the new sultan Abdülmecid announced in 1839 *Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane* to start a sweeping reform program, commonly known as *Tanzimat*. These reforms, guided by clear and official policy statements, began to be applied when the sultan’s reform-minded confidant Mustafa Reşid Pasha was appointed as *Hariciye Nazırı*, the minister of foreign affairs. With this development, a reform era started in the Ottoman history that would last until about the 1870s. The edict guaranteed security of life, property and honor. Secular legal and educational institutions were founded -this was an unprecedented innovation. It promised that all the Ottoman subjects to be treated in the same way: trials will be public, no one will be put to death without trial, and no property will be confiscated. Tax system was also put in an order for efficiency, and military

⁶⁴ Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, 77; Stone, *Academies for Anatolia*, 22

⁶⁵ Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East: 1820-1960*, (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1970), 44-5. A certain Halim Efendi, a missionary friend and the head of a large Muslim school in İstanbul, expressed his hopes to the missionary William Goodell that one day the Ottomans adopt the Western ways of education. Goodell, *Forty Years in the Turkish Empire*, 137-8.

conscription was regularized. The main goal of the reform program was obviously to preserve the empire, in the face of the increased material progress experienced in Europe, by strengthening, rationalizing, and inescapably Westernizing it. It enhanced the power of the central government, and determined the bureaucracy apparatus, headed by Mustafa Reşid Paşa, supervising the reform program and ensuring that they are applied smoothly.⁶⁶

The main outside supporter of the *Tanzimat* reforms was the United Kingdom. Mustafa Reşid Paşa spent years in London as a diplomat, and there he secured the British support for the Ottoman sultan against his governor Muhammed Ali Paşa, who, again, posed a serious threat for the Ottoman power in the capital. In exchange for helping the sultan against his governor, the UK demanded complete access to Ottoman trade markets and the Treaty of Balta Limanı was signed in 1838. The economic side of the *Tanzimat* reforms was based on the policy lines introduced in this treaty. The text of edict was prepared mainly by Mustafa Reşid Paşa himself, during his time in London where he sought the support of the British foreign minister Lord Palmerston.⁶⁷ In 1841 Stratford Canning, the British diplomat who served as the British chargé d'affaires and ambassador to the Ottoman Empire for many years, was re-appointed as ambassador. He formed good relations with Mustafa Reşid Paşa and strongly encouraged the *Tanzimat* reforms. In line with the reform spirit, he demanded from the Sublime Porte to remove the death penalty stipulated by the Islamic law when a Muslim converted to Christianity. In 1844, the Sublime Porte

⁶⁶ Halil İnalçık, "Sened-i İttifak ve Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu", *Belleten*, (Cilt XXXVIII, 1962, Sayı 112), 603-623; Davison, Roderic H. *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1963.

⁶⁷ Davison, Roderic H. *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1963. 38.

gave a partial concession: Christians who had adopted Islam would not be put to death if they chose to return to Christianity.⁶⁸ The ABCFM missionaries, unable to get the help they expected from the American minister in İstanbul and encouraged by Canning's influence and charisma, cultivated good relations with the British ambassador. The main outcome of this collaboration was the official recognition in 1847 of the Protestants as a separate millet in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities.⁶⁹

In fact, since the first days of the ABCFM in the Ottoman Empire, the British diplomats extended strong help to the American missionaries in their activities. The missionaries rightly viewed the British as the primary Protestant power in the empire and got themselves under their protection. In Beyrut, for example, the missionaries obtained their *mürur tezkiresi* (travel permit) from the Ottoman government through the British consulate. In time, the Sublime Porte simply identified and treated all the English-speaking Protestant missionaries as "British", ignoring their distinction.⁷⁰

The Ottoman promises for reform were renewed in a second edict, known simply as the *Hatt-ı Hümayün* or *Islahat Fermanı*, drawn up in 1856 after the allied victory of the Ottoman Empire, France, and Britain against the Russian Empire in the Crimean War. The new edict did not involve anything new, yet it was more direct and unreserved in its tone than the previous edict. The non-Muslim representation in provincial

⁶⁸ Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, 81-2

⁶⁹ Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, 130-2; Goodell, *Forty Years in the Turkish Empire*, 291-2; Şuhnaz Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations, 1800-1952: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 18-20.; Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East: 1820-1960*, (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1970), 51.

⁷⁰ Şuhnaz Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations, 1800-1952: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 19.

councils and in the Supreme Council was increased. A great emphasis was put on the equality of the all Ottoman subjects before law, in taxes, government positions and military service, thus attempting to create a common identity of “Osmanlılık” transcending religious and ethnic lines. Recognizing the value of this document, the Great Powers guaranteed the Ottoman integrity, and the empire was formally admitted into the Concert of Europe in during The Congress of Paris convened in the same year.⁷¹

Two towering figures of the *Tanzimat*, Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha and Keçecizade Fuad Pasha, both proteges of Mustafa Reshid Pasha who died in 1858, put their efforts into promoting this new idea of “Osmanlılık” with the hopes of reducing separatist sentiments within the empire and create a common bonds for the imperial subjects. The reforms in the millet system resulted in a decreased clerical control and increased layman voice through representation. For example, in the Armenian community, the aristocratic domination was being broken for the benefit of artisan and trading class as a result of the reforms.⁷² In 1863, the Armenian constitution was created to regulate the Armenian millet and its assembly that would elect the Patriarch. A series of laws were promulgated to create an assembly of the Greek *millet* who has the authority to elect the Greek Patriarch. The Jewish constitution of 1865, similarly, created an assembly to elect the Grand Rabbi of İstanbul.

⁷¹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 3-52.

⁷² Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 148-9; Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, 66-7; Goodell, *Forty Years in the Turkish Empire*, 231-2.

Although all of these represented some steps towards representative government and democratization, they produced negative outcomes since strengthening millets as separate entities was incompatible with creating a common “Osmanlılık” identity. Plus, during the congress the Ottoman delegation, headed by Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha, failed to secure the abolition of capitulations that traditionally extended certain rights and privileges to European visitors to the empire. Thereby, the text of *Islahat Fermanı*, reaffirming the rights of non-Muslim millets, promising a reform the administration of each millet to make it more representative, yet failing to eliminate the capitulatory privileges of non-Muslim subjects in the empire, appeared to be a decree of concessions to many Muslims in the empire who further resented its implied foreign influence.⁷³

Particularly in order to counter this popular feeling and further European interference either through diplomatic means or capitulations, the *Tanzimat* pashas embarked on a systematic effort for codification. In 1858, a new penal code was drafted. A grand collection of legal interpretations for civil law, named *Mecelle*, was introduced to be applied both in *Nizamiye* (secular) and Islamic courts. A press law in 1865 particularly aimed foreigners as it stipulated that what they print was subject to Ottoman laws. A land law, introduced in 1867, allowed non-Ottomans to own real property in the empire with the condition that they conform to police regulations, accept the Ottoman jurisdiction and pay taxes. In 1869, a law on nationality and naturalisation, that accepted secular standards rather than religious ones, was introduced. The same year witnessed the introduction of a law on public education that put all schools in the Ottoman lands under the governmental regulation, and

⁷³ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire.*, 52-81.

entrusted the task of public education to the Ottoman government. All these regulations, in some way or another, were directed to curb the effects of the capitulatory regime as they also applied to the non-Ottoman subjects present in the empire.⁷⁴

The ABCFM missionaries in the empire welcomed the *Hatt-ı Hümayün* as a charter sanctioning and guaranteeing their activities, as it decidedly promised for religious liberty in the Ottoman Empire, and more importantly, a complete freedom in religious choice.⁷⁵ On the other side, holding their own capitulatory privileges stemming from the 1830 Treaty, the missionaries were not particularly pleased by the codification efforts that attempted to put restrictions on capitulations. More often than not, they built their establishments before they received relevant licenses from the Ottoman authorities. In the case of Robert College, for example, Cyrus Hamlin started education in 1863 using the premises of the Bebek Seminary without waiting for the Ottoman authorization. Sami Pasha, the Minister of Public Instruction, was particularly against the idea of a new American college, arguing that “the Christian communities of the Empire already had more schools, more books, more education and intelligence, than the Moslem inhabitants”.⁷⁶ Sami Pasha, who apparently was in favor bringing the Muslim schools to the same standards before giving authorization for new non-Muslim schools, was a good example of *Tanzimat* bureaucrats of 1860s who wanted to keep a Muslim and non-Muslim balance in the empire.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 114-36.

⁷⁵ Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians*, 34-5; Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria 1800– 1901*, 171.

⁷⁶ Hamlin, Cyrus. *Among the Turks*, 289-90. Şuhnaz Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations, 1800-1952: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 20-22. Cox, *Diversions*, 294-5, 586.

