

**ALBANIAN PERCEPTION OF 1908 REVOLUTION AND ITS EFFECTS
ON ALBANIAN NATIONALISM**

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Abstract

The Young Turk Revolution of July 1908 marked the return to constitutional government in the Ottoman Empire. The constitutional movement wanted to modernize and democratize the empire with a vision of a democratic multi-national state on the one hand and also to preserve what was left of the Empire on the other. Many diverse groups including some of the different ethnic and religious communities gave their supports to this movement hoping that under a constitutional regime they would gain a grater autonomy /priviliges for their people among whom Albanians were the first group to join the constitutional movement and many of them participated in the Young Turk uprising

The Young Turk Revolution in almost all respects failed to fulfill what it promised. The promised democracy and decentralization and also racial-harmony and equality and participation in the state by all ethnic groups were abandoned when Young Turk leaders realized that this compromised security. The authoritarian and centralized nature of the government and its attempt to impose a single identity on everyone led to liberal oppositon of many diverse groups among which the Albanians saw their future as closely linked with a strengthened, more modern Empire . Although very much divided in terms of goals, many intellectual Albanians opposed to the armed struggle that would bring Fearing their end foreign intervention in an era of ethnic Nationalism and irredentist policies of the newly established nation-states in the Balkans. They were involved in an unarmed struggle to achieve cultural autonomy which they perceived as the necessary first step toward the creation of a national sentiment . This is why Albanian Intellectuals used all their efforts for the establishment of a more liberal government based on the Principles of promised at the beginning of the revolution, which had a vital exchange of importance for the protection of their national

Introduction

The 1908 Revolution symbolizes two important conflicting aspects of the Ottoman-Albanian relations. First of all, the revolution of 1908 was supported by Albanians. Secondly, the Ottoman-Albanian relations deteriorated under the constitutional government brought by the 1908 revolution.

The 1908 Revolution was the success of an action plan developed by the opponent group, the Young Turks, which gathered around the liberation formula prescribed for the Ottoman Empire. In other words, Constitutional Monarchy was proclaimed as a liberation formula, the 1876 Constitution was promulgated once again, and the autocratic rule of Abdulhamid II, which was considered to be the source of all evil, was ended. Albanians took part as a dynamic force in that operational success of the Young Turk opposition.

On the other hand, operational success of the revolution of 1908 did not become a political achievement in terms of the Ottoman liberation. From this standpoint, the Albanian opposition that emerged as a national movement shortly after the proclamation of Constitutional Monarchy was a significant indication of such a failure.

With regard to the centuries-old togetherness of Ottomans and Albanians, this process also constituted the history of transition from sharing a common fate to the thinking of self-determination. The concept of common fate serves in this context to discover maximum and minimum conditions for Albanians to continue living under the Ottoman identity.

On the verge of the 1908 revolution, Albanians encountered a serious crisis of survival. The Ottoman identity alone was an essential but insufficient condition to the maintenance of Albanian existence. It was essential because Albanians had to live within the political boundaries of Ottoman Empire for a bit longer time. It was insufficient because the Albanian identity had to be defined and recognized as a separate ethnical and political identity. The main reason behind this was the nationalist wave developed in the 19th century throughout the Ottoman Balkans, and the resulting irredentist policies.

The 19th century Balkan nationalism was of an ethnic type as defined by Anthony Smith. As a matter of fact, the Balkan nationalism was in accordance with Smith's ethnic nationalism definition in that it developed as separatist movements intending to secede from a larger political entity and establish a new nation based on ethnic

identity.¹ Besides, upon acquiring independence, the Balkan nationalists adopted irredentist policies with the purpose of expansion by incorporating their cognates abroad and their territories, and of establishing a larger nation

That was exactly what brought Albanians face to face with a survival issue on the verge of the 1908 revolution. Ethnic nationalism and irredentist policies in an era where nations emerged as a norm, Albanians had nothing but two choices to both resist to the negative consequences of these developments and become a part of it.

First was to demonstrate that Albanians constituted a separate ethnic group. This was essential as a first step of alienation to form a basis for their historical rights over the territories they had lived on. However, that romantic eternal existence myth used in defending territorial integrity was far from being a persuading basis for Albanians' sovereignty rights on the territories they lived. In other words, the myth of eternal existence was an essential but insufficient condition to the survival of Albanians. The second choice for Albanians was to attain their maturity to demonstrate that they were able to govern a political community. This could be ensured with cultural liberation through intellectual education to pave the way for a political platform. Nevertheless, the Ottoman identity was far from responding to these two conditions required for the Albanian existence. That is, the Ottoman identity was an essential but insufficient condition to the Albanian survival.

It can be explained within two frameworks. The first is the issue of Albanian survival arising from the Eastern Question and nationalism. The other is to be considered in the context of Ottoman modernization and nationalism.

Eastern Question and Nationalism

The Eastern Question was a particularly complex problem in which the interests of all of the major European powers and the Ottoman empire were concerned. It began before the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century. There is a direct link between the Eastern Question and the troubles in the Balkans which were to cause the First World War.

