

EARLY AWAKENING OF THE KURDISH NATIONAL SENTIMENTS IN THE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1880- 1914)

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE PROGRAM OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

DECEMBER 2009

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

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December 2009, 171 pages

This thesis aims at presenting the historical panorama of the early Kurdish cultural activities in Anatolia which began to rise as a political subject after the First World War but could begin to express its nationalist demands after the foundation of the Republican government. It is claimed in the thesis that Kurdish nationalist identity as a collective body could begun to be formed in the last period of the Ottoman Empire when the Empire was in an inevitable dissolution. This progress in question took its start during the reign of Abdulhamid II, and accelerated during the Committee of Union and Progress period. Especially after the 1908 Constitution, Kurdish intellectuals have begun to create “Kurdish” publications and cultural institutions seeking to improve the conditions in the regions that the Kurds inhabited. These facts lead us to some questions to begin with and this thesis seeks answers for the following important questions: “By considering *the awakening of Kurdish nationalist identity*, how did the policies centered on the provinces after 1908, influence the Kurdish regions?”, “What is the response of the Kurdish regions to the new state policies of the period?”, “Considering the social associations formed by Kurds during the CUP period what were the effects of them on the formation of a new Kurdish identity?”

Key Words: Kurdish identity, Kurdish nationalist awakening, Abdulhamid II, Committee of Union and Progress.

ÖZ

OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞUNDA ERKEN DÖNEM KÜRT MİLLİYETÇİ HİSLERİNİN UYANIŞI (1880- 1914)

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Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Recep Boztemur

Aralık 2009, 171 sayfa

Bu tez, siyasi bir özne olarak tarih sahnesine 1. Dünya Savaşı sonrası çıkıp, milliyetçi arayış ve taleplerini ancak Türkiye Cumhuriyeti kurulduktan sonra ifade etmeye başlayabilen Anadolu topraklarındaki Kürt Hareketinin tarihsel bir panoramasını sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Tezde modern bir Kürt kimliğinin Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun -çözümlerin de başladığı- son döneminde oluşmaya başladığı iddia edilmektedir. Müslüman tebaadan ayrı, bağımsız bir Kürt ulusal kimliğinin özellikle Sultan 2. Abdülhamid yönetimi döneminde başlayıp İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti (ITC) idaresi boyunca hız kazanarak oluşumunu sürdürdüğü öngörülmektedir. Özellikle 1908 Meşrutiyeti sonrası Kürt aydınları yaşadıkları vilayetlerdeki koşulların düzelmesi çabasıyla ilk kez kendi “Kürt” yayınlarını çıkarmaya başlamışlar ve kültürel dernekler kurmuşlardır.

Tez, *Kürt milliyetçi uyanışı* ana ekseninde “Osmanlı ITC yönetiminin, özellikle düşünce ve amaçlarını direkt olarak uygulamaya koyma imkanını bulduğu 1908 yılı sonrası, Anadolu’ya yönelik politikaları Kürt bölgelerinde ne şekilde yankı bulmuştur?”, “Süreç içinde yeniden üretilen devlet politikalarına Kürtlerin yaşadıkları bölgelerin tepkisi nedir?”, “ITC döneminde Kürtler tarafından kurulan örgütler ve derneklerin modern bir Kürt kimliği oluşumuna ne gibi katkısı

olmuştur?” gibi sorulara cevaplar üretmeyi ve edinilen bilgiler ışığında Kürt Milliyetçiliği tarihine yeniden bakmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kürt kimliği, Kürt milliyetçi uyanışı, II. Abdulhamid, İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti.

To My Grandmother Zeliha Özen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the person who had pivotal role in the creation of this thesis and was important in academic and personal development of me. I am definitely a lucky person since I got the chance to study with him. My thesis advisor, Associate Professor Recep Boztemur with his excitement in regard to supervising and encouraging his student; I always feel motivated every time I contact with him during my time within the department. Besides my enthusiasm and the weaknesses of this thesis, the outcome of this study depends largely on the guidance and tremendous support of him. I can just thank him for sincere help and inspiration.

I owe gratitude and would like to thank my committee members, Assoc. Prof. Ayşegül Aydıngün and Assoc. Prof. Erdoğan Yıldırım, who helped me by bringing suggestions in the admission stages of this thesis project. They especially demonstrated me an alternative and critical view of organizing nationalism theories and reminded some historical- sociological realities that the Kurdish population had possessed.

In addition, I thank to my teacher Asist Prof. Ertuğrul Gündoğan for giving me inspiration and guidance throughout the long university years with enthusiasm. He has motivated me to develop my academic perspective, research abilities and critical thinking.

I acknowledge the helpful comments of Zuhail Ay Hamdan, Murat Karatay and Ahmet Doğru on the earlier talks and throughout the progress of my thesis work. I should specially mention my friend Zuhail who rescued me from the stress of thesis writing by her calls, I am indebted to her. Without the contribution and support of my friends this thesis could arduously be materialized. In particular, I

wish to note the encouragement and support of my long- lasting buddy Yusuf Güteryüz who supported by asking questions all the way and contributed morally throughout.

My masters study was supported by *the National Scholarship Programme for MSc Students* of TUBITAK. So, it is necessary to mention TUBITAK's generous support during getting my graduate degree.

I am indebted to my family for helping me and providing support throughout my academic journey and this project. My sister Seda Özten helped me in searching and acquiring the materials that allowed me to study my thesis and completion of that project. Her personal concern was with me from the outset.

This thesis is dedicated to Cem, to whom I owe so much. He has acted in an outstanding way in the creation of this thesis. Apart from his positive, encouraging and scholarly dealing, he was loaded up twice much for our family in the previous months with excessive workload. His support mitigated, motivated and inspired me during that intense period of my academic adventure.

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INTRODUCTION

As it is widely known and discussed, since it has a multinational character, the Ottoman Empire was peopled by numerous *millet*s and the Muslim *teb'a*. After the French Revolution of 1789, although nationalist trends affected most of the countries, it is a historical reality that Ottoman State had been affected by this movement the latest. When the nationalist ideas have reached to the Ottoman lands, all of the Ottoman *millet*s and some Muslim *teb'a* members have been affected from that trend and swiftly formed their own nationality. In parallel with this, they searched for their national self-determination and got back their sovereignty from the Empire.

In the Ottoman State system, the Muslim Kurds comes after Turks, Arabs and Persians in the distribution of the Muslim *teb'a*.¹ They differ from the founders of the Ottoman Empire, Turks, with their ethnic origin but they are tied to the society and the system because they are Muslims. The Kurds became the last component of the Empire to formulate their own identity as a separate community; they have been loyal to the Ottoman Empire until it broke down. They were not covered in any separatist plan when the Empire was weakening by all means, even in a time period when ethno-nationalist statements were beginning to be made and succeeded within the Empire. As expected, they have offered an opposition against the unbalanced policies of the government and some rebellions occurred through the time period but any real or mature separatist nationalist movement is out of the question until the entire collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Long after, when the Turkish Republic has been established, Kurdish elites realized that they had to create their own way as a distinct Kurdish community and they started to seek its expression in the political realm of the new Turkish Republic by means of uprisings and armed struggles. It is stated by intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire that there have been so-called separatist statements being told in intellectual basis

¹ Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), p. 5.

in a way but it is clear that there has been no activity related to self-determination around the societal basis.² As a sum, Kurds could not produce a real nationalist paradigm except some intellectual actions in the period that is being questioned.

Kurdish society is the first to be remembered when thinking of having no state on its own in the Middle East considering its population and demographic structure. The reasons to this fact can be described by various arguments in the “nation-states” era. Between the 16th and the 19th centuries, in the period when they were under the Ottoman governance, they have lived semi-autonomously by also following a pragmatic relationship with the government. “Statelessness” or “state problem” has begun to be heard as a concept short after the founding of the Republican government³, but before that era they were not cognizant of having a sovereign Kurdish state.

By considering those facts, this thesis analyzes the context and discourse of the genesis of early Kurdish nationalist sentiments which have emerged in the Ottoman Empire during the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) era. My specific area of interest is the early stages of the Kurdish national awakening after 1908 Constitution, which later serve for the separatist nationalist objectives of the Kurds, particularly after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The exact time interval I study in examining this issue will be the Hamidian and the CUP era of the Empire till 1914. I will further argue specifically that the CUP’s *Turkification* policies inflicted serious unrests on the Eastern side of the Ottoman territories, particularly on the Kurds. In the thesis, it is analyzed how the initial waves, the early awakenings of forming a separate Kurdish identity from the *ummah*, which later manufactured divergent separatist Kurdish national claims, have created by the Kurdish intelligentsia exactly during the CUP period, by using the advantages in spreading their understanding around mass education, using printing facilities, forming student charity houses, social organizations, publishing newspapers. In

² Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu: Kökeni ve Gelişimi*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2002), p.89.