In the late 1860s, *Darülfünun-ı Osmani*, also known as the University of Constantinople, and *Mekteb-i Sultani*, or Lycee de Galatasaray, were founded. These European-oriented institutions would soon emerge as powerful competitors to American institutions like Robert College and the Syrian Protestant College. Clearly, despite the growing success of the American missionaries after the Crimean War, the realm of education was not as noncompetitive and productive as they first started their efforts, and the attitude of the Ottoman government towards the missionaries was not as pleasing. Although the missionaries were hopeful for more religious liberty in the empire after the proclamation of the *Hatt-ı Hümayün* in 1856, and formed high-level friendships with Westernizing Ottoman bureaucrats like Ahmet Vefik Pasha⁷⁷, the increased Ottoman attempts at codification foreshadowed a conflict between the Ottoman authorities and the missionaries who made it a common practice to evade the law.⁷⁸

In short, reforms for a centralized and rationalized administration introduced in the capital and the provinces by the Ottoman government, from the last decade of Mahmud II to the Abdülmecid's reign, mainly proved to be advantageous for the American missionary effort in the empire. They gained easier access to the inland

⁷⁷ Washburn, George. *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin company, 1909; 8-11, 54-5; Stone, Frank Andrews, *Academies for Anatolia*, 64. Abdülhamid II was resented by Ahmed Vefik's close friendship with American missionaries. When he died, the sultan ordered him to be buried in a cemetery close to Robert College wishing that the bells of the Robert College would ring in his ears until the end of the times: "Kayalar kabristanına defin ediniz ki Robert Kolej'de çalınan çan sesleri kıyamete kadar kulaklarında çınlasın dursun". Betül Başaran. Reinterpreting American missionary presence in the Ottoman Empire : American schools and the evolution of Ottoman educational policies (1820-1908). Unpublished MA Thesis, Bilkent University Ankara.

⁷⁸ Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901*, 59

Anatolia, became increasingly prominent and respected in the Ottoman society for introducing Western ideas and techniques, and managed to get official recognition for their converts to the Protestantism in coordination with, and strong protection from, the British Embassy in İstanbul. The period after the Crimean War, however, was more ambivalent due to the popular feelings against the *Tanzimat* reforms and the systemic codification, which mainly aimed to curb capitulatory advantages enjoyed by the non-Ottoman subjects, including the American missionaries. Still, their high-level connections with the secularized and Westernized *Tanzimat* elite, as well as their alliance with the powerful British Embassy in the absence of an effective American diplomatic representation in the Ottoman Empire, seemed to keep their evangelical enterprise going.

CHAPTER III

THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN

The Ottoman path of reform was not all undisturbed. Considerable inner criticism expressed against the whole *Tanzimat* enterprise especially by conservative circles and those whose self-interest affected by these radical changes. Furthermore, by the early 1870s prominent *Tanzimat* statesmen Mehmed Emin Âli Pasha and Keçecizade Mehmed Fuad Pasha were both dead.⁷⁹ France, the European model of Ottoman modernizers, had been defeated decisively by the Prussians in 1871, signaling the rise of German Empire as a new great power. A severe drought was experienced in Anatolia, disrupting the financial situation in the empire.

Much to the disappointment of *Yeni Osmanlılar* (the Young Ottomans), a constitutionalist and patriot secret society that harshly attacked the *Tanzimat* pashas for being too worldly, too dictatorial and too complaint to European demands, the sultan Abdülaziz gradually filled the power vacuum left by these reform-minded pashas, and grew more autocratic than ever.⁸⁰ Domestic and international crises that overwhelmed the Ottoman Empire in the mid-1870s made the social and political discontent more pronounced. Sultan Abdülaziz, who gradually monopolized political power since the beginning of the decade, began to be seen as the sole responsible for

⁷⁹ The American missionaries noted that numerous obstructions in their way was brought immediately after Ali Pasha died. *FRUS* No. 466. Mr. Brown to Mr. Fish. February 16, 1872.

⁸⁰ Mardin, Şerif. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1962.

the troubles, particularly by the bureaucratic machine whose long-held influence and limiting position was now being curbed.

3.1 The Eastern Crisis of 1875-8 and American Missionaries

In 1876, no longer able to make the interest payments of the debts it borrowed from European creditors, the Ottoman government went into total bankruptcy and declared that it would not be able to honor its debts, leading Europe into a financial panic. A peasant revolt by Christian subjects of the empire had already started in 1875 in Herzegovina and soon it spread to Bosnia.⁸¹ Ottoman regular soldiers and poorly disciplined irregular troops committed atrocities to subdue the rebellions in various places.

It is important to note here the American missionary role in publicizing what happened in the Balkans and, by this way, internationalizing the Eastern Crisis of 1875-8. In the beginning of the disturbances, very little was published in European newspapers about what was going in the Balkans. It was difficult for the journalists to communicate with the region, and the embassies in İstanbul were not much interested.

The first real piece of information about the massacres arrived İstanbul when some missionaries communicated the news with the colleagues in İstanbul. Upon receiving

⁸¹ The widespread revolts in the Balkans practically meant that the *Tanzimat* reforms were unsuccessful. The crisis was related to many social and economic issues like land, agriculture and peasantry. Langer, William L. *European Alliances and Alignments: 1871-1890*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931) 62-3; İnalçık, Halil. *Tanzimat Ve Bulgar Meselesi*, PhD Dissertation at Ankara University, 1943.; Anderson, *Eastern Question*, 178-9

the news, George Washburn, the president of Robert College, urged Sir Henry Elliot, the British ambassador, to restrain the Ottoman government. As the ambassador appeared indifferent, the missionaries exchanged opinions with Edwin Pears, a British journalist based in İstanbul. Only when Pears' piece describing the massacres was published at the *Daily News*, a British Liberal paper, the British public opinion was informed about the situation in the Balkans.⁸²

After some time, an American journalist, Januarius Aloysius MacGahan, and a minor American diplomat, Eugene Schuyler, arrived İstanbul. They heard about the massacres from the Bulgarian faculty and students of Robert College.⁸³ Fearing a cover-up, given the British diplomatic indifference, Washburn and other faculty members of Robert College asked the American Minister, Horace Maynard, in İstanbul to conduct an investigation. The Minister delegated the task to Schuyler. Schuyler invited MacGahan, who was a friend, to accompany his travel of investigation to Bulgaria. Some other individuals, including a Robert College instructor, joined the group. They spent in the region three weeks to document the massacres.⁸⁴ Their report caused an immediate sensation in the British press, and soon sparked a public outcry in Europe. The leader of the British opposition, William Gladstone, published a booklet named "the Bulgarian Horrors" about the massacres in an attempt to discredit the foreign policy of Conservative Prime Minister

⁸² Field, *America and Mediterranean*, 364; Pears, Edwin *Turkey and Its People*, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1911), 12-29; 210.

⁸³ Washburn, George (1909). *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company), 100–110.; Bliss, Daniel. *The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss*. (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1930), 103-4.

⁸⁴ Field, *America and Mediterranean*, 367; Langer, *European Alliances*, 85,106.

Benjamin Disraeli, which regarded the Ottoman Empire as a balance against Russia. The book sold hundreds of thousands copies within a month, and created a great religious and humanitarian emotionalism in England. The Disraeli government tried to minimize the accounts but failed to convince the public.⁸⁵

This episode demonstrated how well-connected the missionary network in the Ottoman Empire was. They were almost immediately able to enlist journalists and diplomats for their agenda, and soon they managed to make their reports circulating all around Europe. The Ottoman government was aware of the missionary contribution to their public embarrassment. Soon after the Ottoman authorities managed to get Schuyler removed from İstanbul⁸⁶, but utterly failed to pacify the public fury in Europe.

The European Great Powers convened in İstanbul in late 1876 to come to terms with the Ottoman administration on a detailed project for political reforms. By this time the Ottoman constitutionalists, led by Midhat Pasha, had gained the upper hand and eliminated the helpless Abdülaziz via a coup d'état. His brother Abdülhamid II, who promised that he would promulgate a constitution, was brought to power by the coup plotters. A constitution was prepared in haste by a commission headed by Midhat Pasha, and formally declared while the European representatives were still discussing in the capital how to solve the Balkan crisis. The constitution also created a bicameral parliament and a council of ministers, and decided that indirect elections

⁸⁵ Sharkey, Heather J. 2017. "The Pivotal Era of Abdulhamid II, 1876–1909." Chapter. In *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East, 179–242*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 184-5; Anderson, Eastern Question, 184.

⁸⁶ Pears, Edwin, *Turkey and Its People*, 212–214.

will be held. It was the hope that this document would be deemed by the Powers as a solution to the crisis. But the Great Powers were not impressed. A reform program prepared by the Powers was handed to the Ottoman government, which was rejected subsequently by the new vizier Midhat Pasha. In reaction, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, advanced into Thrace, and approached to the Ottoman capital within a year. Fearing criticism and rivalry, Abdülhamid II prorogued the parliament, which could function barely a year, and shelved the constitution. However, his drastic measures failed to stop the Ottoman defeat and Russia won the war.