The first framework should be started with the question of where the Ottoman state stood in the Eastern Question. Disintegration of the Ottoman Empire began from its European territories. The nationalist ideas and movements that the Ottomans met in the 19th century also appeared in these territories. The fact that the Ottoman Balkans was contiguous to the European states and dense Christian population in the region meant that this area was always exposed to political and ideological

¹ Smith , Anthony, *Milli Kimlik*, by Bahadır Sina Şener, İletişim Yyn., İstanbul, 1999, p.134

influences from the West. On the other hand, a potential disorder in this region would lead to the clash of conflicting interests of the major powers. Indeed, the separatist nationalist movements that erupted among the Balkan nations in the 19th century appeared to be an important question not only for the Ottomans but also for the major powers.¹ Russia's main objective was to gain direct access to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles and to protect the rights of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire. For this aim Russia supported the nationalist movements among the Ottoman Orthodox subjects. Serbian uprising of 1804 resulted in gaining of autonomy. Greek uprising of 1821, has brought their independence in 1829.

During this process the other major powers who do not want Russia to establish dominance in the region alone, supported these new political formations at the beginning. But, Russia maintained its ambitions in the region through its pan-Orthodox policies that resulted in the increasing influence of Russia on the Danube principalities and Montenegro. This constituted a serious threat for the interests of the western powers such as England, France and Austria. The only solution to be adopted by the Western powers against Russian objectives for more domination over the Orthodox subjects in the area was the protection of Ottoman territorial integrity for a bit longer. Thus, the Ottoman state that was once a threat against the West would serve as a brake against the Russian danger. This was to be ensured through the initiation of a reform movement that would stop disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.² Indeed, the Western powers supported the Ottoman reformation process beginning with *Tanzimat* reforms. Despite coming for different reasons, that support from the West served the intentions of reformist Ottoman bureaucrats who acted with the reflection of rescuing the Ottoman state.

In this respect, the *Tanzimat* reforms focused on two main targets, namely building confidence on the part of the Western powers and maintaining domestic order. As a matter of fact, there would be the same reflections and targets in the Reform Edict of 1856 and proclamation of the first Ottoman constitution in 1876. However, consequences of the 1878 Berlin Treaty would show that both targets were failed; the Ottoman state would be isolated in diplomatic terms, and lost huge territories as a result of the formation of new nation states in the Balkans.³

¹ Hösche, Edgar, *The Balkans, A Short History From Greek Times to The Present Day*, London, 1972, p.22-23

² Jelavic, Barbara, *Balkan Tarihi*, c. 1, Küre yın., İstanbul, 2006 p. 211-216

³ Sander, Oral, *Siyasi Tarih, İlk Çağlardan 1918'e*, İmge yın. Ankara, 2003 p.34-35

The severe conditions of the Treaty of San Stefano that ended the Russia-Ottoman war in favor of Russia alarmed the Western powers. This Treaty gave Russia and the pan-Slav movement almost everything that could have been hoped for; Ottoman Empire was to grant full independence to Serbia, Montenegro, Romania ; autonomy to a Bulgarian Principality with a large piece of land which included most of Macedonia ; to implement reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to this new arrangement some territories primarily inhabited by Albanians annexed to these newly independent Slavic Orthodox states.¹ The western powers confronted with these major changes in the Balkan, convened a Congress of Berlin in 1878 to revise the conditions of the Treaty of San Stefano. The Treaty of Berlin adjusted the boundaries of newly independent states of Serbia, Montenegro and Romania. Bulgaria was divided into two separate units; a Bulgarian principality which is to be autonomous under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Sultan and the new Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia. Bosnia-Herzegovina although still nominally within the Ottoman Empire was transferred to Austrian control. This left the Ottoman Empire with a portion of Balkan territory which was consisted essentially of two areas, Macedonia and Albania. The strong nationalist pressures on these areas would lead an almost insoluble complexity which characterize the Balkan problem and Albanians are the people who have suffered most from it.²

Within this respect, conclusions of the Berlin Treaty exhibited that the Western powers gave up supporting the Ottoman integrity against Russian expansionism. So much so that new political boundaries drawn by the Berlin Treaty demonstrated that the Western powers made all the efforts to balance the conflict of power in the region against Russian expansionism. The agenda was no longer about supporting the Ottoman territorial integrity but breaking it up without reversing the balance of power. Basic elements of this break-up would be the nation states. However, Albanians would not be a part of this development. Bismarck's statement in the Berlin Congress that "Albanians did not make up a nation"³ was enough for Albanians to face this fact.

As evidenced by the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin, Albanians were forced to act to save themselves from their neighbors not from the Ottoman government. Albanians were the only group in the Empire that reacted to the Treaty of San Stefano with more fear than the Other Ottomans themselves. Their first attempts against the Treaty was the foundation of the Committee for the Defense of Albanian Rights based in Istanbul. The leading members of the committee were the

¹ Jelavic, *İbid*, p.388-389

² Jelavic, *İbid.*, p.390-391

³ Castellan, George, *Balkanların Tarihi*, Milliyet Yyn. , İst., 1993, p.376

Albanian intellectuals prominent in the Ottoman center. It was the first group of Albanians that was organized to ensure the territorial integrity of Albanian lands.¹ Meanwhile, in Albania, groups of Albanians, whose lands were brutally undermined in the Treaty, had begun to organize militant bands to defend themselves from encroachment.

This opposition among the Albanians in action led to creation of Albanian League (or the League of Prizren) on June 10 1878 just three days before the Congress of Berlin gathered. This brought together the Albanian leaders around the League of Prizren which would act as the organizational backbone of the movement to protect the integrity of the Albanian lands.