³ C. G. Macdonald, *The Kurds*, p.124, c.f., “Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu: Kökeni ve Gelişimi*, p.3.”

the final analysis, I wish to reach to the conclusion if and how those cultural activities and institutions have paved a way to formation a mature Kurdish identity after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. My thesis question, under which internal conditions and international atmosphere did early Kurdish nationalist discourse show tendency to appear in the imperial system and grow up in the Ottoman State, will also help us in reading and analyzing today's nationalist Kurdish statements by giving us some better parameters to rely on. So, I personally believe that, in order to fluently understand and analyze that prolonged continuum of the Turkey's Kurdish discontent, one has to touch upon to the roots of this dissent and search for the footprints of the issue in the recent times of the Ottoman Empire.

Moreover, in order to clear up pressing problems of a specific time period, all we need to begin with is to explain the main dynamics of that time by using a valid social theory. Accordingly, I guess it would be fruitful to think over the issue of the early awakening of the Kurdish nationalist sentiments via "nationalism" theories. Thus, I will deal with the historical survey of nationalism in order to shed light on my specific issue "early awakening of the Kurdish nationalist sentiments which have particularly evolved in CUP period in the Ottoman Empire". I will benefit from the nationalism theories in general. By analyzing classical nationalism theories, I will decide which of the nationalism perspectives would help me clarify my topic and while doing analysis on the subject matter, it will help me to explain the problematic more suitable and theoretical. Thus, with the theoretical data in hand, I will try to analyze my thesis topic "*the awakening of Kurdish national identity*", and I will draw the borders of my thesis with this theory. It is sure that the problem will become clearer on an analytic basis when the origins of the problem are rooted to reasonable facts with a theoretical understanding.

As I read further it became apparent that there is no historical approach sufficiently regarded on the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Currently, the Kurdish problem is analyzed without being linked to previous historical events. Besides,

the data that pro-Kurdish and pro-state sources offer is almost distant from themselves as east and west. It is still asserted by both sides as if Kurdish nationalist statements were always presented and they were survived with difficulties from ages and it has the available infrastructure in a Western format to build a unique nationalist movement, or, it is an imperialist game supported by foreigners and the actual problem is an uprising of undeveloped “Kurdish Turks” which is a result of international trends being followed in a Western format. Furthermore, in the light of documents, by following an academic perspective it is seen that the formation of the Kurdish nationalist identity has progressed in a different route than international trends. In other words, the Kurdish people followed a different experimental path than the other nationalist movements in the Ottoman Empire while forming a nationalist paradigm. More profound researches on the birth of Kurdish nationalist sentiments show that Kurdish nationalist discourse developed by pioneering of the Kurdish elites as a “reaction” against the government policies rather than being formed gradually after the social processes like in the Western world. So there is not any internal social dynamic to seek the national aspirations for creating a nation- state among the Kurdish population. Any Kurdish social form which aimed at founding its “nation state” is out of the question in the late Ottoman times. Kurdish nationalist ideology, like Turkish nationalist ideology, is more like a project being forced to be put in practice by the ruling elites.

Thus, with the inferences I had about the insufficient sources on Kurdish nationalist discourse I had to focus more on history and state politics of the period. I will examine my exploration of the emergence of the early Kurdish nationalist feelings mainly in a historical perspective because of the lack of historical perspective on this area in Turkey. That examination will point out how driving factors and motivations leading the Kurdish nationalist sentiments have began to flourish in the Ottoman Empire. Particularly the CUP era has attracted my attention since that time interval was somehow brought an identity making process to the Kurds for the first time regarding both domestic and international considerations. Therefore the method adopted my study is a historical one.

In this thesis I aim to present the panorama of the period with the historical documents other than criticizing or praising Abdulhamid II or the CUP, as it has largely been used. Native and foreign, the second hand sources will be mainly used as historical documents. Sources I quote and make use of go back to the 1880s because after this period the Ottoman Empire has gone through critical cross roads to never turn back politically and socially; there have been huge social and political changes in the Ottoman Empire.

What I wish to conclude with this thesis is my work will be based on material facts other than pro-Turkish or pro-Kurdish approaches. Because most of the sources on this topic are of Russian and European researchers and it is true that most of those work are generally the claims of “foreigners” since they observe and explain the facts from the outside. I believe that the problem is solved better if the questions are treated in a different way than previous works. This different way includes analyzing the facts in a more historical perspective, considering the period’s historical events with the understanding of that particular period, while making use of native, original and concrete sources. My thesis will be different in this perspective. Besides, in writing my ideas and making claims on the subject, there is a point which I particularly pay attention to. I try carefully to refrain from over-generalizing when deciphering the historical events which need to be examined within their own historical context.

Here, my thesis work is composed of a total of four interconnected chapters.

In chapter 1, in order to arrange the theoretical infrastructure before building the thesis on it, and since the time period for the nationalist assumptions which paved way to my study, sticks around the 19th and early 20th centuries, I will try to mention the historical and theoretical developments of classical nationalism theories. With some understanding of the literature on nations and nationalism, my intended topic would easily be grasped and elaborated systematically. Accordingly, I will analyze the historical survey of nationalism in order to shed light on my specific issue “early awakening of the Kurdish nationalist sentiments which have particularly evolved in CUP period in the Ottoman Empire”. Broadly,

I will discuss the classical nationalism theory endeavors in three axes as primordialists, modernists, and ethno- symbolists.

After the introductory “nationalism theories” chapter, in the second part I will work on the Abdulhamid II period between the 1880s and the second constitutional period of 1908. The main questions of my work are: “What were the motivations of the period’s state politics in the Hamidian era and how they were perceived by society in the provinces?” “What are the politics produced around the provinces, mostly around the Eastern Anatolia, *Vilayat-ı Şarkiye*⁴?” “How was the Kurdish identity interpreted in that period?” How did the inner realities of *Vilayat-ı Şarkiye* had shape the politics of the government, as an example how did the primordial structure of the area shape the politics on the Kurdish society?” “How were the inner and international problems of the period expressed around *Vilayat-ı Şarkiye* and how did those problems again shape the politics around the region?” In other words, in this chapter I will explore the domestic and the international conditions in which the Ottoman Empire has had and if/how those conditions have led to an early Kurdish nationalist awakening. I aim to discuss in a broad survey of the regional and international political developments which shaped the nature and behaviors of the Empire during the 19th century. Historical roots of the Ottoman state and socio-political system will be elaborated in which the Kurdish population has lived for ages under that domain.

Accordingly, in Chapter 3, I am going to analyze the period after 1908, around the topics “the provincial politics of the CUP” and “the Ottoman Empire and the Kurds after 1908”. In this chapter I am going to analyze the provincial politics

⁴ The appellation of the region that the Kurds inhabit involves controversy. Actually in some studies researchers (Nikitine, Minorsky, McDowall, Jwaideh, Bruinessen) discusses the Kurdish provinces as “Kurdistan” but it did not correspond to a historical reality at all. The Ottoman official documents did not use the concept Kurdistan since it was not regarded as an administrative unit; “Kurdistan province” was just in use between 1847 and 1867 so as to explain Mardin, Siirt and Diyarbakır districts. (Şimşir, 2007: 50) The term Kurdistan had a geographical connotation rather than a political one. In such a condition, in this study, by staying loyal to the Ottoman records, I prefer to use the term “*Vilayat-ı Şarkiye*” when referring the areas inhabiting the Kurdish people. Particularly, for the areas that the Kurds mostly populated in *Vilayat-ı Şarkiye*, of Arapkir, Musul, and Van (Kieser, 2005: 63).

that CUP advanced after 1909, the year they totally obtained governmental power. The politics of the CUP on Kurdish regions region will be the focal point in this analysis. There have been various changes in the Eastern Anatolia in this period such as reforms in education, administration, press, and reforms in social organizations, and in political organizations. These changes would result in a gradually awakening of Kurdish nationalist identity with the political conditions of the period. Moreover, as it is widely known, the CUP government, within a short time- pass, had changed the nature of their attitudes towards the masses; the policies transformed into a harsh form. Strict and somehow oppressive policies have implemented by the authoritarian CUP government particularly after 1913 in the Empire. This harsh approach and attitudes against the Muslim *teba* resulted in a crush between the *teba* and the government. Furthermore, I aim to study how the early Kurdish sentiments have begun to appear and sharpen with the help of CUP's "administrative centralization" policies. Particularly after 1913, CUP's harsh *Turkification* policies surround the conflictual relationship of the Kurdish regions with the regime of the CUP. The settling of the tribes and the reactions against this implementation will be worth to investigate in this analysis. So, the social and the political conditions during the CUP era, their policies to preserve the Empire from cultural dissolution and to rule the country according to their self ideals and interests, will be the specific area of interest in that chapter. The historical roots of the emergence of the first Kurdish nationalist sentiments in the Ottoman Empire during the CUP era will be analyzed in that chapter.