3.2 Reform in the Ottoman East Under European Supervision

The ABCFM grew into a large complex of network towards the end of the century, aided by a budget which expanded sevenfold in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The American Board now ran over four hundred schools and nine colleges with a total enrollment of 20,000; operated nine hospitals and ten dispensaries that treat an estimated 40,000 patients annually; published journals, newspapers, and religious books in five native languages; and printed about four million textbooks on various subjects. The network in the Ottoman Empire experienced such an unprecedented success that the ABCFM got the mission in the Ottoman Empire under its primary focus among its worldwide operations. By far, it became the most active missionary organization in the Ottoman Empire, outperforming the European missions active in the region for many decades.

The missionary success was accompanied by an increased political and diplomatic influence wielded by the top missionaries operating in the Empire, due to their

profound knowledge about local situations, command over information conveyed to the outside world, and well-established connections. As the American diplomatic establishment in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century was unimposing and the consular representation was mostly inadequate, these American nationals acquired British protection or became “do-it-yourself” diplomats themselves as need arose.⁸⁷ Yet, it was mostly the missionary work, rather than financial matters, the main agenda in the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States, and the biggest American interest in the Ottoman lands. Lloyd Griscom, the American charge d’affaires in İstanbul in the late 19th century, noted that the main business of the American legation in the Ottoman capital was the missionaries.⁸⁸

A group of ABCFM representatives was present in Congress of Berlin, advocating for increased freedom and security of the Armenians in the Ottoman East.⁸⁹ Joseph Parrish Thompson, an ABCFM member then in Berlin, had been contacted by the ABCFM headquarters in Boston that asked him to lobby for furthering religious

⁸⁷ John A. Denovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), vii, 20. Denovo specifically calls George Washburn, the president of Robert College in İstanbul, and Howard Bliss, the president of Syrian Protestant College in Beyrut, as “do-it-yourself” diplomats.

⁸⁸ Lloyd Griscom, *Diplomatically Speaking*, (London: J. Murray, 1942), 134.

⁸⁹ Kieser, *İskalanmış Barış* 113. The Congress of Berlin was convened after the Great Powers did not favor the stipulations of the Treaty of San Stefano. In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, a peace settlement, called the Treaty of San Stefano, was imposed on the Ottoman Empire in 1878. It created independent countries Romania, Montenegro and Serbia out of former Ottoman lands, and gave autonomy to Bulgaria under Russian protection. The other powers were alarmed by excessive Russian gains, and the Congress of Berlin was organized the same year. Dominated by the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck, the congress agreed that the Ottoman Empire will remain, but Romania, Montenegro, and Serbia will be recognized as independent states, and Bulgaria as an autonomous principality under the Ottoman sultan.

liberty within the Ottoman Empire during the Congress. Thompson, who knew Otto von Bismarck in person, presented the relevant material supplied to him by the headquarters to the chancellor and influenced in securing that Article 61, about the security of Ottoman Armenians, and Article 62, about the principle of religious liberty, inserted into the Treaty.⁹⁰

The presence of the ABCFM network at this top-level international event is indicative of how politically powerful their network grew. With the tremendous success of the independent institutions like the Robert College, Syrian Protestant College, and the American College for Girls, the missionary education tended to be more focused on a secular content, taught in English, and bent on raising future Christian leaders. According to Tibawi, the American missionaries became more and more involved in regional social and political affairs as a gradual secularization took place in their educational activities towards the end of the century.⁹¹ Robert Daniel also claims that towards 1880s the educational work became somewhat secularized, which particularly alarmed the Turkish authorities as they feared that this, by making them self-conscious about their distinct identity, could make local non-Muslim communities seek autonomy.⁹² The primary Ottoman concern was an Armenian nationalist revival.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 166-7

⁹¹ Abdul L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

⁹² Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East: 1820-1960*, (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1970), 71-123.

An Armenian delegation was also present in Berlin before the conference started. Encouraged by the Russian and British concerns for the position of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, the delegation toured the European capitals for lobbying before the Congress of Berlin convened to ensure a reformed Ottoman administration in the region. Their agenda involved a degree of self-government, with a Christian governor presiding over the affairs of Ottoman Armenians, and European guardianship of their rights and position within the empire.⁹³ Nevertheless, realizing that their efforts did not result in a desired impression over the Great Powers, returned to the Ottoman Empire after declaring a strongly-worded protest:

The Armenian delegation will return to the East carrying with it the lesson that without struggle and without insurrection nothing can be obtained. Nevertheless, the delegation will never cease addressing petitions until Europe has satisfied its just claims⁹⁴

Actually, what emboldened the Armenian hopes was a certain article placed in the Treaty of San Stefano, the peace settlement imposed on the Ottoman government by Russia immediately after the war. The Article 16 demanded reforms in the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, then occupied by the Russian troops, urging the

⁹³ François Georgeon, *İkinci Abdülhamid*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 143; Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 151-2; Anderson, *Eastern Question*, 253-60; Abdülhamid II called the Armenian delegation's visit of the Congress of Berlin as a grave "insolence and treachery". BOA, Y.EE, 4/6. H-29-12-1311 (3 July 1894)

⁹⁴ Ralph E. Cook, "The United States and the Armenian Question, 1894-1924" (unpublished PhD thesis, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1957), 6-7

Sublime Porte to improve the local needs in the region and guarantee the security of Ottoman Armenian subjects against the Kurds and the Circassians in the region. This particular article had obviously alarmed the British who certainly had no desire to see a Russian advancement in the Eastern Anatolia under the guise of protecting the Ottoman Armenians, as this would threaten the road to the British dominions in the east. Right before the Congress of Berlin, Henry Layard, British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, informed Abdülhamid II that the Great Britain would support the Ottomans during the congress only if new reforms in the Armenian provinces are promised to be carried out and the island of Cyprus is allowed to be occupied by Britain.⁹⁵ Clearly, the former demand was intended to replace the relevant article in the San Stefano, while the latter aimed to obtain a base in the Mediterranean to guarantee Ottoman integrity in the face of any future Russian aggression, and to secure the British trade road to the east.⁹⁶

Article 61, the replacement of Article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano, read as:

The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds.

⁹⁵ Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 151-2

⁹⁶ Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II* 132-5; Anderson, *Eastern Question*, 204-6

*It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers, who will superintend their application.*⁹⁷

The ABCFM missionaries, at both sides of the Atlantic, were in high spirits at the end of the Congress of Berlin. The provisions of the treaty had begun a new era, which, they thought, would make it easier for them to evangelize the Ottomans under the strong British guarantee for security, property and law in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It was particularly important for them that a Protestant Power, the Great Britain, was undertaking to ensure the reforms in the empire.⁹⁸ For the missionaries, they had a fair share in this brilliant success: Cyrus Hamlin commented that without the materials provided by the missionaries in the field to Joseph P. Thompson, who represented the ABCFM interests at the Congress, this result would not be possible.⁹⁹

Despite having some reservations, the Ottoman Armenians were also hopeful for their future after the Congress of Berlin. For one thing, their cause was now internationally recognized, with the British guaranteeing the fulfillment of reforms providing them with security. Most of them expected that the *Tanzimat* promises of rule of law, equality and progress, repeated since decades, were now going to be fully and decidedly implemented under the supervision of the Great Powers of

⁹⁷ Text of the Treaty of Berlin:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/2212670?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁹⁸ Kieser, *Nearest East*, 55

⁹⁹ Kieser, *Iskalanmış Barış*, 166.

Europe.¹⁰⁰ Henry C. Barkley, who travelled through Anatolia right after the war, notes that in many places local Armenians expressed hopes for reform under British supervision.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, they privately expected an act of vengeance by their Muslim neighbors who suspected that during the war the Ottoman Armenians afforded important assistance to the advancing Russian troops at the Caucasian theatre. Indeed, the Russian Caucasus Corps were led by four Russian Armenian commanders and, in the midst of chaotic war conditions, many Armenians in the Eastern provinces greeted the advancing Russian forces as their liberators and guarantors for their security. Although their stance during the war was not conclusive in the result, it infuriated the Muslim population in the region.¹⁰² Adding to this was the mistrust of the Ottoman authorities who despised Armenian lobbying in San Stefano and Berlin, particularly the efforts of Nerses II Varzhaptian, the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople.¹⁰³

The years following the Congress of Berlin witnessed determined steps, on the part of the European Powers, in implementing the reform program for the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire. Immediately after the Congress, Henry Layard forwarded to Safvet Pasha, the Grand Vizier, a note verbale containing precise

¹⁰⁰ Kieser, *Iskalanmış Barış*, 148

¹⁰¹ Barkley, Henry C. *A Ride Through Asia Minor and Armenia: Giving a Sketch of the Characters, Manners and Customs of Both the Mussulman and Christian Inhabitants*. (1891), 135-156; 244-282. During his visit, Barkley was hosted by American missionaries. 149-53; 219-233; 302-4.