The League of Prizren unique identified of the following principal fields of activity. Those were, starting diplomatic struggle; unification of the Albanian speaking lands into a single province; preparation of the status of Albania's independence. In relation to the first activity the petitions have been given to the representatives of the United Kingdom and Austria at Berlin Congress that they would fight to the end for the existence of the Albanians. But the Albanian demands through these petitions would be ignored as evidenced by Prince Bismarck's statement that "Albanian nation did not exist"². This caused a natural outcome of the widespread reactions against the resolutions of the Congress of Berlin that had suggested the division and distribution of a portion of Albanian lands. In relation to the second, the most important problem faced by Albanians initially was lack of a consensus among them. A religious and conservative Muslim Albanian fraction did not welcome the idea of uniting Albania under a single province while nationalist intellectual fraction led by Abdul Frasherri defended this idea.³ On the other hand Abdülhamid II supported the League of Prizren as long as it was in line with the Ottoman State's domestic and foreign policies. That meant since the lands that Albanians struggled for were a part of the Ottoman Empire, the Albanian resistance was legitimate as far as Abdulhamid II was concerned. The success of this resistance in preventing the loss of the lands in question was in concordance with the interests of the Ottoman State and such a success could relieve the Ottoman State from possible liabilities against signatory countries. Furthermore, the fact that a great majority of the Albanians were Muslim created suitable grounds for Abdülhamid II for controlling this resistance movement. In the isolated state, Islam had become the strongest weapon for Abdülhamid II in both domestic and foreign

¹ Bozborra, Nuray, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğunun Doğuşu*, Boyut Yın. İst., 1997, p.190

² Castellan, *İbid.*, p.376

³ Frasherri, Kristo, *The Histoy of Albania*, Tirana ,1964, p.130-131; ArbenPuto and Stefanaq Pollo, *The History of Albania , From its Origins to Present Day*, London, 1981, p.119

politics. From this point of view, the mainly Muslim Albanians were the stronghold of Ottoman presence in Roumelia lands.¹ Abdülhamid II realized that the transformation of the Prizren League into a national movement would dangerously lead to the turning of Albanian attention to the domestic rule of their country. To prevent this from happening, he opted to give a religious form to this League through the efforts of Muslim Albanian clergymen in the region. The efforts of Abdülhamid II were largely successful and this caused a division within the League. Taking advantage of this division within the League Abdülhamid II, suppressed the nationalist activities and established a central authority in the region. Despite the various political discrepancies it contained, the League of Prizren holds an important place in Albanian history as a movement that gathered and organized the Albanians under a single cause. Although this movement strong in terms of being a resistance force for the defense of the Albanian lands against invading countries, it was unable to become a politically strong and stable movement that could establish its own political future.²

Although the Congress of Berlin yielded most Albanian-speaking territories back to the Empire, the annexation of Dulcigno (Ülgin) by Montenegro made it clear that for the Albanians these concessions were merely maintaining the balance of power in Europe. As well as the Albanians' frustration due to loss of Ülgin, the rising problem of Macedonia in the 1890s increased unrest among the Albanians of Macedonia.

Treaty of Berlin provided for Macedonia as an Ottoman province, to have its own constitution and a special legal status similar to that of Crete within the framework of the Ottoman Empire. This laid out the interest of the Great Power to Macedonia. The signatories of the Treaty of Berlin left implementation of these reforms to Sublime Porte. But Abdülhamit II did not initiate the implementation of the Treaty with the idea that this would lead to autonomy of Macedonia first and annexation of it by Bulgaria later, just as happened for Eastern Rumelia in 1885.

The Bulgarians' secret nationalist activities to attract the attention of the European Powers in the region and also to create pressure for the reforms caused to mobilization of the other Christian minorities (Serbians, Greeks, Romanians) in the region during the 1890s. These developments led to not only the demands for reforms in Macedonia and also the demands of Albanians for unifying the Albanian territories under a single province have been raised again. Kosovo Albanians

¹ Bozbor, Nuray, 'The Policy of Abdulhamid II Regarding the Prizren League', *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, Annual 2006, no. 11, İstanbul , p. 46

² Bozbor, 'The Policy of Abdulhamid.....', p.66

wanted their lands within the borders of Macedonia stay out of the reforms with the idea that in the event of a possible implementation of the reforms in Macedonia, Kosovo lands thrown the lap of the danger of the Slavic lands. On the other hand, the Albanian intellectuals and patriots wanted the unification of Albanian lands under a single province. This division among the Albanians on the question became apparent in the Peja meeting of 1897 attended by 500 Albanian delegates . Attempts of the Albanian nationalists and patriots to revive the League of Prizren through the Unity of Peja have been unsuccessful due to this division.¹ During this process the major states have become an advocate of the status- quo.² When Bulgaria demanded autonomy for Macedonia in 1896, Russia and Austria absolutely opposed it. This meant that they would never tolerate Albanians' demands for autonomy. Abdulhamid II have ignored the demands of the Albanians during this process.

The reforms for Macedonia have been introduced in 1902 under the growing pressure of nationalist movements.³ The Western Powers who did not want the Balkan states to be active in the region have intervened the process and prepared a new reform programme which was approved by the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin. The new reforms led to an increase in Muslim-Christian opposition in the region and also the anti-reform movement among Albanians grew stronger. On these developments, Mürzsteg Program has been prepared in 1903.⁴ New reform program greatly restricted the rights of the Ottoman Empire in the region in favor of the great powers was accepted by Abdühamid II, reluctantly.