Furthermore, in Chapter 4, the changes described in the third chapter will be elaborated broadly. I will work on the Kurdish social and political activities which have emerged after the liberal phase of 1908 Revolution. I aim to focus on how those social developments like student organizations, publications, and cultural organizations were covered by the Kurdish notables brought new to the Kurdish identity will be analyzed. It will be clearer to see how "Kurdish nationalism" took its roots from this culture and identity-formation period. Those local activities show the driving factors and motivations leading the Kurdish nationalist sentiments have begun to flourish after 1908. These changes would create an

awareness later which would lead to a unique type of Kurdish identity. Actually, this work seeks to contribute to the discussion of history of the early Kurdish nationalism on some levels.

Besides, my final hypothesis will be the nationalist sentiments of the given time period has hold the core of the later separatist Kurdish nationalism, but did not show us an entire separatist national movement at that period of time. I also hope to point out the idea that imperial disintegration and the international wave of nationalism were inherently intertwined and affected to the formation of the individual Kurdish identity. At that time, which I focused on during the study, the CUP era, the ultimate aim of the Kurdish intelligentsia was not a separate nation-state for them but just to inspire their people's minds, awaken the nationalist sentiments in the Kurdish society. It just depicts the researchers how the early nationalist activities have led to a mature form in the future but not at that time. Lastly, I very much hope that I will be able to look at the history from an alternative perspective on Kurdish nationalism if I can properly analyze the panorama of how and at what time the Kurdish population, which constitutes one of the most populated of the Ottoman Muslims, has begun to aware of their unique identity as "Kurds".

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The undeniable fact about all collective systems and regimes is that the main element of all is human. All these systems, political regimes, and governmental units stand for the service of human being, so for the society in general. These units, which are formed for the sake of human so their legitimacy derived from that reality, appear according to lead the society to create their own system by their own inner dynamics and different identity forms. Moreover, humans have formed various kinds of different collective identities in order to distinguish “us” from “them.”⁵ So, they are our identities which determine forming the conditions of the societies- so the actual formation of the world- we are living in.

In this sense, in modern times, - we may roughly accept that the beginning is in the 19th century- individuals began defining themselves through the new- comer identity units such as “nationality” and “citizenship”. In the past they attached themselves to a more local identity set such as tribe, kin, or religious sects. But in the modern era, society’s basic infrastructure has changed according to new social and economic conditions. There witnessed a set of essential changes in the fundamental principles of social organization passing from the 18th century to the 19th century; before anything else human mind has transformed profoundly.⁶ With the changing circumstances, the society had to resign from its old religious and domestic ties which led it to find a new identity, and it was the idea of a “nation”. Particularly in the first half of the 19th century the educated classes contributed powerfully to the nationalism scholarship. The educated classes promoted the publication of medieval sources of their histories, and they have collected and

⁵ Steven Grosby, *Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.1.

⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Milliyetçiliğe Bakmak*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998), p.19.

edited the documents of the past; the people began to take a new interest in their own history and drew from it a new pride.⁷ To become a nation, being a part of this process was an advantage for the societies in many aspects; therefore, forming a nation and nationalism would be the guiding ideas of the new era which were being shaped by the new conditions.

With a short time travel to the past, one can clearly see that no concept is more pervasive than nation in modern social sciences. The concept of nation still over 200 years has a huge academic and intellectual concentration in understanding the modern social life and its basic parameters. In other words, the last two centuries of the human history of planet are incomprehensible without some understanding of the term “nation” and the vocabulary derived from it.⁸ So, in the very beginning, one should prioritize the definitions first. Thus we ought to search and discuss the question of what nation and nationalism is before all else.

Although nationalist movements have been effective since the 19th century; the existence of nations which is the only political unit for nearly two centuries can be rooted down to earlier times. Nations has existed over time as a result of various historical processes, so the definition of the term nation has differentiated again and again in the course of time. Hobsbawm summarizes this issue as follows; in 19th century the word nation simply meant “the aggregate of the inhabitants of a province, a country or a kingdom.”⁹ By the 1920s in the dictionaries it is basically described as “the collectivity of persons who have the same ethnic origin and speak the same language and possess a common tradition”. But today it was given as a “political body” which recognizes a common government authority.¹⁰

⁷ Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: It's Meaning and History*, (Princeton; New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1965), p.39.

⁸ Eric. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, (Cambridge; Newyork: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.1.

⁹ *Ibid.* p.14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.15.

Then, in the nationalism literature, there has been a remarkable analytical problem, a general uncertainty on what one comprehends from nation and nationalism. Grasping nationalism in a grand theory and understanding it in the world of definitions is a complicated task. There is not an actual standpoint about how to define the concepts of nation and nationalism. Why there is not a generally admitted “nation” and “nationalism” definition is because there is not any fixed texture among nations; there is a variety of historical experiences by different nations in seeking their own path to make their nation-state. In analyzing nationalism, one should keep in mind that there are different phases of ‘world time’ for various kinds of nationalist movements.¹¹ It means a specific type of nationalist movement can not be smoothly used in modeling any other particular one. Social codes, parameters and perceptions also change from society to society; so there is not an ideal nation form. Societies diversely use the term “nation” in order to define and legitimate their actions for an effective political movement.

According to Anderson’s analysis, the concept of nationalism is not easy to define or explain and there is not a common agreed framework on it since it is mainly perceived as an ideology.¹² All definitions might be partially valid because, each definition describes only one dimension of history and reality in terms of providing a definition of nationalism on which all can agree. While it is connected with industrial developments, it neglects cultural changes caused by industrialization. If cultural explanation is supposed to be valid, and then ethnic common sense remains unexplained. Therefore, it is seen that it is hard to reach a comprehensive definition of nationalism and a so-called “definitions inflation” has appeared.¹³

Although, there is not any consensus obtained among the scholars in the constant definition of the terms “nation” and “nationalism”, there is adequate data

¹¹ Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, (London : Macmillan, 1981), p.195.

¹² Umut Özkırımlı, *Milliyetçilik Teorileri; Eleştirel Bir Bakış*, (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2008), p.181.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.23.

accumulation on what these notions mean for different scholars. Concluding over some of those joint values is a common technique while resolving nation rhetoric. Craig Calhoun rightly puts the basic parameters to define a nation in order as follows:

- 1-A determined territory
- 2-Sovereignty, a formal equality among different nations
- 3-A superior legitimacy
- 4-National consciousness and national integrity
- 5-Participation of the people in collective events
- 6- The fact that every individual is a part of the nation
- 7-A cultural synthesis including the same language, beliefs, daily life practices
- 8-A timeless understanding that the nation includes all former generations and next generation which exists with its joint history
- 9-Common religious and racial characteristics
- 10-A sacred historical tie with a determined territory.¹⁴

All these components for nationhood, based on one of those like language, common territory, common history and cultural traits, are themselves shifting and unclear, there is no clear objective definition for the term nation. All of the alternative perceptions, which also show the standards of the Western type of the nation, define the nation by its members' consciousness of their unique belongings.¹⁵

A. Historical Legacy of Nationalism Literature

In historical analysis the concept of nationalism has a great role. The historical product, nation, is one of the most influential identities which became important in the modern world, in the realms of history and social science. Moreover,

¹⁴ Craig Calhoun, *Milliyetçilik*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2007), p.6.

¹⁵ Hobsbawm, *Ibid*, p.6-7.

nationalist movement is one of the rare socio-political movements which have the power to affect all aspects of social life, especially becoming more intense for about two centuries. According to common widespread thinking, nationalism, from the French Revolution to the Second World War on, comes first among the main driving motives which determine the progress of history. Particularly, it was in and during American and French Revolutionary movements that various social, political, and intellectual developments found powerful expression in politics.¹⁶ In this particular point it will be more useful to make use of Marxist perspective while analyzing the historical conditions resulting in nationalism since classical nationalist assumptions mainly make use of that Marxist understanding of the world system. According to Marxist perspective, the birth of nationalism should be sought under the fact that the needs of the bourgeoisie increased after the French revolution. In historical terms modern state is an inevitable result of international capitalist production relations and accumulation of the capital.¹⁷ As production means became widespread, it produced its own urban production class; and this resulted in needs to new sources for production and marketing, it can be said that this need to continuity of bourgeoisie gave birth to nationalism.