¹⁰² Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 27, 83

¹⁰³ Miller, *Sasun 1894*, 11.

expectations: establishing an effective gendarmerie force trained by European officers, appointing a European judge at the Ottoman Supreme Court, setting up a more efficient tax system and provincial administration. Abdülhamid II, in his late response, claimed that he is unable to perform all these measures at once, as the empire has certain financial constraints. Furthermore, he was concerned that some of these proposals, in fact, violate his sacred sovereign rights, and implementation of them would appear as yet another European encroachment for the local Muslim population.¹⁰⁴ Two years later, a collective note by the European Powers, urging once again to initiate the promised reforms, sent to the Ottoman government.¹⁰⁵

In the meantime, the British government dispatched to the region a group of military consuls tasked with inspecting the application of the reforms in the field.¹⁰⁶ By 1880, eight military consuls, all fieldmen, arrived the Ottoman East. Lord Dufferin, the newly-appointed British ambassador, was sent in 1881 chiefly to convince the Ottoman government to implement the reforms. ABCFM missionaries, some of whom believed that internal reform was impossible without a British protectorate in the region, welcomed the new British diplomats.¹⁰⁷

On the other side of the Atlantic, Nathaniel G. Clark, Foreign Secretary of the ABCFM, wrote in 1881 that this chronic problem in the Ottoman East would be

¹⁰⁴ Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II*, 151

¹⁰⁵ Cook, *American Foreign Policy* 8; Lepsius, Johannes, *Armenia And Europe: An Indictment*, 85-103

¹⁰⁶ Greene, 76-7; Despite the attitude of the British government, other European governments did not take serious the Ottoman reform agenda. For example Otto von Bismarck was skeptical that the Ottoman government could reform itself from within. Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 152-3.

¹⁰⁷ Genell, *Empire by Law* 69-82.

solved only if the American missionaries get down to work.¹⁰⁸ In their reports, the British military consuls often depended on the information supported by the missionaries who, quite knowledgeable about the region, reflected the local problems from their eyes. Some of them entered the British service as paid advisers and, by this way, served their common agenda: reform in the Ottoman East. Soon, in the eyes of the local population, they came to be regarded as same.¹⁰⁹

In fact, Abdülhamid II held that reforming the Ottoman East, in the way that the Europeans demand, would pave the way for, first, the Armenian autonomy, and eventually, the Armenian independence.¹¹⁰ The sultan particularly associated the Armenian intellectual and material development experienced in the 19th century Ottoman society with the American missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire, drawing a parallel with the Bulgarian case where the many leading revolutionary figures of the new country was educated at the Robert College in İstanbul. He suspected that a similar pattern can be repeated in the Armenian case, leading his Armenian subjects into rebelling against the state. The sultan was also disturbed because the missionaries grew quite organized within the empire, and they were well-connected enough to provide detailed information to the outside world about what is going on in the Ottoman lands. They were the ones who had provided, through diplomats and journalists, the earliest reports about the Bulgarian rebellions

¹⁰⁸ Kieser, *Iskalanmış* 160-1.

¹⁰⁹ Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II* 149-154.

¹¹⁰ Georgeon, *Abdülhamid* 150-3; Genell, *Empire by Law* 74-7.

and, as reflected once again in the case of the British military consuls, they were still performing the same function.¹¹¹

Whether or not the Protestant missionary work in the empire was subversive and seditious (*fesad-pezir*), as the state documents repeatedly claim throughout 1880s and 1890s¹¹², the sultan had fixed his eyes on the American missionary efforts, both inside and outside the borders of his empire, as the primary reason for the nascent Armenian revolutionism. In other words, the emergence of the American missionary individuals as international actors especially after the Congress of Berlin coincided with and connected to the negative change in the Ottoman official approach to them.

¹¹¹ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Lands*, 112-34

¹¹² Kieser, *Nearest East*, 57.

CHAPTER IV

THE HAMIDIAN PROJECT

As the post-Berlin optimism and enthusiasm was still alive among the European diplomats and the American missionaries, Abdülhamid II was devising his own agenda that, if applied in its entirety, would leave little space for the kind of reform demanded by the Great Powers. Soon after the congress, rumours about the Armenians, following the Bulgarian example, were going to revolt.¹¹³ In order to preempt further territorial disintegration and maintain the empire, the sultan embarked upon a new project.

The Hamidian project, unlike the *Tanzimat* reforms that promised equality for all Ottoman subjects regardless of faith, aimed primarily at empowering the Muslim element in the empire and creating an Islamic loyalty to the empire, rather than a secular one transcending religious and ethnic bonds. The sultan gradually diminished the power of the Ottoman bureaucracy, the main guarantors of the *Tanzimat* reforms, and finally placed the whole authority under his personal control. He was obsessed with information: he extended telegraph lines all around the country, his palace received long press reports from the Ottoman diplomats working abroad, and his spy network enabled surveillance from the Balkans to the Arabian Peninsula. Maybe the sole continuation from the *Tanzimat* period, however, was the rapid modernization and administrative centralization that, in turn, further bolstered the sultan's personal monopoly over power.

¹¹³ Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 151-4.

The Ottoman defeat at the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 resulted in an extensive demographic shift. As the Ottoman lands in Europe lost with the emergence of autonomous or independent states in the Balkans, the non-Muslim element in the empire greatly diminished. This development was followed by a massive influx of Muslim and Turkish-speaking immigrants from the lost regions mostly into the Ottoman Anatolia.¹¹⁴ The empire was already housing since the mid-1850s millions of Muslim refugees from such places as the Caucasus and Crimea, fleeing from the tsarist regime.¹¹⁵ What these demographic shifts indicated for the future of the empire was a homogeneously Muslim body that is mostly poor, subdued and definitely war-weary.

Yet, compared to the Anatolian Muslims of the empire, the immigrants from the Balkans were more innovative in agriculture and manufacture, owing to their previous proximity to Europe, and more conscious about their identity as Muslims of the last major Islamic empire due to their recent and tragic experiences. In the words of Kemal Karpat, they were the nucleus of a new rising Muslim middle class “with rationalist modes of thinking that appraised their own social position and Islamic culture in a critical and worldly manner”.¹¹⁶ An Islamic sentiment, mainly complaining about the increasing Western influence and meddling, an apparent

¹¹⁴ Karpat, *Transformation*, 272-3

¹¹⁵ Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 86; Brian Glyn Williams, “Hijra and Forced Migration from Nineteenth-Century Russia to the Ottoman Empire: A Critical Analysis of the Great Crimean Tatar Migration of 1860–1861”, *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 41 : 1 (2000), pp. 79 – 108.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3

disregard for religious precepts, and the increase in powers, privileges and prestige of the non-Muslims during the *Tanzimat* era, was being voiced more and more frequently. The argument was that as long as the Islamic basis the empire was founded upon is revered and adhered to, more troubles -internal and external- would not cease.

This was the kind of potential upon which Abdülhamid II was going to base his control of the Ottoman State as a sultan and as a caliphate, an emotionally powerful and politically useful position. He discovered that religion was the strongest glue for the unity and solidarity of his subjects, now more Muslim than ever before. He was already popular among his Muslim subjects who viewed him as a humble, prudent and thrifty sultan, in contrast with his haughty predecessors. They soon realized that, especially during the years immediately after the Congress of Berlin, the Sultan was primarily taking the concerns and sensitivities of the Muslim element into his consideration.¹¹⁷ After experiencing decades of Westernizing reforms implemented by the iron-handed *Tanzimat* ministers and bureaucrats, the Ottoman Muslims, particularly the rising middle class located mostly in the provinces, found in the person of Abdülhamid II a compassionate and caring caliph who reconsecrated the position of the Ottoman sultan.

Abdülhamid II found it essential the preservation of Islam, the survival of the Ottoman imperial house, the protection of holy places in Mecca and Medina, and maintaining İstanbul as the capital of the Ottoman state.¹¹⁸ To this end, he envisaged

¹¹⁷ Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II*, 605-14.

¹¹⁸ “Hasıl-ı kelimat matlub olan şey devletin bekası olub bu da dört şeye münhasırdır birincisi dinimiz olan din-i İslam’ın muhafazası ikincisi hanedan-ı saltanat-ı seniyye-i Osmaniye’nin bekası üçüncüsü

following policies and establishing regulations that are of conservative nature, in other words, not like the Western-imported *Tanzimat* reforms. He said:

*Although a law may guarantee the life of the state and people in one country, the same law may cause destruction in another country (...) as the law must accord with the religion, character and morals of the people.*¹¹⁹

Having lessons learned from the Balkan Uprisings precipitating the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, he was particularly careful not to indulge too much into the idea of strengthening the local administrations and recognizing them some representation and self-rule, the grand project of the *Tanzimat* reforms:

Midhat Paşa believed that the principle of devolving the administration in the provinces was in accordance with the interest of the state, and as an introduction to generalising the principle, set up the Danubian vilayet. But it is natural that the benefits of devolved administration will accrue most to the nation which is in the majority in a given region, and although, in the aforementioned vilayet the reins of government were in the hands of the Muslims, it was the

haremeyn-ş şerifeyn'in vikaye ve muhafazası dördüncüsü payitahtımızın İstanbul kalması hususlarıdır". BOA. Y.EE 4-29.