Implementation of Mürzsteg Program did not prevented the nationalist activities of Christian Minorities in the region, worse, led to anti-reformist and anti-Serb riots among the Albanians. This would lead to great unrest among Albanians in Kosovo. Besides the armed uprisings the secret organizational and written propaganda activities among the Albanians gained momentum.⁵ Ideological and political nature of the movements began after the Albanian nationalist organizations to increase operating abroad in 1905 made a connection with them. The situation in the Balkans after the Ilinden insurrection, began to deteriorate. In the beginning of March 1908 Great Britain launched an initiative for the introduction of more radical reforms in Macedonia. This initiative was accepted by Russia. The two states sovereigns met in June 1908 in Reval and adopted a new proposal for reforms

¹ Frasheri, *Ibid.*, p.154-155

² Swire, j., Albania, *Rise of a Kingdom*, London, 1929 p.173

³ Beydilli, Kemal, "II. Abdülhamid Devrinde Makedonya Meselesine Dair" ,*Osmanlı Araştırmaları Dergisi*, IX, pp.77-99, 1989, p.93

⁴ Anderson, M.S., *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, New York, 1966, p.271

⁵ Resneli Niyazi, *Balkanlarda Bir Gerillacı*, İstanbul, 1975, p.36-37, 43-44

known as “Reval Program of Reforms” as a preliminary phase towards full autonomy for Macedonia. But this initiative did not place due to the revolution of the Young Turk.

During this process Abdülhamid II considered the Albanian movement as an instigation of the foreign Powers and never sympathized with the Albanian demands. Abdulhamid’s negative attitudes towards the Albanian demands caused to awaken sympathy among the nationalist Albanians for the constitutionalist monarchist ideas of Young Turk Movement. After the committee of Union and Progress penetrated to Macedonia in 1907, Albanian movement began to recede into the Young Turk movement. Although both movements were strong in early 1908, Young Turks movement was far more organized and have active role. For this reason relying on supports Committee of Union and Progress of the Albanians' constitutionalist views were able to mobilize 20.000 Albanians gathered in Ferizaj (Firzovik) just before the proclamation of the Constitution.¹ In this context Albanians took an active part in the Young Turk movement. They are the first initiators of the 1908 Revolution. The convention held in Ferizaj and the Manastiri’s meeting forced Sultan Abdülhamit to proclaim the Constitution.

The Albanians welcomed the Constitution hoping that through it the Young Turks would grant them political rights. In the first days of the revolution Young Turks made some concessions in the educational and cultural fields in accordance with the spirit of constitutional monarchy. Albanians took advantage of concessions and set up many clubs and schools that helped publish patriotic newspapers and books in Albanian. But soon after coming to power, not only Committee of Union and Progress failed to keep their promises, but they also strongly opposed the Albanian national demands. The most dramatic development faced by the new monarchist regime was Bulgaria's full independence immediately after the proclamation of the 1908 Revolution. This development made the Macedonian question more dangerous not only for one but for the Albanians of the Ottoman state itself. Within a period with increased activities of the irredentist policies of the neighboring countries of Macedonia, the repressive policies of the Committee of Union and Progress towards the Albanians in Kosovo would lead to outbreak of a revolt in 1910. This was followed by another one in 1911, which was as a result of the violent policies that

¹ Uzunçarşılı, İ.Hakkı, “1908 Yılında İkinci Meşrutiyet’in Ne suretle İlan Edildiğine Dair Vesikalar, *Belleten*, c.XX, Ankara, 1956 ; Külçe, Süleyman, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, İzmir, 1944

should be pursued under Ottoman government which clubs and newspapers were closed and forceful disarmament of the people effected.¹

When the Albanian insurgents realized that their salvation could not be achieved unless they combined political activity with armed one they have decided to demand the unification of Albanian vilayets, establishment of a civil and financial administration, legal structures, the Albanian gendarmerie and police force. Along with the Turkish language they also demanded the use of Albanian in administration. These steps would lead to the creation of an autonomous Albanian province. But they did not find a significant support for their demands neither from foreign powers nor the Ottoman government until Ottoman Sultan agree to some of these demands for autonomy in 1912.² This development was the last thing the Balkan States want. Thus, due to the outbreak of the First Balkan War, the government has failed in implementing it. When the Albanians felt that their lands are exposed to the threat of the Balkan states they decided to take arms to fight for country's independence. On November 28, 1912, the National Assembly held in Vlorë which proclaimed the Independence of the country.

Ottoman modernization and Nationalism

In an era when the Western powers gave up all their efforts supporting the Ottoman integrity and allocated to the formation of nation states in the region, the Ottoman identity, which was not corresponding to any form of national identity, was the primary obstacle to Albanians for being part of this process. Developments in the Balkans showed that Albanians needed to survive in cultural and political terms as the Ottomans, but as noted in the territories that were still Ottomans. This was only possible within territories of the Ottoman state, which used its sovereignty over the area on a legitimate basis. Basic challenge in this issue was where Albanians would stand under the ideology of Ottomanism covering all Ottoman subjects as a whole. This was the point of focus in political and cultural programs of Albanian intellectuals.

At this point, the issue of Albanian survival in the context of Ottoman modernization and nationalism will be addressed as a process evolving around the ideology of Ottomanism.