Furthermore, nationalism is certainly one of the most dominant and stabilizing theories of modern times that directly affects and definitely shapes human life and the right of self determination is definitely based on it in the 19th and 20th century political expressions. It was taken as a unit of measure in the new socio-political platform. Apparently, the 19th and 20th centuries have witnessed the spread of nationalism and formation of independent states in the world system and the “age of nationalism” have also influenced the collective memoir of humanity form that time on. As Ernest Gellner mentions, in the past, social status was dependent upon the family one born to, whereas in the modern period it is more flexible to pass

¹⁶ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, (ed.), *Nationalism*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.7.

¹⁷ Recep Boztemur, “Tarihsel Açıdan Millet ve Milliyetçilik: Ulus-devletin Kapitalist Üretim Tarzıyla Birlikte Gelişimi”, *Doğu Batı*, Vol. 38, (2006), p.161.

through different social statuses. For this reason in industrialized societies the idea of a “nation” happened to become a need.¹⁸

It is also necessary to summarize the historical legacy of nationalism in order to understand the facts in a deeper sense. Nationalism as a leading principle of the creation of the modern world system has come to scene first in the European continent. Shortly after the French Revolution, the term nationalism has appeared and entered the international agenda; thus, nation-states became the leading figures in the political arena. Besides this, especially in the second half of the 19th century nationalist movements have affected each other on international basis. Obviously the 19th century is a period of the fastest and clearest changes in every area. The most crucial fact of the period is that the French Revolution could influence the whole Western world because men’s minds were prepared for the reception of the new ideas.¹⁹ Plus, with the direct force of its fundamental assumptions, the borders of the modern world have actually been shaped. The map of Europe was redrawn according to the principle of nationality after some vital revolutionary changes began to flow into social life.

At the same time, the modernization process which begins in the 17th century in Europe, the Industrial Revolution, bureaucratization, economic developments, capitalism, class conflicts, creation of bourgeoisie class, and developments in communication, are the main factors leading the idea of nationalism to grow in minds and to become widespread through the societies.²⁰ Especially in the nation-state period, industrialization has become very important in leveling the social life up to a new phase. Individuals started to live in industrialized cities without being a member of a local community; they do not need to feel culturally bonded to anywhere. From now on the individuals are isolated workers in city life where there is no local tie. As Mümtaz’er Türköne mentions, in this period of intense

¹⁸ Özkırımlı, *Ibid*, p.165.

¹⁹ Hans Kohn, *The Age of Nationalism, the First Era of Global History*, (New York: Harper&Brothers Publishers, 1962), p.5.

²⁰ Hobsbawm, *Ibid*, p.76.

changes with the clashing social structures and developing mass media, the isolated individuals have found a new base to lean on; ideologies.²¹ In this period of changes, the new sense of belonging has become the nationalist ideology and to the modern nation-states, rather than former sacred affairs and ties. Furthermore, as Hans Kohn has pointed out, the French Revolution had a twofold impact on the Western world. In countries with old-established concepts of liberty, with local self- government and limitation of power for the sake of general will, it strengthened democracy.²² But in other countries, the French Revolution aroused a kind of militant nationalism. Those alternative forms of nationalism has come up in various forms, which Smith also called the “dark side” of nationalism, as ultranationalism, neo-Nazism, anti-Semitism and the like.²³ There are millions of examples on how the repercussions of nationalism have reflected in the political sphere of the independent nation- states system. In this manner, studies of nationalism, particularly by the 20th century, without doubt has attracted numerous attentions and those excitedly received by the historians and social scientists.

Moreover, about the origins of nationalism, every author prefers to explain the birth of nationalism by referring to different historical incidents. Different thinkers seek for evidence to the birth of modern nationalism in different historical events. While Elie Kedourie analyzes ideological movements to lean the origin of nationalism on them²⁴, Kohn mentions the English Industrial Revolution in the 18th century²⁵, some authors like Nairn and Smith think that nationalism results from the French Revolution and American Revolution²⁶.

If we take a close look on historical development of nationalism by using current nationalism studies we see that there are three main periods;

²¹ Mümtaz'er Türköne, *Siyaset*, (Ankara: Lotus Yayınevi, 2005), p.108- 109.

²² Kohn, *Ibid*, p.4.

²³ Hutchinson and Smith, *Ibid*, p.11.

²⁴ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.1-3.

²⁵ Kohn, *Nationalism*, p.16

²⁶ Özkırımlı, *Ibid*, p.31. Hutchinson and Smith, *Ibid*, p.7, 70.

1- 18th and 19th centuries till the World War I, in which nationalism was actually born. That stage started with the first uprisings happened around 1830s and extended to the final victory of the nationalist assumption in 1918. It is named as “nationalist irredentism” phase in Gellner’s statement.²⁷

2- The period between 1918 and 1945. Nationalism began to be studied in academic field; the primordialist aspect has appeared in academy.

3- Times between the World War II to 1990s. This was the second period of nationalism discussions in which the modernist aspect has formed against primordialist approach especially after 1960s. “Ethno-symbolist” perspective has also formed.

Beside these three periods, there added another period to that periodization which is post 1990s period. This period can be regarded further as a step to pass over the classical nationalism argument of the time period after 1945 after the post-colonial interpretations has started to affect to the political agenda.²⁸

B. Different Approaches on the Emergence of Nationalism

As discussed above, there have been many different approaches on describing what nation or nationalism means, the origin of the idea of nation, and the stages in developing the idea. It is for sure not possible to have all studies on nationalism in hand but it is necessary to choose the vital ones and analyze them. In general, nation is divided into two categories in the contemporary literature: as a collective consciousness meaning a “cultural community”, and as a “political community”.

²⁷ Gellner, *Ibid*, p.48.

²⁸ Özkırıklı, *Ibid*, p.32.

1. Nationalism as a “political process”

As an example, For Hobsbawm, nation’s primary meaning is political one. The nation was the body of citizens whose collective sovereignty constituted them a state which was their political expression.²⁹ The society is connected to each other with a citizenship tie, and it defines a nation by its members/citizens consciousness.³⁰ Furthermore, he uses the term nationalism in his works as “a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be harmonious”.³¹ The nation was a unique tradition “invented” by political elites in order to legitimize their power. Policy makers have constructed the nation within the old-established political units for the sake of political, administrative, economic and other requirements. In other words, with Ernest Gellner, he prefers to conceptualize the element of nation as a “cultural artifact”, a “social engineering” product.³² Similarly, Benedict Anderson regards the modern nation as an artifact, “an imagined political community”. It is imagined, since –even in a small-populated- community’s citizens do not know all other members in the community, do not meet with them, and do not heard anything about most of them but the total sum image of the community will continue to exist in their minds and consciousness.³³ The very sufficient conditions of imaging the nation have arisen with the convergence of capitalist system. Especially print knowledge-capitalism, serves for people to think about themselves and to relate themselves to others in new grounds and in the long run gave a new fixity to language in order to build the image of antiquity so central theme of the nation formulation.³⁴

²⁹ Hobsbawm, *Ibid*, p.19.

³⁰ Hobsbawm, *Ibid*, p.18, 30.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.9.

³² *Ibid*, p.10.

³³ Benedict Anderson, *Hayali Cemaatler, Milliyetçiliğin Kökenleri ve Yayılması*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1995) p.20.

³⁴ Hutchinson and Smith, *Ibid*, p.90–94.

Moreover, another scholar, Anthony Giddens, claims that when we speak of nationalism, we are often speaking of a particular political movement that only exists when a state has a unified administrative reach over its sovereign territory. He also presents a statist definition of the nation, described a nation- state as a “bordered power-container” of the modern era.³⁵ A.D. Smith also accepts nationalism as an ideology and a movement. He argues, nationalism arose in order to create a world of collective identities or cultural nations.³⁶

In one of his studies, as one of the “twin founding fathers” of the academic study of nationalism³⁷, Hans Kohn makes a philosophical typology between a more rational ‘Western’ type and a more organic ‘Eastern’ version of nationalist ideology that remains valid in the social system. Nationalism is, on the whole, emerged in a form of civic-territorial, a rational way in Britain, France and America. This model was produced by the bourgeoisie and citizens live under the same government and legal codes. However, in Eastern Europe, since there was not an actual middle class, a small group of intellectuals has formed an authorian kind of nationalist movement. Nation was seen as an organic entity with a mystical ethnic core that created the reality of gathering themselves into one nationalist movement.³⁸

Furthermore, I need to touch upon shortly to the description of nation in classical Marxist theory. Marxist understanding considers nationalism as a political process too. In one of the most famous works of the founding father of Marxist understanding, Marx has divided the history of human society in terms of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Since that social classification has held the crucial position in his perspective, he pays relatively little attention to nationalism. Through the replacement of feudalism and capitalist

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.34.