¹¹⁹ "Bir kanun bir memlekette devlet ve ahalinin hayatını temin ettiği halde aynı kanun diğer bir memlekette harabiyeti mucib olabilir (...) kanun ahalinin din ve mizac ve ahlakına mütenasip olmalıdır" ibid.

Bulgarians who benefited, with the harmful consequence that at the end of the last war the vilayet took the name of Bulgaria; part of the Muslim population emigrated, part died in the course of war and migration (...) It became obvious that the principle of devolved administration was damaging and destructive not only to the state, but also to the Muslim population.¹²⁰

Abdülhamid II disliked the outcome of the Treaty of Berlin, for it appeared to him as a basis for total European intrusion into the Ottoman affairs, and a reason for discord among the elements making up the Ottoman population:

It is obvious that the reforms in the Anatolian and Balkan vilayets the Treaty of Berlin recommend the execution of will bring forth the same result, that it will serve the interests of Armenians in the vilayets where the Armenians are abundant,

¹²⁰ “Hatta üç beş sene evvele gelinceğe değin yakın zamanlarda bile serkara gelen zevat içinde menfaat-ı devlete pek makus noktalardan nazar edenler zuhur idüb ez an cümle Midhat Paşa taşralarca tevsi-i idare usulün tamimine mukaddeme olmak üzere Tuna vilayetini teşkil eylemiş ise de bir memlekette ekseriyet hangi millette ise tevsi-i idarenin fevaidinden en ziyade o milletin hisse-mend olması tabii olduğu cihetle vilayet-i mezkurede inan-ı idare-i hükümet yedd-i İslam’da olduğu halde yine Bulgarlar müstefid olarak bunun netice-i muzırrası olmak üzere hitam-ı muhaberede vilayet-i mezkure Bulgaristan namını almış ve ahali-i Müslim’den bir takımı hicret ve (...) tevsi-i idareden yalnız devletin değil ahali-i İslamiye’nin dahi mutazarrır ve hasar-dide olduğu meydanda bulunmuştur.” BOA. Y.EE, 4-26.

*and will serve the interests of Greeks in the vilayets where there is much Greek influence.*¹²¹

For him, the regulations in the Ottoman East for self-administration (as he called “otonomi”) imposed by the European Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin meant nothing than “anatomy”, in other words, dismemberment:

*It is clear that England – God forbid! – is striving to dissolve the Ottoman Empire into statelets. For example, by creating an Albania in Albania, an Armenia in the Armenian-inhabited places, an Arab government in all the places inhabited by Arabs, and a Turkistan in the Turkish-inhabited areas. This amounts not to autonomy, but to anatomy,*¹²²

Especially after managing to shelve the European-imposed reforms dictated at the Congress of Berlin, as the missionaries and diplomats gradually lost their hopes for internal reform, and surviving the obstinate financial crisis through the establishment of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration in 1881, he began to enact his project full

¹²¹ “İşte Berlin Muahednamesinin Anadolu ve Rumeli vilayet-i şahanesinde icrasını tavsiye eylediği ıslahat dahi aynıyle bu neticeyi hasıl ederek kesretle Ermeni sakin olan vilayet-i şahanece Ermenilerin ve Rum nüfuzu ziyade olan vilayetlerce dahi Rumların menfaatine hizmet edeceği derkar iken (...)”BOA. Y.EE, 4-26.; “Ecnebilerin Berlin muahedesıyla nail oldukları salahiyyetten maada ayrı bir nezaret hakkı gibi muzır bir şey tasavvur edemem (...) en ziyade düşüneceğim ve din ve devlet ve vatanıma karşı olan vazifem böyle bir tehlikeye meydan vermemektir”. BOA. Y.EE 4-29.

¹²² “İngiltere devletinin Devlet-i Aliyye’yin neuzen billahi tevaif-i müluk şekline koymağa say eylemekte olduğu bedihidir. Mesela Arnavudluğu Arnavutluk ve Ermeni sakin olan mahalde bir Ermenistan ve bilcümle Arab sakin olan mahallerde bir Arab hükümeti ve Türk sakin olan yerleri Türkistan tabirleriyle otonomi değil yani anatomi yapmaktan ibarettir.” BOA Y.EE. 4-59.

force. With now liberals in power and Egypt invaded in 1882, the British opted for the Suez Canal of Egypt over the Turkish Straits, and discarded the Ottoman Empire as its ally in the east in the first years of the 1880s, ending the traditional British support of the Ottomans.¹²³ Abdülhamid II, in response, strengthened ties with Germany. He was particularly concerned about the “defence problem” of his empire, in the absence of territorial guarantees and alliances with European Great Powers.¹²⁴ Thus, he secured a military mission from Germany to train his army and provided German credits for constructing an extensive railroad project. He once said:

Those so-called progressives say such things as ‘We are feeding too much soldiers, the country must be protected by the gendarmerie’. These [individuals] say feeding and increasing soldiers is possible and attainable only after the country is made prosperous. Those who hold these ideas are resigned to a foreign protectorate; they have no religious or national feelings left and they think only of their personal interests. Anyone who owns a farm procures a watchman and a watchdog before settling down to cultivation; for in the absence of a watchman wild beasts may damage the farm, or another person may come . . . and take it over.’¹²⁵

¹²³ Actually the missionaries hailed the invasion as, in their eyes, the British imperialism could offer them protection in their evangelizing efforts. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria* , 255.

¹²⁴ Yasamee, F. A. K. (1993). *Abdülhamid II and the Ottoman defence problem. Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 4(1), 20–36. doi:10.1080/09592299308405871

¹²⁵ “(...) Biz çok asker besliyoruz memleketi jandarma ile idare etmeli deyü terakkiper ver denilenler tarafından sözlür söylenmektedir. Bunlar asker beslemek mülkün imarı ile hasıl olur mülkü imar ettikten sonra askeri çoğaltmalı diyorlar ki bu fikirde bulunanlar bir devletin himayesine girmeyi göze almış kendilerinde hissiyat-ı diniye ve milliye kalmamış ve menafi-i şahsiyyesinden maada bir şey

Abdülhamid's another concern was, in Selim Deringil's words, the "legitimacy deficit" he was experiencing as a ruler who prorogued the parliament and shelved the constitution.¹²⁶ He was particularly concerned with his empire's image in the European eyes, and invented traditions and rituals often were used to bolster the Ottoman prestige.¹²⁷ Yet, in the eyes of the European Great Powers, the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire over its non-Muslim communities, especially the Armenians, was questionable since, as set forth in the Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin, the Ottoman state is unable to provide security for them.¹²⁸ In an effort to provide produce legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects, the sultan engaged with modernization projects in many areas. Judiciary, the educational system, the civil administration, and the financial structures were all overhauled. He afforded most of these

düşünmeyenlerdir. Bir çiftliğe malik olan kimse korucu ve bekçi kelb tedarik etmezden evvel ziraat ve imara sarf-ı mesai etmez. Çünkü kourucusu olmaz ise ya yabani bir hayvan çiftliğe ika-ı hasar eder yahut bir başkası gelip orayı sahihsiz bir yer addiyle ondan istifadeye çalışır." BOA Y.EE. 3-59 (23 April 1895).

¹²⁶ Deringil, Selim. *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1998. In recent years, many works published about the ways Abdülhamid II dealt with his legitimacy problem. See Özbek, Nadir. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset İktidar Ve Meşrutiyet : 1876-1914*. İstanbul: İletişim, 2002; Somel, Selçuk A. *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline*. Leiden: Brill, 2001; Karateke, Hakan T. *Padişahım Çok Yaşa!: Osmanlı Devletinin Son Yüz Yılında Merasimler*. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017.

¹²⁷ Deringil, Selim. 1993. "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (1). Cambridge University Press: 3–29.