Yet, the Ottomanism was a political-cultural scenario which was expected to ensure a kind of Ottoman fraternity. It was the result of *Tanzimat* reformers' efforts to

¹ Sönmez İşlet, Banu, *II. Meşrutiyet'te Arnavut Muhalefeti*, YKB Yyn., İst., 2007, p.147-172; Çelik, Bilgin *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, Büke Yyn., İst., 2004, p.371-384

² Malcolm, Noel, *Kosova, Balkanları Anlamak İçin*, Milliyet Yyn İst., 1998, p.305-307

overcome national challenges by creating an Ottoman identity under a new legal arrangement. On the other hand, the Ottoman identity was not a social identity. In the classical period, it was used only to describe the dynasty.¹ Under the rule of this dynasty, the Ottoman Empire was dominated by a world of localness and by sects. *Millet system* has been an important administrative apparatus for the sultan to govern the different cultural and religious groups in a harmony. The term '*Millet*' in the context of Ottoman history means a religiously defined people. The *millet system* had a socio-cultural and communal framework based, firstly, on religion and, secondly, on ethnicity which in turn reflected linguistic differences of the *millets* consisted essentially of people who belonged to the same faith. The system allowed them much autonomy, particularly in matters of religious observance, education, and personal status (birth, marriage, death and inheritance). In exchange, these *millet* groups pledged allegiance to the Ottoman reign. This is essentially an indirect commitment to the sultanate was presented through the religious and local leaders. So, the system provided on the one hand, a degree of religious, cultural and ethnic continuity with these communities, while, on the other hand it permitted their incorporation into the Ottoman administrative, economic and political system. This constituted the basis of a compromise between the Ottomans and the non-Muslims. Although it has allowed the maintenance of ethnic identities on the part of non-Muslim groups, *millet* system has been far from providing a sufficient ground to satisfy the demands of certain ethnic groups and also to build political legitimacy on a national ground as could be seen during the nationalist uprisings of the 19th century.

Developments of the nationalist Movements during the 19th century, the compromise between the non-Muslim religious communities broke with the Ottomans. This is also revealed that the non-Muslim clergy could not control their own communities in a single religious identity, and the non-effect of traditional community structures. Upon deterioration of concordance between the religious sects and Ottoman state and emergence of nationalist movements in the 19th century, the Ottoman identity was extended to include all communities on the basis of legal equality. This vision to cover the society as a whole was a good reference for developing loyalty to the state above religious and ethnic differences by emphasizing divinity of state and land, and for designing a secular nation by creating an upper identity beyond religious and ethnic differences. With such characteristics, Ottomanism was in compliance with administrative and political constraints of the Ottoman modernization. These policies in the state-society relations, has led to the development of a more direct relationship. As a result, a

¹ Öğün, Süleyman Seyfi, *Mukayeseli Sosyal teori ve Tarih Bağlamında Milliyetçilik*, Alfa yın. İst., 2000, p.96

flexible system of government of the empire broke down and passed a strict order of the state. This led to fracture and conflict.

The Ottoman modernization, according to D. Rustow, was a defensive modernization. It worked from above to the bottom as a state decision to modernize the society as a result of security challenges. Because the society was no modern, no contribution from it was expected and they were only required to obey quietly the modernization requests from central government.¹ Thus, the Ottoman modernization was state-based, elitist and far from objectives such as national identity. These factors provides central bureaucracy could not explain why the modernist transform Ottoman society and why reform projects such as Ottomanism as an ideology counter to nationalism, state administration reforms and Ottoman constitution progressed with difficulty.

More importantly, the modernization efforts and well-matched Ottoman ideology did not achieve its objective, and accelerated separatist nationalist movements, paving the way for their separation from the empire as independent nation states. Anthony Smith explains it as a typical feature of classical ethnic nationalism as seen in the Ottoman, Romanov and Habsburg Empires. Modernizing and autocratic regimes was intrinsically against ethnic nationalism at the same time.² As seen in the example of Ottomanism, the nationalist movements were developed both as provocateur and as a response to imperial nationalism, which was implemented in accordance with the said regime

During the Ottoman westernization / modernization which began with the Tanzimat, the biggest problem faced by the Ottoman elites which was undoubtedly the concept of the nation which has been one of the most problematic among the other concepts imported from the west. For this reason efforts for westernization would bring a more dynamic process beyond the technical import. This meant that the emerging nation-building process as a phenomenon that would arise in the west will also affect the Empire in the end. This explains why the first objective of the Ottoman reformers was to prevent the demands for national rights in a cosmopolitan Empire. In accordance with this aim, the reforms as an expression of the Ottoman modernization were limited to areas such as, bureaucracy, military, education and law in order to strengthen the central authority. On the other hand, the administrative centralization as a modernist project was integral to Ottomanist policies.

¹ Rustow, Dankwark in H.Karpat, Kemal , *Social Change and Politics in Turkey. A Structural-Historical Analysis*, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1973, p.113

² Smith, *ibid*, p.192-193

The Ottomanism originated as a reponse to foreign enrochments and separatist movements and has been used by political elites to achieve consensus among different ethnic and religious communities to encourage political and social unanimity of loyalty to the Sultan. While Ottomanism was sufficiently vague and malleable concept to serve different political platform the territorial integrity of Ottoman domains was its constant concern. Ottomanism was also compatible with the tradition of imperial. The main components the tradition of the imperial has been the the sanctity of state and reign and preservation of differences and diversity. Therefore, due to its roots in the tradition of imperial, authoritarian or liberal Ottomanism was easily able to obtain the form. This concept has been also used as a tool to address sometimes to be conducive to the whole Ottoman elements, sometimes the Muslim and the Turkish elements increasingly of whom were the Ottoman elites mainly representative, in accordance with the time and the changing conditions. This explains why the Ottoman Elites have not abandoned Ottomanism as long as the presence of the Empire was in question.