³⁶ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p.99.

³⁷ Hobsbawm, *Ibid*, p.3.

³⁸ Smith, *Ibid*, p. 80- 81.

production system, nation appeared as a bourgeois ideology.³⁹ In Marx's opinion, nationalism is a statement of bourgeoisie class's interests. Guibernau quoted from him as "the bourgeoisie conveniently assumed the nation consisted only of capitalists. The country was therefore 'theirs'".⁴⁰ For another instance, according to a contemporary Marxian, Nairn, nationalism arises in underdeveloped "peripheral" societies whose intelligentsias "invite the people into history" and then use their vernacular cultures.⁴¹ Thus, nationalism is an internally- determined necessity for the creation of a national market economy and of a viable national bourgeois class.⁴²

2. Nationalism as a "cultural process"

The aspect is different for the studies which take nationalism as a cultural process. As Özkirimli states, nationalism is not an aggressive ideology which emerges time to time with intense conflicts. Nationalism is an expression which shapes the senses of the society and makes the society to give meaning to the ongoing events. In a society nationalism is a way of interpreting the daily life for it determines the cultural identity.⁴³ According to Kedourie, who is well known with his studies on this topic, it is necessary to look for the signs of nationalism in ideological movements -especially he heavily based his theory upon German Romantic Movement-.⁴⁴ According to him, one interprets nationalism as a cultural fact; the nation should be considered as a psychological and political entity. Nationalism is a statement which develops with the national awareness of individuals.

³⁹ Montserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms, The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996) p.13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.13.

⁴¹ Hutchinson and Smith, *Ibid*, p.47.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.70.

⁴³ Özkirimli, *Ibid*, p.15.

⁴⁴ Özkirimli, *Ibid*, p .31.

Gellner further argues that it is the need of modern societies for cultural homogeneity that creates nationalism.⁴⁵ He declares ‘nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist.’⁴⁶ Namely, a new form of social organization, “dependent high cultures”, which were based on education, imposes of a high culture on society. So nationalism is in reality the consequence of that process.⁴⁷

C. Modernity and Variety of Nationalisms

‘Nationalism is sociologically rooted in modernity’, says Gellner.⁴⁸ Nationalism is a way of constructing collective identities in the era of modernity in terms of breaking changes in state’s power structure, increase in economic ties between states and rising new kinds of communications and transportation facilities.⁴⁹ If we question to what degree nations and nationalism are modern formations we see that most of the approved studies in this particular area have asserted that the discourse of nationalism is apparently modern. Basic political entities of the period have developed around nationalist ideas shaped by industrialization which is a nation-state production style. Nationalism, being categorically a modern phenomenon, has changed through time, in form and content, according to where and when its subject had been located.

It would be proper and helpful to analyze different nationalist ideologies in order to understand why nationalism still exists with its importance, and which factors make nationalist movements to be reproduced over and over. Although nation and nationalism are among the terms used to refer not to any clearly definable set, there are various types of nationalisms in reality. As mentioned earlier, with its

⁴⁵ Hutchinson and Smith, *Ibid*, p.47.

⁴⁶ Smith, *Ibid*, p.71.

⁴⁷ Hutchinson and Smith, *Ibid*, p.63.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.47.

⁴⁹ Calhoun, *Ibid*, p.41.

modern identity, nationalism has a weighty literature which makes it impossible to define nationalism with just one general theory. Lots of criteria such as international and domestic changes, politics which make the nationalist movement to be approved and spread in the society, traditions, language, religion, and common history state this variety. These criteria are at the same time fuzzy, shifting and ambiguous.⁵⁰ At the same time, again quoting from Hobsbawm, national identification can change and shift in time even in the course of quite short periods.⁵¹ By recognizing the variety in nationalism, it is clear to see that nationalism is multidimensional, changeable, eclectic and able to accommodate with the circumstances of the environment it grows in. Through different historical and sociological periods nationalism has emerged in different societies in different times. In consequence, it is not possible to interpret all kinds of nationalism by only one common theory. None of the current allegations is able to explain nationalism on its own, there are different kinds of nationalism on the basis of concrete actions.

This practical plan mentioned above took place as “nationalisms set” in Smith’s studies and other studies. Nationalist expression appears in different formats such as religious, conservative, liberal, fascist, communist, irredentist, pan, separatist, cultural, and political.⁵² So, nationalisms are extremely varied phenomena. In short, as many different authors claim, nations are created by nationalism with the direct help of myths, national anthems, flags and other nationalist means. Moreover, it is possible to generally conclude on the fact that nations and nationalism are modern phenomenon since it is ‘modernity’ that creates the modern political units in the social system.

⁵⁰ Hobsbawm, *Ibid*, p.6.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.11.

⁵² Hutchinson and Smith, *Ibid*, p.3.

D. Different explanations of nationalism in literature

As mentioned earlier, the basic questions arising around nationalism argument and the answers to those questions are various. As an example, what is a nation and what is nationalism? How does a national consciousness emerge? Where did it emerge? Is nationalism a cultural organization or a political construction? What is the motivation behind the fact that it influences people to dauntlessly die for? Is nationalism a tool for policy makers in order to use the masses for their own benefits? The claims like those are to be answered by;

1-Essentialist/ primordialist

2-Modernist/ constructivist

3-Ethno-symbolist approaches.

Actually, it is possible to divide the debates on the nature and definition of nationalism broadly into two parts. The main debates on the impetus of nationalism and most interpretations on the subject can be divided mainly into two camps; those are the primordialists and modernists. By the way, there stands another alternative option in the literature by some authors. Those are the ethno-symbolists who are standing between the two, asserting a synthesis composing of both of the perspectives.

1. The Primordialist conceptions

Clifford Geertz, Anthony Smith, Walker Connor are the most important representatives of the primordialist approach. Particularly, Anthony Smith is the most popular author in this looking. The primordialist approach claims that nations have seen since the ancient times and national ties are permanent identities. The primordialists take the nation as a “given” societal category, nations are natural formations according to them, nations have existed before and they will exist forever. According to the primordialists, nations in the modern

sense are not new-born notions, rather they have perennial character. They accept that nations have always existed even before the nationalisms and “the age of nationalism”. They hold their members together in a common ground through history. Besides all, societal ties like blood tie, religion, language, territory, traditions provide the continuity and originality of the nation.⁵³

According to the historians and the politics that played an active role in creating a national historical past in the 19th century, the only thing needed was to relight the nationalism fire.⁵⁴ According to Geertz, an individual feels an attachment by force to the community she belongs to. This loyalty is restrictive.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Geertz asserts that the “given” character of culture is considered inexplicable and coercive.⁵⁶ As W. Connor mentions, in the definition of a “nation” the belief in a common past is necessary. Nation is defined as a community who believe in a common race, hence a common past.⁵⁷ On the other hand primordialists only deal with the existing reflections of nationalism rather than questioning its existence and origins.⁵⁸

Accordingly, it would not be a great shock for the students of nationalism that all arguments asserted by primordialists are refused by the alternative understanding, by the modernists, in terms of the nature of the nation, the time period that nations and nationhood have actually began to appear and the like. It seems that the criticisms of the primordialists gather in a fundamental point. According to criticisms that are directed form constructivists (modernists), nations are not given, fixed and unchanged entities. Nations are redefined for each different generation, the borders and content of identities change consistently and the

⁵³ Hutchinson and Smith, *Ibid*, p.83.

⁵⁴ Özkırımlı, *Ibid*, p.88.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.91.

⁵⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 259.

⁵⁷ Özkırımlı, *Ibid*, p.93.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.75.

processes in constructing the national identities are “consciously” carried out by the elites.⁵⁹ At the same time, Özkırımlı mentions, even religion, being the strictest element of all common values, is accepted to change over time.⁶⁰ Attacks to primordialist look mainly come from the modernist interpretation of nationalism literature.