¹²⁸ Gürbüz, Aslıhan. *Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia (1878-1890)*. Unpublished MA Thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, 100-1.

modernization projects through his personal budget, *Hazine-i Hassa*, headed by a certain Agop, his personal banker.¹²⁹

The sultan paid a personal attention to opening up first and second level public schools all around the empire, and developing a state school curriculum with an openly Islamic emphasis. He often deplored that, despite the great amount of money spent, the school programs still are unable to indoctrinate the love of religion, sultan and the homeland, and that the Christian schools in the empire still outperform them.¹³⁰ By the Hamidian period, the state-sponsored school network founded by the Ottoman state emerged as a strong rival to the American educational institutions.¹³¹

By the second half of the 1880s, the sultan was reaping the fruits of his consistent policy of reforms intended to strengthen the Ottoman Empire and his throne. The political power, by then, decisively shifted from Babıali to the Yıldız Palace, his residence, with the last representatives of *Tanzimat* reforms were all eliminated. In the provinces, he depended on alliances he made with local Muslim notables and on the loyal governors appointed directly from Yıldız. A more homogenous, Muslim

¹²⁹ Georgeon, Abdülhamid 225-32

¹³⁰ “Mekteblerimizin programları yetişen talebenin ezhanına din, padişah ve vatan muhabbetini tamamiyle ilkaya salih bulunmuyor (...) bu mektebler için ve alel-umum maarifin neşr ve tamimi maksadiyle bunca mebalîğ sarf edilmekte bulunduğu halde afif ve müstakim ve malumatlı olarak mekteplerden çıkan gençlerimizin adedi Hıristiyan mekteplerinden çıkanlara nisbetle dun bulunuyor” BOA. Y.EE 2008-8; “Bilakis nakıs malumatlılarımız pek çoktur. Onun için milliyet ve din ne demek bilmezler. Daimen ecanibin alkış ve paralarına aldanırlar. Maarif ise olmadığından servetle dahi müdafaa edemezler. Bilakis memleketimizde bulunan Hıristiyan oldukça malumatları ile temelli ve kendi mezheblerince dindar ve dinlerini muhafaza edecek kadar da taassupları bulunduğundan şu vaziyette milliyetlerini dahi muhafaza etmektedirler” BOA Y.EE. 4-59 (23 April 1892).

¹³¹ Kieser, *Iskalanmış Barış*, 39, 85

empire was being molded with the precedence given to the Anatolian and Arab provinces, rather than the Balkans. And ideologically, the *Tanzimat*'s secular "Osmanlılık" promises for equal citizenship waned and replaced by an Islamic identity centered around the person of the caliph. In Abdülhamid's person, an all-powerful, sacred caliph emerged, unchecked by the ulama, the janissaries, or the bureaucrats. In the first years of his reign, he said:

*I made a mistake when I wished to imitate my father Abdülmecid, who sought reforms by permission and by liberal institutions. I shall follow in the footsteps of my grandfather Sultan Mahmud. Like him I now understand it is only by force that one can move the people with whose protection God has entrusted me.*¹³²

In short, although the volume of American missionary enterprise was on constant increase, together their political and within and outside the empire, a clash with the Ottoman authorities was becoming more and more imminent as they were began to be widely perceived as connected to the encroaching European powers, and the Hamidian project was being put into force. Maybe, for the American missionaries, the most important repercussion of this imperial power shift was the elimination of a secularized and Westernized bureaucratic class that limited the sultanic power since the 1830s and often tolerated, even supported, the missionary work all around the empire. Clearly, this time, the structural changes within the Ottoman state did not serve them well, as it did some decades ago.

¹³² Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period. A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament*. (Baltimore, 1963), 244.

4.1. Showdown

Towards the end of the 1880s, it was apparent to the American missionaries that the reform agenda based on the Treaty of Berlin could not coexist with the Hamidian Project. The sultan wanted to empower his Sunni Muslim subjects, yet the missionaries supported the non-Muslim elements in the empire and encouraged their cultural and intellectual development. He wanted to stamp out the previous *Tanzimat* reforms that attempted to implement a common and secular identity for all the Ottoman subjects and demanded allegiance of all the Ottoman subjects to his person, yet the missionaries worked assiduously on the field to make sure that earlier promises for greater security and representation of the Armenians are carried out.¹³³ The missionaries demanded increased security for the Armenian subjects in the Ottoman East, but the Hamidian state, instead of playing a mediating role, formed alliances with local Sunni landlords, further sharpening the dividing lines between different ethnic groups in the region. It was clear that Protestantism, as represented by the American missionaries, became the fundamental ideological rival of the sultan Abdülhamid II.

The initial recognition of American missionary institutions as charitable foundations because of their public service shifted to a watchful and suspicious stance. The sultan, identifying the missionaries as threatening elements to the Ottoman integrity, now began to contemplate the ways of containing their growth within the Empire. Devrim Ümit, in her PhD thesis focusing on the relations between the Ottoman

¹³³ Kieser, *Nearest East*, 35, 55-8.

authorities and the ABCFM missionaries during the Hamidian era, highlights the Ottoman attempts at limiting the missionary growth in Anatolia. Ümit argues that by the second half of the Hamidian reign, the missionaries were not seen as beneficial to public good. This was, she argues, mostly due to the impact of the ABCFM missionaries on the public and the evangelist and internationalist agendas of the missionaries.¹³⁴

One of Abdülhamid II's tactics was to use the Ottoman legal codes, mostly developed by the *Tanzimat* ministers in the 1850s and 1860s, as instruments against the American missionaries. *Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi* (Education Act of 1869), for example, had been charted out during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, but had never been implemented. Küçük Said Paşa, Abdülhamid II's Grand Vizier, refurbished it in 1879 and put it into practice in opening up many *rüşdiyyes* and *idadiyes* (first and second level) schools. Abdülhamid II held the opinion that, as Islam was the official religion of the empire, the religious education should occupy a central place in the curriculum of the state schools. According to him, the curriculum should inculcate the children "piety, and its consequence, love of country and solidarity", as well as patriotic zeal and nationalist fervor.¹³⁵ The act reorganized the entire Ottoman education by creating a standard curriculum for state schools, and introducing mandatory education for boys and girls of certain ages. Furthermore, it organized all schools in the empire, whether state, confessional or missionary

¹³⁴ Devrim Ümit. *The American Protestant Missionary Network in Ottoman Turkey, 1876-1914: Political and Cultural Reflections of the Encounter*, (Unpublished PhD thesis, 2010).

¹³⁵ " (...) ve mekatib-i mezkure programlarının ol-vechle tanzimi yani (...) evvel-be-evvel diyanetlerini ve netice-i diyanet olan vatanperverlik ve hamiyet ve gayret-i milliye efkarının talebe-i umum meyanında neşr ve tamimi ve tekid ve tezyidi". BOA. Y.EE. 3-60.

schools, under the *Maarif Nezareti* (Ministry of Education), and gave the minister responsibility to approve and authorize their teachers, curricula and teaching materials.¹³⁶

In these new standards were established for certifying teachers and authorizing the curricula, Sultan Abdülhamid II had a tool to frustrate the missionary efforts at growth. In many cases, certification of the missionary school teachers and materials were either rejected or delayed.¹³⁷ In December 1886, the Ottoman Minister of Education, Münif Pasha, met with the Charge d’Affaires ad interim of the American Legation to communicate about the need for some American institutions in the provinces to submit in three months their textbooks, curricula, and teacher information in accordance with the Article 129 of the 1869 Education Act. Otherwise, they would not be considered legitimate.¹³⁸ In the same year, the Ottoman authorities carried out an investigation to figure out whether the missionary teachers held teaching qualifications and whether the mission schools had necessary licenses. It turned out that a great majority of institutions and educators lacked legal documents, demonstrating how evasive the American missionaries could be in their dealings with the Ottoman state.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Emine Ö. Evered. *Empire and Education Under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks*. (London: I.B. Tauris), 1-34.

¹³⁷ Daniel, *Philanthropy*, 114.

¹³⁸ “Vilayat-ı Şahane’de, bila-ruhsat küşad edilmiş olan mekteblere, üç ay mühlet ihsan olunarak, bu müddet zarfında ruhsat talebine tesebbus etmeyenler hakkında, muamele-i nizamiyenin icrası hususu”. Ümit, *the American*, 60-72.

¹³⁹ Sharkey, Heather J. 2017. “The Pivotal Era of Abdulhamid II, 1876–1909.” Chapter. In *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*, 179–242. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 211.