Although it is authoritarian and centralized features Tanzimat Ottomanism had germinated the notion of citizenship. New rights given to the Ottoman subjets has been declared as a grace from the Sultan with absolute power. On the other hand the reforms were announced as a state decision to modernize the society and asked all the people to obey this decision

The main objective of the state was presented as progress and salvation. At this point Ottomanism reveal an interesting mixture of enlightened synthesis of progressivism and enlightened despotism.¹ Although the equality of Muslim and non-Muslim subjects before the law was promised, this was not implemented until 1856. The equal rights of non-Muslims in 1856 clearly to have been incurred as a result of pressure from foreign states meant that rights of non-Muslim subjects were under international mortgage. This situation has created the effect of psychological trauma for the Muslims and created a division in the Muslim bureaucrats. New Ottomans movement was born in this division.

New Ottomans brought a new approach to the idea of Ottomanism. This was the constitutionalist Ottomanism. First they critised the authoritarian implementation of the reforms. Secondly, they argued that they were the Tanzimat reforms western imitation. And finally, they criticised the Edict of 1856 with the argument that it led to foreign intervention to increase. According to them, for the salvation of the state

¹ Somel, Sina Akşin, "Osmanlı Reform Çağında Osmanlılık Düşüncesi", *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, vol. 1, iletişim yyn. İstanbul, 2001, p.96

constitution, parliament was necessary. They suggested that the new regime's ideology of Ottomanism to be used as leverage. They argued that the constitution would also ensure the implementation of the reforms, the parliament would allow the political representation of all Ottoman subjects while the Ottomanism would be a unifying identity to develop loyalty to the state. Young Ottomans thought that could stop the external interventions under the pretext of protecting the rights of the non-Muslims. The Young Ottomans represent an attempt to reconcile the new institutions with the Ottoman and Islamic political tradition. They wanted the reforms to be built on the Islamic traditions with the argument that there are forms of democratic governance in Islam. Namik Kemal was a leading representative of this idea. His initial idea of Ottomanism gradually shifted to a line Islamist due the growing pan-Slavism and separatist movements. By the 1870s Namik Kemal defended the brotherhood of Islam, rather than Ottomanism. In the contrary, Fazıl Pasha who was another leading figure of Young Ottomans, did not give much importance to the role of religion and tradition in a constitutional regime. Ali Suavi who is known as an ardent Turkish nationalist represented an attempt to merge Turkism, Islamism and Westernization in a melting pot. The idea of the establishment of a federal structure of the Ottoman Empire was proposed by Mithat Pasha and Sherif Halil Pasha in 1872. Their main objective was to keep the Ottoman lands in the Balkans within the Ottoman Empire just as it same for the other Young Ottomans. But Russia, Serbia and Romania strongly opposed to this idea.¹ The dangerous developments in the Balkans has accelareted the efforts to transition Constitutionalist regime.

The first official definition of Ottomanism came into being in 1876 Constitution. According to the Constitution of 1876 Ottomanism was not understood as religious communities but population as a whole. At this point, very close to the ideal of Ottomanism. However the first parliamentary deputies were elected on the basis of the religious community through the old regulation. More important, different imaginations for the implementation of the Ottomanism became apparent in the debates on mother tounge during the parliament sessions. This gives some clue about how much the Muslims get used to the idea of the equality.² The first constitutional period is also important to understand the expectations of the Albanian intellectuals. Şemsettin Sami an Ottoman intellectuals of Albanian origin, defended the Ottomanism in the framework of the Constitution of 1876 during the first constitutional period. At the same time he was defender of the cultural rights of the Albanians against the danger of Slavic and Greek. More important he pointed out the importance of the Islamic bonds that unites the different ethnic groups for

¹ Somel, *İbid.*, p.105

² Somel, *İbid.*, p105

the Ottoman unity. His ideas are very important to understand how he acquires the meaning of Ottomanism in three different identities. There is no doubt that the Ottomanism which acquires the meaning of the three separate identities in a harmony would be the most ideal one. In this context the relationship between the Albanians and the Ottomans is a key phenomenon for measuring the level of the liberal face of political modernization of the Ottoman state.

This is an ideal fit the traditional mold of a state built on a flexible arrangement had been able to. This flexibility ensures the integrity of the state, respectively. However, new networks of relations within the empire emerged and developed new identities through the transformation of the conditions.¹ Flexible system of government can not respond to the new network of relations was far from protecting the integrity of the Empire, no longer. Therefore, to ensure the integrity of the empire Ottoman governors have been forced to make choice of a new national policy. Modernization was the new name of national politics. To do this, there were two tools in their hands, the first of which would take control of every aspect of society, to establish centralized control through modern institutions, and the second to create a common identity for social consent. However, because the reforms have been imposed by the government, they were authoritarian in nature. In fact, modernizing applications, such as compulsory military service, taxation and bureaucratic administration, has led to reactions from the traditional communities. One of the best examples of this was the Albanian responses developing during the Tanzimat period. On the other hand Ottomanism, which directly represent the state as an official identity was soulless and cold. However, the traditions of imperial Ottomanism to be the main reference points earned him both flexibility and rigidity. Islam is one of the major components of these were the imperial tradition. Islam recognizes other religions and was releasing its internal affairs. This was a source of legitimacy for the Ottomanism for equiveling the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman with the Muslims. On the other hand, applications of this idea in the process of modernization, secularization in the non-Muslim communities has created a space for the free. Ethnic and cultural movements has been developed for the first time among the non-Muslims against the authority of the religious leaders, initially. These movements rised the demands for worship and education in the national language turned into the separatist movements in the long term. These movements due to the support of the foreign powers gained strenght and could not be prevented by the Ottoman state.