2. The Modernist interpretation

The modernist approach explains the discourse of nationalism from a different point of view. They interpret nationalism and its emergence according to socio-political changes that is modernism, peculiar especially to Western Europe. In this approach, the emergence of the nations and feeling of nationhood must be novel and belong to the modern ages -especially to the last two centuries-. According to Hobsbawm, who developed a modernist approach to nationalism, there was no space for nations and nationalisms in the pre-modern ages.⁶¹ Hobsbawm states that nations belong to a recent time period. For him, nation is not an unchanging social entity; rather it is a social unit since it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the nation-state.⁶² Further, in his own words Hobsbawm claims, “God- given nature of the nations is a myth. Rather nationalism sometimes invents them, and often obliterates preexisting cultures: that is the reality. Nations do not make states but the other way round.”⁶³ In other words, it is similar in all authors in modernist outlook to nationalism; nationalism comes before nations. It is nationalism that creates nations and governments.

According to this view, nations and nationalism spread with the individuals getting more conscious by the modern developments. In the past, the factors

⁵⁹ Calhoun, *Ibid*, p.43.

⁶⁰ Özkırımlı, *Ibid*, p.96.

⁶¹ Hobsbawm, *Ibid*, p.10.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.9.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.10.

effective in nation formation do not exist; they appear in the modern world. The idea of nationalism begins to be accepted as a result of crucial developments such as capitalism, industrialization, central-state formation rather than monarchical empires, urbanization, increase in literacy, spread of mass media communication facilities and printing offices.

With respect to the modernist perspective, nationalism has constructed from “above” by the political leaders and social entrepreneurs. In modern times societies use nationalism to progress, as to industrialize and provide a national fraternity. They achieve their goals by going to their “past”, and vitalizing the bravery tales.⁶⁴ Moreover, Hobsbawm states that a huge political movement occurs after 1780, and the people begin playing an active role in politics. The involvement of people in politics discomforts the policy makers. They try different ways in order to keep the society under their control, and harmonious with the rules. They try to canalize the energy of masses to festivals, sports, syndication in order to keep the society under control. In Özkırmılı’s words, “intelligentsia has the power to affect the masses with their rewritten history”.⁶⁵

As expected, it is hard to determine a single method to analyze nationalism. The approaches are various. Considering the modernist perspective of nationalism literature, as an example, Breuilly and Brass take nationalism as a way of diplomacy, a tool which policy makers use in order to attain their goals.⁶⁶ Similarly, Hobsbawm and Gellner think of nationalism as based on a political formation. They conceptualize nationalism as follows: “Nationalism is the principle which argues that the politics and nation should be harmonious with each other”.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Özkırmılı, *Ibid*, p.114.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.211.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.139.

⁶⁷ Hobsbawm, *Ibid*, p.1.

For Hobsbawm nations are “invented traditions” and “social engineering” products that are produced by national consciousness and nationalism of some groups. Those traditions are symbolic habits, and when they are repeated it creates an inherent atmosphere on particular values. In this manner, nationalism turns to become a collective idea which aims at creating an association and solidarity between the individuals.⁶⁸ Gellner thinks that nations can only occur when certain structural needs are fulfilled –in the nationalism era-. So, it is meaningless to talk about nations in the middle ages. Nations begin to be shaped in the last period of the 18th century with the changing dynamics in culture and social structures by the effect of industrialization.⁶⁹

Benedict Anderson touches upon the reasons of change in individual’s conception of the world. He binds this change to political and economic circumstances like capitalism controls the publication sectors.⁷⁰ Nations and nationalism are special cultural “artifacts”. For Anderson, nationalism emerges by the end of the 18th century, after it is created once; it becomes a flexible, modular, and “copiable” model for all different social structures.⁷¹ Anderson contributed to the problematic of nationalism with his well known conceptualization the nation as an “imagined political community”. In this view, each and every nation is a distinct unity, and not every member of a nation knows each other – even they do not see and do not aware of most of the other member’s presence at all- but they will live in something like an idealized ground as if where they were all connected as a nation. It must be this fraternity which makes people to die for their nations.⁷²

In the final analysis, what modernist critique mainly claims is the central image of modernization in constructing national images and the idea of nationalism.

⁶⁸ Özkırımlı, *Ibid*, p.148.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.206.

⁷⁰ Anderson, *Ibid*, p.51-52.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.19.

⁷² *Ibid*, p.159.

3. The Ethno-symbolist approach

The ethno-symbolist account can be classified as the synthesis of modernist and essentialist accounts in nationalism literature. The ethno-symbolist contribution is a perspective developed in the 1980s by especially Smith, Armstrong and Hutchinson. It is a perspective which criticizes the modernist and primordialist approaches and its main assertions are based against modernism. Ethno-symbolists solve the nationality problem by combining the two main approaches; or rejecting the two approaches stating that both have deficiencies. Ethno-symbolism, which is produced in response to essentialist and modernist interpretations of nationalism, develops its stance both using primordialist and modernist arguments. In one hand they prefer to build nations on cultural heritages that they possess and regard the origins of the nations as always-already existing ones. On the other, they identify and locate nationalism in modern times.

Ethno-symbolists concentrate on the past and cultural values in understanding nationalism. They mainly refer cultural statements while explaining nationalism and consider that nationalism is created under modern conditions. They also assert that ethnic solidarities, ties and sentiments were transmitted from pre-modern conditions.⁷³ According to ethno-symbolists, nationalism and ethnicity were prepared by elites and other participants in political and social struggles and this reality shows nationalisms' socially "constructed" nature.⁷⁴ Moreover, ethno-symbolists claim that the evolution period of nations should be handled in a wide time zone. The birth and history of the modern nations should be analyzed because today's nations are continuities of the former ethnic communities and cultural heritages in the pre-modern period.⁷⁵ The ethno-symbolist contributions also mention that myths and symbols coming from the past determine the content

⁷³ Haim Gerber, "The Limits of Constructedness: Memory and Nationalism in the Arab Middle East", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol: 10, No:3, (2004), p.252.

⁷⁴ Craig Calhoun, "Nations and Nationalism", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol: 19, (1993), p.211.

⁷⁵ Özkırıklı, *Ibid*, p.210.

of today's nations and nationalist expressions. Hence, a true way of understanding nationalist discourse should include a larger time interval. The ethno-symbolists analyze a large time interval which goes to the ancient history, like Armstrong does in *Nations before nationalism* in 1982.⁷⁶ They underline the role of memories, traditions, myths and symbols in shaping the concept of nationalism in a modern sense.

Anthony Smith is the most popular scholar of that aspect. In his works, Smith has tried to show that nationalism has stronger roots in pre-modern ethnicity than others have accepted. He acknowledges that nations can not be seen as primordial or natural, but nonetheless argues that they are rooted in relatively ancient histories, traditions and ethnic consciousness. Similarly, ethno-symbolists mainly agree that nationalism, as ideology and movement, dates only from the later eighteenth and 19th centuries, but the "ethnic origins of nations" are much older.⁷⁷ Beside the consideration of the ancientness of ethnic origins of nations, ethno-symbolists do not much focus on the "primordial" antiquity of the contents of tradition and ethnic affiliations, rather the focus lies in the efficacy of the process by which tradition "reproduces" and "creates" certain beliefs and understandings.⁷⁸

The recent-comer ethno-symbolist assumption on nationalism was criticized by the scholars from different points of view around some crucial points. Ethno-symbolist aspect which dominates contemporary discussions on nationalist discourse is blamed as ignoring political factors in its interpretations on nationality and nationalism. Traditions, cultural and historical heritages may constitute the major elements of a determined community but it is also tempting to say that these ethnic ties do not always result in a nationalist aspiration. As one of the very sets of social identities and perceptions, ethnic solidarities, political communities and nationalist formations show variety in determining communal

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.212.

⁷⁷ Calhoun, *Milliyetçilik*, p.76. Calhoun, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.227.

⁷⁸ Calhoun, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.222.

objectives in the process of social mobilization. These categorical identities which predominates national identity or a shared culture also do not succeed and result in creating a nation- state in all cases. As Gellner describes as “failed” or “absent” nationalisms, there are broadly more ethnic or cultural groups than there are nationalist movements or states and this suggests that even if ethnicity plays a role in nationalist movements it is not the ultimate determinant.⁷⁹ So, opponents of ethno-symbolist account mainly assert that referring cultural accounts of "nationhood" can not always constitute the ground for nationalist claims and an ethnically unified nation- state.

At that point it is needless to say that cultural identity significantly contributes to political identity as a founding factor but that cultural identification can also not serve a sufficient consideration for forming a political nationalist community in all cases every time. Moreover, ethnicity and ethnic community which are common unifying factors in modern times can not be required to advocate nationalist desires. Cultural identity is a political one but desiring a political sovereignty depicts a different social formation. As the other methods of being “political”, a unique culture, a determined cultural and political identity, and organization in social level means being political but it does not correspond to a nationalist structuring properly. So, all ethno-symbolisms do not put forward nationalism at all times.