Yet another obstacle for the American missionary enterprise came as a result of the Hamidian project of administrative centralization. Citing an unwelcome precedence that took place in Harput where the Euphrates College, an American missionary complex, is located, an Ottoman *tebliğ* (communique) sent to the provinces declares that the provincial authorities have no authority to issue permissions to non-Ottoman citizens for construction and inauguration of schools, and makes clear that only an *irade-i seniyye* (imperial edict) has such a capacity.¹⁴⁰ This was a perfect example illustrating the Sultan's control over the provinces with negative implications for the American missionary educational institutions. With the power of local officials is diminished, he could control the provinces more directly from the palace. When a problem occurred, he simply changed governors. Henry Barkley, who during his tour in Anatolia mingled with American missionaries, noted that a big drawback for the missionaries is the fact that governors are coming and going very quickly.¹⁴¹

Various reports were prepared by Ottoman officers to inform the sultan about the current picture of the American missionary presence in the Ottoman Empire and how to counter them. In a report that was produced by Şakir Pasha who was, at the time, serving as *Anadolu Umum Islahat Müfettişi* (Inspector General of Reforms in

¹⁴⁰ “...mekatib-i mezkurenin vaktiyle hilaf-ı usul olarak hükümet-i mahalliyenin ruhsatıyla inşa ve küşad eylediği anlaşılıb binaenaleyh şimdi bunların ilgasına teşebbüs olunması muvafık-ı hal ve maslahat olamayacağı gibi ferman-ı ali itası da münasip görünmediğinden buna ruhsat verilmesi hususunda Maarif Nezaret-i Celilesi’ne tebliğiyle badema irade-i seniyye-i cenab-ı hilafet-penahi istihsal olunmaksızın taşralarca ecnebi mektepleri küşadına ruhsat verilmemesi zımında keyfiyetin tamimen izbarı ba-tezkire-i samiye-i Sadaret-penahi emr ü iş’ar buyurulmuş ve mucebince icra-yı tebligat edilmiş olmağla vilayet-i celilelerince de ana göre icra-yı icabına ihtimam ve itina buyurulması”. DH.MKT. 2038, 7.6.1310 (27 December 1892).

¹⁴¹ Barkley, *A Ride Through Asia Minor*, 225-8

Anatolia). The report is significant in that it warns the Sultan specifically about the activities of the American missionary schools, charging them to incite the Armenian community to revolt against the imperial authority. The solution, Şakir Pasha advised the Sultan, was to open schools with Islamic-based curricula especially in the Eastern Anatolia to counterbalance the impact of the ABCFM schools.¹⁴² Following the advice of Şakir Pasha, Abdülhamid II introduced a spirit of competition in the field of education that directly aimed to rival the missionary schools in the empire. Abdülhamid II was engaged in establishing his own network of primary and industrial schools with curricula in Turkish and Muslim character in an attempt to counter impact of the American missionary schools in Anatolia. As late as 1850, there was no more than six secondary schools operated by the imperial authority; and until 1868 when *Mekteb-i Sultani* was opened, there was no Western-style secondary school for the Muslim population of the empire¹⁴³. Unlike the educational policies of the *Tanzimat* period between 1839 and 1876 which prioritized middle and high schools, Abdülhamid II's aim was to open schools from kindergarten up -an explicit indication that his policy was in emulation of the work of the American missionaries.¹⁴⁴

Another legal code used as a tool to contain the American missionary growth by Abdülhamid II was the 1874 *Sicil-i Nüfus Nizamnamesi* (Regulation For Population

¹⁴² Somel, Selçuk A. *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline*. Leiden: Brill, 2001

¹⁴³ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 73-125, 171-205.

¹⁴⁴ Ümit, *The American Protestant Missionary Network*, 6, 310.

Registry). In the scope of the official population census, the American consulate in İstanbul was asked in 1883 to provide the Sublime Porte with a complete list of American citizens in the Ottoman Empire, as well as their location, profession, and legal status. The consulate rejected the demand as illegitimate, and asked the reason why the government needed such information. In response, the Ottoman minister of foreign affairs said that it was important on the grounds of “efficiency”: this way the Sublime Porte could provide “a better and faster service” to the foreigners.¹⁴⁵ The Ottoman governments also communicated with the provincial authorities, asking them to count the foreigners for them. The consulate, recognizing these efforts as a means to pinpoint the missionary distribution in the empire and to profile the individuals, firmly refused to cooperate with the Ottoman authorities unless their government instructs them to do so.¹⁴⁶ The issue dragged on for years, and only could be solved in the first decade of the 20th century.

In 1884, after news arrived that two Muslim boys in the Levant region were converted to Protestantism due to the missionary efforts, Ottoman authorities ordered that Muslims in the region from cannot attend Christian schools, and funding for constructing many more government schools, where the state curriculum was taught, was increased. An Ottoman official, depending on the imperial censorship regulations, suppressed the printing of a missionary weekly journal in Beirut.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Emrah Şahin, *Faithful Encounters: Authorities and American Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire*, Montreal : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 21.

¹⁴⁶ BOA Y. PRK. HR. 7/36, 1–9 (19 December 1883).

¹⁴⁷ Jessup, Henry H. *Fifty-three Years in Syria*. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co, 1910)., 549-53.

The Bible House was located in a central place in İstanbul. This was the missionary headquarters for printing and distributing Bibles and other religious documents. During the Hamidian period, the Bible House experienced serious hardships due to governmental pressure.¹⁴⁸ In the 1880s, the Ottoman government also engaged in an effort to distribute Qurans as a way of countering missionaries' distribution of Bibles.¹⁴⁹ In fact, Abdülhamid II's policy of opening up new Islamic-focused public schools and distribute Qurans to encounter the missionaries represented yet another form of evangelism, not so different than the one practiced by the ABCFM missionaries. At times, the Ottoman state officially sent missionaries to various parts of the empire, mostly for converting the communities practicing heterodoxical beliefs to the orthodox Islam embraced by the palace. For example, many Sunni clerics arrived Yezidi areas to convince the local leaders to accept Islam, and mosques and religious schools were built to inscribe Sunni Islam into the region.¹⁵⁰

Abdülhamid II was particularly worried about his Alevi subjects; some of them built close relations with American missionaries and members of the Protestant millet in the 1850s and 1860s. Ignoring the Islamic message was not an option, given that the empire was desperate for financial and human resources, as well as a sense of social and political common bond. The Ottoman missionaries aggressively worked in the Alevi regions, opening up mosques and schools, in order to make sure that the Alevis do not deviate from the official Islam.¹⁵¹ These examples suggest that the sultan

¹⁴⁸ Kieser, *İskalanmış Barış*, 89-90; The sultan identified Bible societies as possible centers of suspicion. Deringil, *Well Protected Domains*, 113-4

¹⁴⁹ Rogan, Eugene. *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 137– 38, 143

¹⁵⁰ Deringil, *The Well- Protected Domains*, 69– 74.

¹⁵¹ Hans- Lukas Kieser , *Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East* (Philadelphia : Temple University Press , 2010) , 51 – 55 .

employed and adopted some missionary techniques and ideas to counter and limit them.

Especially towards the end of 1880s, Abdülhamid II activated the Ottoman diplomatic corps for his cause against the missionary efforts in his empire. The Ottoman diplomatic machinery, began to be built even before the *Tanzimat* reforms, came to assume important tasks in the last century of the Ottoman Empire. In order to perpetuate its territorial integrity, which was often depended on European support, the Ottomans built a cadre that would learn and adopt contemporary practices of European diplomacy in order to build and keep friendly ties with much powerful European states. The peak moment came when the Ottoman Empire joined the European State System following the Treaty of Paris in 1856, signed after the Crimean War during which the Ottoman Empire was allied with Britain and France. Such modern methods of diplomacy the Ottoman diplomats employed to further the imperial interests included influencing public opinion, information-gathering, and alliance-building.¹⁵²

As the Ottoman authorities were concerned with a collaboration between the American missionaries the Armenian revolutionaries, it became the duty of Ottoman diplomatic representatives in the US to step in. One particular responsibility of the Ottoman diplomatic corps in the US was to collect and convey information about the situation and activities of the Ottoman Armenian subject residing in the United States. The sultan received many information and policy recommendations from the

¹⁵² Davison, Roderic. "Ottoman Diplomacy and Its Legacy", in L.C.Brown, *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Ottoman diplomats around the world. The Ottoman diplomats were attempted in changing the public opinion about the Ottoman Empire through their efforts.¹⁵³ For sure, detailed intelligence reports and policy recommendations provided by the Ottoman diplomatic corps in the United States were substantial in the process of policy-making back in the Yıldız Palace, Abdülhamid II's headquarters in the Ottoman capital. In any case, efforts of the Ottoman diplomatic machine -such as information gathering, public opinion shaping and lobbying- indicate that, unlike what "the European Question literature" suggests, the Ottomans were not passive actors who entirely depended on European support for survival during this period; they somehow adopted the modern/European tools of diplomacy and actively employed them.