Not caused a significant problem for the Albanians initially the Ottoman identity as long as this represents the structure of the imperial and the Islam has been an

¹ Barkey, Karen, *Farklılıklar İmparatorluğu Osmanlılar*, Versus Yyn., 2011, p.363-364

important part of it. For this reason during the process of modernization, the Albanian opposition against the centralized bureaucratic practices emerged as the traditional responses. Although it was ethnic nationalism in itself as much as other Balkan nationalist examples, this movement differed from others in that it mainly focused on an issue of survival from extinction to existence. This was a guiding force for the Albanian national movement on territorial integrity, sometimes with armed resistance which represented bitter face of Albanian nationalism. On the other hand, the enlightening literary and intellectual movement as the basis of Albanian cultural awakening led by Albanian intellectuals represented a moderate aspect of Albanian nationalism. These two aspects of the Albanian national movement came to light under 1878 League of Prizren, which gathered Albanians around a common objective. In this respect, claims such as territorial integrity and modernization of Albanian society in every sense were advocated on the basis of regional autonomy granted by Ottoman rulers. According to them, the only way for the salvation of the Albanians was the liberalization of the ideology of Ottomanism. However, each time the Albanian intellectuals faced with the cold side of the ideology of Ottomanism.

Once the Ottomanism with its reference to the Islam, not allow the recognition of the legitimacy of ethnic identity. Second, with its reference to the sanctity of the state and its governors, it does not allow the recognition of the legitimacy of the another political formation out of the central government. Finally, with its reference to sanctity of the territory of the empire it does not allow fragmentation of this land. However, due to the religious division among the Albanians, they need a non-religious identity. Secondly, the Albanian speaking lands had to be recognized as a separate political entity.

These issues from the agenda of the Albanian nationalist intellectuals after 1878, would lead to anti-foreign, anti-clerical and ethno-linguistic discourse . Vaso Pashko who was a Roman catholic and held various administrative positions in the Ottoman empire, which has been the most radical advocate of anti-religion among the albanian nationalist discourse. His statement as "the faith of the Albanians is in Albaniaism" is the best expression of his ideas in the question. Faik Konitza was the advocate of the cultural movement with the idea that this was necessary for the nationalist movement to gain political legitimacy. For this reason he emphasized the importance of the ethno-linguistic national identity. Sami Frasheri has developed a theoretical background for Kointza's ideas. Sami's ethnic language studies, not only the Albanian nationalist ideology, but also the Turkish nationalist ideology has contributed to. Sami argued the coexistence of two motherlands within the empire. Ottoman Empire was the "general home land". Besides this there were "special

home lands” possessed by the former. “Special home land” was the expression of the individual territories of religious and ethnic origin, in his formulation. This means that under the auspices of Ottomanism, non-religious identities would be granted a space for their development. Thus, Albanians would continue their commitment to the Sultan as well as their cultural developments would have an adequate tolerance. Thus Sami has a different definition of Ottomanism. While describing the Albanian and Turkish togetherness as a sort of long-lasting companionship, in the face of the inevitable fragmentation of the empire he argued that this association might come to end for pragmatic reasons. His pragmatic approach has brought such a radical discourse relating the Albanian and Turkish co-existence. According to him, for the salvation of the two peoples was the Albanian-Turkish coexistence must be ended.¹ However, under the current international conditions, end of coexistence would be realized through the political struggle rather than the armed one. However Abdulhamit II's Ottomanism locked to unity of Islam was far from satisfying the demands of the Albanians

That is why some Albanian intellectuals such as Ismail Kemal and Ibrahim Temo joined Young Turks, which aimed at a more liberal order. In this movement, the Prince Sabahattin's liberal ideas were compliant with Albanian purposes. This way of thinking that puts individual above citizen and even nation, and supports individual entrepreneurship and decentralization stood for liberal Ottomanist line.² In this respect, Albanian intellectuals supported this political wing wholeheartedly. On the other hand, represented by Ahmet Riza centralist ideas contained in the Party of Union and Progress in itself authoritarian and Turkist. Both focused on the Ottoman liberation. However, Turkist line wing in the Union responded better to the requirements of an era when the nation-building was uncontrollably rising. On the other hand, since the founding dynasty was Turkish, it was easily joined with Ottomanism, which was based on existence of the Ottoman Empire. Basic challenge in this issue was how Albanians would cope with this Turkist line if the Union was able to establish its political domination. Yet, this was the hardest among the Unionist Ottomans Turkist line. So much so that Ahmet Riza, in the Congress of Young Turks in 1902, stating that while somewhat policies announced the coming of Turkism, Turks were the only subjects that were not protected in the Empire.³ On the other hand, due to negative developments after the revolution of 1908, such as

¹ For mor information, Licursi Emiddio Pietro., *Empire of Nations: The Consolidation of Albanian and Turkish National Identities in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 1878-1913, p.55-69, Senior Thesis, Departmen of History Columbia University, Spring 1911, http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora/content/download/ac:131865/CONTENT/Licurci_Senior_Thesis,

² Ramsour, E.E., *Jön Türkler ve 1908 İhtilali*, Sander Yyn., Türk Tarih Dizisi:4, p.102

³ Ramsour, *İbid.*, p.30

the independence of Bulgaria, Turkism, gain weight within the Unionist Ottomanism. Albanians had to wait no longer to see it.

End of Togetherness After the 1908 Revolution.