After a brief review of the theoretical background of the nationalism literature, pointing out what I understand from nations and nationalism, which is the central figure of the political arena⁸⁰, and where I prefer to stand, and serve as my normative standpoint in thinking about nationalism might be useful for the consistent continuance of my thesis work. After analyzing the characteristics of the period I am working on, I guess, particularly ethno-symbolist perspective of nationalism suited more to my study. I do not hesitate to propose a bit which of

⁷⁹ Calhoun, *Ibid*, p.227.

⁸⁰ Gellner, *Ibid*, p.57.

the nationalist discourses analyzes the birth of early national sentiments of Kurds and appears as more suitable perspective for my case study.

First of all, I feel myself more comfortable if I can look at the nationalist assumptions in a critical sense. I personally think that the three axes of nationalism literature which I elaborate above are actually insufficient in explaining an “Eastern” social case. They are relatively prone to examine more Westerner accounts inherently since the processes exposed to the Western societies differ profoundly in the Eastern side of the world. History flows into a different direction in the different “hemispheres” and they live in an almost entire different time intervals. So a western type nationalist interpretation does not suit to other regions’ case studies precisely. Then, I definitely claim that ethno-symbolist assumption proves nationalist debates in some angles but it is also limited in explaining some particular points and cases. Ethno-symbolist aspect focuses on cultural awareness and national identity in contemporary debates on nationalism and it has a troublesome course in a way on how it explains the political identities. Regarding to the opponent scholars to ethno-symbolism, a crucial point bears in mind if all political communities always transform into a nation-state form and whether they always seek self determination and sovereignty. It is well-known argument that some political groups have no significant attempts to become nations in a modern sense like the Kurdish case between 1880- 1918. Consequently, national identity and shared culture do not directly result in a struggle for national identity or autonomy and most of them failed to compose their unique nationalisms.

E. Best- fit nationalism approach in analyzing the Kurdish identity

In order to make a connection between my thesis and the approved ideas I would say that in the Kurdish case, the study of the genesis of the early Kurdish nationalist sentiments in the Ottoman Empire would be best explained by applying the ethno-symbolist approach. As far as I read regarding my research

topic, it convinced me to the point that Kurdish nationalist activities can be read through the ethno-symbolist lenses. Neither have I neglected the assumption that the sentiment of nation and nationhood is ancient nor the other assumption that the modern nation forms are created under modern conditions. When we look at the origins of the early Kurdish nationalist awakening, we see that its' groundwork is both shaped by primordial and modernist ties. We observe that the Kurdish intellectuals, who "constructed" the national consciousness among the Kurdish population, composed their nationalist literature around the primordialist and ethno-symbolist assertions that the Kurdish cultural heritage was "ancient" and also a contemporary Kurdish identity was in need of formation in these modern times. They attributed the Kurdish nationalist sentiments to the 17th century (those of the Êhmedê Xani's Mem û Zîn and Şerefhan Bitlisi's Şerefname) in order to prove that the Kurdish identity is ancient. Moreover, the Kurdish nationalist statements progressed by going parallel to the modern and symbolist trends' statements like focusing on developing the Kurdish culture which later led to a mature nationalist discourse. Undoubtedly, Kurdish nationalism is a real product of the modern age which has built from "above" from the ruling elites and intellectuals in Kurdish society. Therefore, for the Kurdish case, ethno-symbolist account of nationalism literature can be applied on in some ways; in one hand Kurds look back to the past and Kurdish heritage, on the other they construct their own national identity with using modern tools such as the flowing of nationalist ideas in the Ottoman Empire that arrived from the Balkans, creating national heroic myths, going back to the Kurdish roots, discovering early Kurdish literature and re-writing Kurdish history.

In the context of different nationalism approaches, one should also search for the answers of the questions such as how and why the ethno-symbolist aspect remains limited in interpreting the Kurdish early nationalist sample, why Kurdish identity did not transform into a Kurdish nationalism or formation of a Kurdish nation-state in that time period. The internal dynamics of the Kurdish society, as the alliances with the imperial authority (such as Hamidiye regiments, grants and some privileges given by the Sultan and the CUP government), religious and

sectarian diversities, tribal identities, feudal structure, and Kurdish intellectuals' split from the Kurdish masses in regional terms, were the causes of the late creation of a separate Kurdish identity and a Kurdish early nationalist awakening. Furthermore, Kurdish notables' mentioning of their identity components respectively as being Ottoman, Islamist, and finally Kurdish proves that a Kurdish identity exists but it does not have a political content or assert a nationalist aspiration during that era. For instance, one of the most powerful Kurdish notable families, Bedirhans, is a tribe, so a political community, but the members of the Bedirhani tribe did not consider themselves as ethnically unified. It was just a regional Kurdish principality and they did not have a mature nationalist ideal and they did not pretend to establish their own independent Kurdish state since regional existing relationships with the Empire and with the regional actors have satisfied them in maximizing their benefits. So we should keep diligently in mind the distinction that there appeared alliances, cultural and political activities in the Kurdish regions but there was not any ethnic reference or a nationalist demand asserted within them. Thus, without doubt, modernity brings the Kurdish identity to fore but constructing a modern nationalist paradigm remains a different dimension and needs some other determinants to be realized in the Kurdish society.

In addition, in the light of these remarks, we see that ethno-symbolism remains limited in elaborating the Kurdish case. In Kurdish sample cultural identity contributed to formation of the Kurdish political identity, but it is also apparent that cultural identity is not enough in being or forming a political nationalist community in the Kurdish domains. So, why Kurdish cultural and political activities did not reach to a nationalist level is fall within the ethno-symbolist area of interpretation. Why I have to be more critical is because of the reason that, in the relevant time period there was a Kurdish identity, a Kurdish culture and so-called social organizations like Kurdish cultural associations and publications but these did not bring a nationalist demand. These other methods of being political and cultural of the communities might have been appeared but they did not correspond to a nationalist presence at that time yet. So we may safely suggest

that ethnic identification, cultural heritages and even being a political community do not sufficient to establish a modern nation-state. In academic terms, it is stated that all ethno-symbolisms do not bring nationalism.

Moreover, Kurdish nationalist awakening began to form in a different basis other than classical Western-oriented nationalist movements. Like all nations have historical antecedents⁸¹, the ultimate reality in the Kurdish collective memories and the social system comes from tribal structure. Undoubtedly, tribal organization has affected the social system entirely; it does not allow the development of different social classes which later pursues nationalist aspirations. So, tribal formation is one of the most constitutive sources of legitimating in the Kurdish territories. As discussed above, before anything else, Kurdish nationalism arises from the lack of a mature bourgeoisie in the Kurdish society.⁸² Particularly, lack of bourgeoisie, and industrialization which are two of the fundamental realities which result in a nationalist understanding in the society, made the Kurdish intellectuals to implement the criteria from “above”. Besides, when we analyze the origins of Kurdish nationalism from the classical nationalist frame, we see that the Kurdish intellectuals to construct the movement follow –even imitate– the Western models in construction their own national identity. As an example, when the Kurdish intellectuals think of the parameters required to create a collective state of belonging to a unique Kurdish nation, the first blank that attracted the attention of them is the “common history, shared myths”. Therefore, the first Kurdish cultural associations formed after 1908 Constitution first aimed at “re-writing” Kurdish history. They also aimed at opening Kurdish schools and Kurdish student associations in order to enlighten the Kurdish society in all levels. As well, they worked for increasing the means of publishing occasions in order to provide communications between the Kurdish peoples.

⁸¹ Grosby, *Ibid*, p.8.

⁸² We should not miss the point that lacking of bourgeoisie and a middle class is a historical reality of the Muslim subjects in the Ottoman Empire; indeed there was not an Ottoman Muslim bourgeoisie class at that time period in the Empire. So, Kurdish issue was not a marginal one regarding the bourgeois-type relationships since conditions in the Empire required the same conditions to all Muslim societies.

Finally, I very much hope to get help from the nationalism theories in answering the questions such as why an “early awakening” but not a “nationalist” paradigm has occurred within the Kurdish society, when this verity has turned to be a nationalist one and if Turkification/centralization attempts have affected the Kurds. Actually an early nationalist awakening has brought about during the Hamidian and CUP processes by means of alliances in the fields of military (Hamidiye regiments), education (Mekteb-i Aşiret) and of grants and privileges given by the imperial authorities. I hesitate from identifying these developments as nationalist particularly until 1914 since Kurdish identity and nationalist awakening just pretended to be realized in cultural levels till that time. Thanks to the liberal atmosphere after the 1908 Revolution, Kurdish notables first came to scene and started to form their own “Kurdish” social clubs and publications and those materials have paved way to an early Kurdish national identity awakening. These efforts can not be mostly regarded as nationalist since they remained limited to Kurdish urban notables and the activities of the notables did not contain any mature nationalist content. The cultural activities of the Kurds between 1880 and 1914 did not claim an experienced and separatist nationalist demand. In their awakening process, before 1914, they surely were aware of their Kurdishness and their tribal and religious belongings. Unlike other Ottoman subject communities they did not exposed to an external intervention. They mostly attempted to use inner realities and tried to fight against several obstructive factors in forming their own Kurdish nationality.