In short, undoing the mild democratization of the *Tanzimat* reformers, the sultan diminished the powers of the provincial authorities and preferred loyalty over merit, creating a cadre of bureaucrats scattered all around the country, but linked directly to the palace. Thus, Abdülhamid II could more efficiently and effectively move his administrative machine from his palace at Yıldız, and use it against any threat he perceived. As he was suffering a "legitimacy deficit", he employed invented traditions, symbols, and more importantly, modern tools of education and statecraft to bolster his image as a Caliph. In this case we are focused on, his target was to contain the American missionary growth that, in his view, had gone too far and dangerous. Tools he employed in his effort to limit the missionary activities included

¹⁵³ BOA. Y..PRK.EŞA.17-19 (21 March 1893); BOA. HR. SYS. 2737/25 (16 March 1894); BOA Y..A...HUS. 289 - 49. (12 December 1893).

making use of Ottoman legal codes –a fruit of the Ottoman reform process- and to engaging in counter-evangelism.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Oscar Straus, who served as US Minister to the Ottoman Empire for multiple times around the turn of the twentieth century, commented that the missionary affairs formed a considerable part of his daily work at the legation.¹⁵⁴ Lloyd Griscom, a young diplomat who worked at the American Legation in the Ottoman capital, said that

the Legation's real purpose was to protect and advance the interests of the hundreds of missionaries scattered throughout the country — an American in Turkey was practically synonymous with missionary (...) The missionaries had been among the first to learn how to exert pressure in politics — even the head of our State Department used to quake when the head of a Bible Society walked in.

Especially after the missionary institutions became the center of Ottoman government's attention by the 1880s, American diplomats had to put more and labor to make sure that their operations would continue. The missionaries, as the most powerful American interest groups in the region, increasingly requested more US

¹⁵⁴ Straus, *Under Four Administrations*, 70-4.

involvement into the Middle Eastern affairs for the continuation of their works.¹⁵⁵ In the late 1893 Alexander Terrell, the American minister in İstanbul, asked from the State Department to send gunboats to the Ottoman waters. He was convinced that only a show of power would make the Sultan reconsider his policies, claiming that “a warship to hover about Smyrna (İzmir) would help American diplomacy greatly”. Later he wrote “Periodically the Turk must be reminded that our Government is weary with his methods”.¹⁵⁶ By the way, the US Navy had already ordered the *USS Chicago*, commanded by no one other Alfred T. Mahan himself, to cruise in European and Mediterranean waters.¹⁵⁷

Sultan Abdülhamid II, in an apparent suspicion and apprehension, issued an *irade* for the Ottoman government to investigate whether or not the gunboat has the particular intention of extending any kind of protection or support to the Ottoman Armenians.¹⁵⁸ When the warship finally arrived in İzmir in the early March of 1894, with a delay of more than two months, in Terrell’s eyes, it had already lost most of its effect since the Ottoman authorities had already received the news of the coming ship beforehand by the Ottoman minister in the US, Mavroyeni Bey.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ John A. Denovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

¹⁵⁶ Terrell to Secretary of State, (29 January 1894), roll 55.

¹⁵⁷ Still, *American Sea Power* 93.

¹⁵⁸ (...) ve Midilli’ye bir Amerika harp sefinesi dahi vürud edeceği haber alındığından sefain-i mezkurenin bu vechile vürudunda yekdiğeriyle birleşerek Ermenileri sıyanet gibi bir maksad olup olmadığını tahkiki mukteza-yı emr ü ferman-ı hümayün Hazret-i Hilafet-penahi’den bulunmuş olmağla (...) BOA. İ..HUS. 21-101;

¹⁵⁹ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 165-4.

Although assiduous missionary efforts in influencing the US policy-makers to persuade the government to increase its naval presence in the Ottoman Mediterranean, its initial impact was weak. Yet, however weak the impact was, this incident marked the first time an American gunboat visited the Ottoman ports due to the missionary calls, and it demonstrated the limits of the American missionary impact over the making of American foreign policy right after the period we are focused in this thesis. During the 1890s and the 1900s, numerous American vessels visited Ottoman ports in order to protect missionary interests.

The period between 1876 and 1890 was a formative period that prepared the structures that prepared the more serious clash between the missionaries and the Hamidian state from the 1890s onwards. The ABCFM network, operating worldwide as a transnational community, involved many professionalized missionaries that often carried multiple identities transcending their nationality. As the ABCFM network grew stronger at different parts of the world, they emerged as powerful international actors, engaged in lobbying for their cause, influencing public opinion, shaping the views of foreign policy-makers, and mediating between polities. Due to their hard-works, systematic efforts, and well-connected networks, they grew to become important social, political and diplomatic actors, in the Ottoman context as well.

As this thesis demonstrated, the early Ottoman official attitude towards the missionary work was not necessarily negative during the Tanzimat era; often they were considered as carrying out good public works like education, health service, philanthropy etc., thus sharing the burden of public works that the government is unable to carry out. In this period, they became to be more visible in the public and political life: for example they lobbied for the recognition of the Protestant millet in alliance with the British Embassy and supported constitutional movements. The first generation of missionaries were not much knowledgeable about the societies they came to convert. But their children often grew up speaking the local languages. In time, the missionaries interacted with the local communities and authorities and they shaped each other. These interactions and the process of cross-pollination helped the missionaries amass huge local experience concerning the place they were operating.¹⁶⁰

The 1870s witnessed important breaking points. The missionary work grew even bigger and stronger by this time, and the education they offer became somewhat more secularized and enlightened. The *Tanzimat* experiment came to an end when the French model of the modernizing Ottoman bureaucrats failed with the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, a severe drought was experienced in Anatolia, Sultan Abdülaziz began to sideline the *Tanzimat* bureaucrats and amass power in his hands, the Ottoman economy nearly collapsed in the mid-1870s, and finally uprisings began in the Balkans. The fierce European reaction to the massacres in the Balkans and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8 precipitated the end of the *Tanzimat* era: the

¹⁶⁰ Miller and Soleimani, *The Sheikh and the Missionary*, 408.

Constitution shelved, the Parliament prorogued, and the new sultan Abdülhamid II emerged as an authoritarian figure in his palace at Yıldız.

The American missionaries were particularly on the radar of the Ottoman government during the Congress of Berlin where they lobbied for the protection of the Armenian community. They had been particularly active during the Balkan Crisis as they communicated to the world what is going on there and called the Europe for humanitarian action. Now, as the new sultan took the throne and gradually gained power, they were perceived as usual suspects, and, somewhat paranoidly, suspected by the sultan for creating a new Bulgaria in the Ottoman Armenia.

As considerable Balkan lands with a mainly Christian population was lost and the European powers -particularly Britain- lost hope for internal reform within the empire, Abdülhamid II started to perceive a somewhat justified insecurity and vulnerability for what remained of his empire and began his own project. This involved an emphasis on the Islamic identity -rather than an Ottoman identity as was the case during the *Tanzimat*- and a sweep centralization on many matters: administration, education, technical modernization etc. The main difference between this and the previous *Tanzimat* centralization, which was actually favored by the American missionaries, was that in the latter it was the Sublime Porte, the Ottoman government, who largely held the power. Now, the sultan held the entire power in his person. With the *Tanzimat*, the Westernizing and secular bureaucrats, who occasionally befriended with the missionaries, gone.

Apart from growing suspicions against the missionaries, this “Yıldız centralization” was also bad news for them, as the new provincial leaders were now directly appointed by the palace, not based on their local affiliations or their merit, but based on their loyalty for the sultan. By this time, national pride and industrial growth in the post-Civil War America helped bring territorial consolidation at home and an ever increasing activity abroad. It was thus only natural to expect a rapid growth in the American missionary work in the Ottoman lands. For nearly half a century, the missionaries developed good relations with local leaders all around the empire, but now they had to settle a new understanding with the representatives of the Hamidian government for their still growing enterprise.

Moreover, the American missionaries were actively lobbied for the implementation of the reforms proposed in the Ottoman East. A missionary delegation was present at the Congress of Berlin, indicating that they now became international actors. On one side, the missionaries felt security concerns for themselves and their Armenian fellows, as evidenced during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8. The future of their well-established enterprise was also under threat. Apart from petitioning the US government to become an intermediary between the European Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire on the issue of implementing the Berlin reforms, the missionaries – especially those living inland Anatolia- proposed to increase the consular representation especially in the interior regions, and called the US Navy to visit the Ottoman Empire to witness their situation. The main goal was to demonstrate to the American officials the gravity of the situation in Anatolia and, by this way, to compel them to take immediate action.

However it became more and more clear that they were going to fail to reach a lasting accommodation. They realized, for example, that the local authorities were trying to diligently locate and suspiciously monitor them. Plus, now they were required to standardize their curriculum considerably due to the government regulations, and their work became more subject to government inspection. Yet, the authorities were less cooperative when it came to issuing official permits for the missionary institutions, and more demanding when it came to bureaucratic details. Moreover, the sultan now started his own evangelism, mirroring the missionary example, by opening up new schools, distributing Qurans and sending out Muslim missionaries. By this point, it seemed clear that the Hamidian project, bent on centralizing power in the Yıldız Palace, was doomed to clash with the growing missionary interests in the Ottoman Empire. The question was, however, when and in what form this was going to happen.

As we have seen in this thesis, even a non-European empire like the Ottoman Empire soon began to mirror and employ the tactics and ideas brought by the missionaries. It, then, follows that that the missionary work is never a one-way process and the nineteenth century was indeed the age of evangelism of all kinds.

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