The Young Turks agreed on secular and constitutionalist Ottomanism but were divided about the nature of the underlying administrative framework. Power struggle among these two political wings, liberal Ottomanism and Turkist Ottomanism of the Unionist which acted in cooperation for the revolution of 1908, resulted in the political domination of the Unionist thinking. This was also the end of liberal environment brought by the proclamation of Constitutional Monarchy. Ottoman- Albanian relations during the Constitutional Monarchy should be reviewed as an issue of survival on both parts. Administration of the Union and Progress Party was committed to solving the issue of Ottoman survival by reordering the society according to positivist principles. Realization of this modernization project, based on order and progress, was accompanied by positivist secularism, increasing dominance of Turkism against Ottomanism, and creating dutiful individual citizens. Compared to this modernization project presented as a requirement for modernity, progress, and being a nation, liberal Ottomanists was criticized for being too backward line. In fact, liberal Ottomanism provided a political framework to create conditions required for the survival of Albanians. Decentralist, individualist and diversity-oriented liberal characteristics of this political line would ensure Albanians to attain cultural freedom and reach their political maturity within autonomous structures. In other words, liberal Ottomanism appeared to be the liberation formula for Albanians compared to Turkist and authoritarian Ottomanism of government of the Party of Union and Progress. Interestingly, arrangements made by the Party of Union and Progress on disarmament, taxation, land law and military, as in any other modern state, encountered with the bitter face of Albanian opposition, sometimes with armed resistance. Nonetheless, Albanians' right to take part in literary and intellectual activities for cultural development as in any other modern state was hampered by the Turkist vein as the most severe aspect of Unionist Ottomanism. Basic challenge in this issue is that Ottomanism was an open-ended concept. Albanians accepted the revolution of 1908 as the return of flexibility embodied in the concept of Ottomanism. Therefore, their expectation from the revolution of 1908 was the recognition of traditional cultural and political rights.

In fact, a lot of CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) member of the Albanian were active members of the local Albanian national Committees at the same time in the early years of constitutional monarchy. However, immediately after establishing

its dominance, Ottomanism has been an instrument to Turkify the Ottoman subjects by the Party of Union and Progress.

When we look at the Turkist ideas of Yusuf Akçura that inspired the Unionists, it can be seen the secular and anti-ottomanist motifs as it can be in the ideas of Albanian nationalists. Yusuf Akçura like the Albanians has a multiple identity. He is a Muslim, Ottoman and Turkish, respectively. However, while he was rejecting the Islamism and Ottomanism as the failed policies for the unity of the empire, He argued that the Islam was a unifying force for the Turks, with the pragmatic reasons. ¹Again, he pointed to the continuity of a link between the Turks and the Ottoman dynasty from ancient times². However for the Albanians the religion was not a unifying force due to the religious division among them. On the contrary, religion had a function of the divider in terms of the Albanians. For this reason Albanian nationalism required the rejection of religious identities, respectively. On the other hand there was not a perpetual link between the Albanians and the Ottoman founder of the dynasty since the ancient time as it was for the Turks. In an age of empires shattered by nationalist movements, in both the Albanians and the Turks were looking for a pragmatic way of salvation out of their multiple Identities. In this respect, the Albanian nationalism and the predominant direction of Turkic Unionist Ottomanism were mutually exclusive concepts. This paved the way for rupture of relations between Albanians and Ottomans. So, having emerged as an important part of defensive Ottoman modernization, Ottomanism became the most prominent target of its own components.

Conclusion

The Eastern Question and the Ottoman modernization process with a long history, offers a framework for understanding the Albanian-Ottoman relations. These Processes have been experienced with the Ottomans and the Albanians from the beginning to end. In an era of the imperials shattered by the nationalist movements, in both the Albanians and the Turks were terrified by the danger of fragmentation and the extinction.

In general, by applying a defensive modernization of the Ottoman Empire tried to overcome the problem of survival faced by. For this reason the Ottoman modernization was the expression of pragmatism forcing the traditional patterns of the structure of society but also by feeding them. However, it has had to endure the long-term negative consequences.

¹ Georgeon, François, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, , Yurt yyn. No.13, Ankara, 1986, p.42-43

² Georgeon, *İbid.*, P.68-71

Interestingly, the Albanians and the Ottomans shared the same fate at the end as fragmented. Therefore, maybe, it was the best thing for the Albanians to get independence from the ottoman state but was not a solution for the salvation of the Albanians. The best proof of this was the disintegration of the albanian lands shortly after the independence. To avoid this common danger foreseen the Albanian nationalists were insistent on the application of the liberal principles of the constitution. However they encountered Turkish nationalism radicalized through the survival problem. While the Albanians attempted to liberalize the Ottomanism with the aim to create the conditions for their cultural and political development, the Unionists wanted to use the Ottomanism as an ideological instrument to translate the imperial identity to the Turkish one. Albanians broke off relations with the Ottomans at this point. This rift largely imposed by the foreign powers, led to break down of both shortly after the Balkan Wars.

The following two statements from British archives are very challenging to understand what kind of a disappointment the Albanian nationalism was evolved from.

One of them is the statement of Mr. Greary in his Monastir report dated July 8, 1911 to reflect the disappointment of an Albanian lord “ He complained that he have lived under four successive Padishahs but had never seen his race in so miserable and desperate a position as at the present time”¹

The other is Mr. Morgan’s statements in his Thessaloniki Report dated 23 May 1912. “...it must remembered that the Albanians admit with difficulty that they have ever been subjugated by the Turks and look on themselves rather as partners with than as subjects of the Turks in the government of the Empire”²

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¹ F.O. 195/2382 Mr. Geary’s Monastir report dated July 8, 1911

²F.O. 195/2406/ no.2537 /no.22 /p.220, Mr. James Morgan Report to Mr. Lowther, Manastır, dated May 25, 1912,

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