CHAPTER 2

Transformation in the Classical Ottoman State Structure in the 19th Century: the Reign of Abdulhamid II

The Ottoman state which was unique as it was the only Muslim great power and also the only European Muslim power⁸³ mainly composed of different peoples and communities of different religious and ethnic affiliations in the Balkans, Near and the Middle East. This diversity enabled the Sultans to develop an eclectic administrative system; Sultans, within the same period and in the different locations of the Empire, developed a complicated administrative system which was depended on theocracy, hierarchy, centralization and tradition at the same time.⁸⁴ In other words, the Ottoman rule had never preferred a constant, standardized and one-dimensional administrative system in the places they ruled; instead, they adopted a multi-component administrative system until the last century of the Empire. They hold many different communities which had different sects, cultures, demands and expectations together for centuries in that way and they achieved to maintain a more or less successful empire system.

The most basic constant of the Ottoman state, which was committed itself to establish the sovereignty of Islam and to advance the Islamic belief⁸⁵, was apparently the phenomenon of religion. It was the religion which categorized the many communities living in the Ottoman Empire and their citizenship rights and responsibilities were determined due to their religious belonging. In comparison to different belongings, the religious affiliation was heading: within the Empire the main factor was religion in the social stratification, politics and construction of social identities. Still at the dawn of the 19th century, religion, rather than race or

⁸³ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains, Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876- 1909*, (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999), p.1.

⁸⁴ A. L. Macfie, *Osmanlı'nın Son Yılları*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2003), p.14.

⁸⁵ Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2007), p.12.

any other local determinant, was the dividing line between the subjects of the Sultan and the Muslim people, whether they had a Turkish origin or any other, formed the dominant social group within the Empire⁸⁶.

The Ottoman rule achieved prominent success in assembling different people, communities, tribes and groups in a more or less coherent imperial system; however it was successful to maintain this system until a particular time⁸⁷. In the beginning of the 19th century, it started to be difficult to hold that ethnic and religious diversity together for Ottoman state which was composed of different ethnic and religious groups and which had strictly speaking a cosmopolite structure. The effects of the French Revolution extended to, in the first half of the 19th century to the Balkan communities of the Empire, and started nationalist uprisings against the Ottoman authority in their regions. With the separatist movements, started with the Serbian uprising and continued with the formation of the Greek, Romanian and Bulgarian independence, the Ottoman Empire started to become a dominantly Muslim state. In the 19th century, the regional situation and conditions of the Kurdish people who were a part of the Muslim subject were seemed to change with this new century. This chapter is based on the following subjects of curiosity: to what extent classical Ottoman state traditions and practices were adhered, in which areas what kind of innovations were needed to keep Ottoman administrative system alive. Taking these issues as a base, this chapter will particularly focus on the policies oriented towards the Kurds and the Eastern provinces (*Vilayat-ı Şarkıye*) which were implemented by Sultan Abdulhamid II in the framework of social and political conditions of the reign of Abdulhamid II.

⁸⁶ William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors, 1801- 1927*, (London: Frank Cass& Co. Ltd., 1966), p.30.

⁸⁷ Macfie, *Ibid*, p.15.

A. General Conditions of the Ottoman State in the 19th Century

The 19th century was the century of endless problems, many turmoil and uncertainties for the Ottoman rule as it was the same for the whole world. In the 19th century, the classical power structure, state organization, social and political institutions, and broadly, the whole elements of the Ottoman state, have visibly altered. The Ottoman state system, which could not accommodate to changing global conditions and balances, keep up with modern world system and renew itself, became inoperative in every respect.

Before all, when 19th century started, the weight of the Ottoman Empire in the international political arena was run out and it lost its power to determine the parameters and trend of the system. Nevertheless the Ottoman Empire was exposed to the modern and rapidly developing, social, political and economic infrastructure of the West. The Ottoman state, like the rest of the Muslim world was exposed to capitalism and the threat of violent European occupation in the 19th century.⁸⁸ The wild capitalist system destroyed all the economic activities in the Ottoman lands.

The most important practical reason why the Ottoman Empire fell behind of the era was military underdevelopment, but above all, the intellectual reason was conservative world view of the ruling class and Ottoman intellectuals. They were looking to the world with the assumption of “supremacy of the Ottomans”. Their view of the West which was conceived as “other” against the Ottoman Empire, therefore, was built on underestimation. The Ottoman Empire’s perception of trade and manufacture as a business of Christians and Jews and its underestimation of them which was based on a grassroots belief and also its apathy in everything which is technological⁸⁹ enabled the West which had been developing since the end of the 16th century to overwhelm the Ottoman Empire

⁸⁸ Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: reconstructing identity, state, faith and community in the late Ottoman State*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 2001), p.3.

⁸⁹ Macfie, *Ibid*, p.20.

easily. In fact, they were just an onlooker to the French Revolution which changed all balances in Europe and formerly they thought that it was a domestic of Europe and they were barely interested in those events. Even when the Revolution spread to whole Europe, they perceived it as a domestic problem of the Christians.⁹⁰ In short, Frankish Europe was a sort of darkness of brutality and faithless; from which Islamic world that is “sunny by itself” had nothing to learn, and of which Islamic world would never afraid.⁹¹ Because the Ottoman Empire was the single power assigned to establish the world order (*nizam-i alem*) and the rest of the states was conceptualized as the zone of war (*dar-ul harb*) and they were just places which would be “tolerated” with a feeling of supremacy when they would be invaded. Of course this disdainful view would bitterly go out of fashion after the world balances had changed in favor of the West. When the Ottoman Empire, which was a martial one, started to lose its supremacy in military area, rulers faced the first wave of shock and started to be curious about what was going on in the other side of the water.

B. Ottoman Intellectual Conditioning in the 19th Century

The Ottoman elites’ recognition of the erosion of the *nizam-i alem*, the order of the world, which was established and tried to be preserved by the Empire for centuries, corresponded to an actually very late period. In that sense it is important to analyze how late the Ottoman elite reacted to the world around them in the intellectual context. The elites were just an onlooker to what was happening in the West for a long time however they had been intensively exposed to the Enlightenment thinking meanwhile. They had ignored the innovations until they recognized that it was impossible to be uninterested in these developments since they were profoundly affecting their Empire. The required reaction and attitude vis-à-vis these developments were late because of various reasons; the elites, in this long process, were pushed into a syndrome of a backwardness and

⁹⁰ Lewis, *Ibid*, p.66.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.35.

desperation that they felt even in their each cells. The symptoms of crisis appeared with a lack of self-confidence and feeling of comedown rather than with the loss of lands of “always victorious” Empire.⁹²

In first place, the limited military reforms were put in action “for the good of the country”. The inadequacy of new openings such as *nizam-i cedid* (the new order) administrative reforms of 1839 and 1856, and the land ownership of 1858 which seemed to be adequate to avert decline and the similar limited reforms was understood when the loss of lands had increased in time and the Empire had started to dissolve in every area. A more deep-rooted reform program required to get closer to Europe and to recognize the mentality that underlies the innovations. It was understood that it is necessary to be familiar with know-how, the technical knowledge and the European modern thought. Young students and experts were rapidly sent to the West to see these innovations in their homelands and to inform rulers about them. Actually it is how the business of learning the West and reforming the country due to modern Western principles started so lately. The young people who were sent abroad in that process to bring information from the West directly, above all, met with new progressive ideas. When they were traveling in Europe for the technical missions they were assigned to, these young students, since they faced a new and unfamiliar civilization, started to be interested in different issues out of the areas they were assigned in and they especially had the opportunity to read the books which constructed the intellectual bases of Western modernization. Young Ottoman visitors to Europe observed that the West takes its power and development from its parliamentary government system.⁹³ Such new ideas that they brought from the West assisted them to create new models of commitment and they started to put in practice them to accomplish their goal of saving the country from collapse. These new ideas in brief were perceived as liberty, equality and nationalism (may be as an opposite concept of fraternity) in Ottoman domains.⁹⁴ In the first place, one of these concepts,

⁹² Hamit Bozarslan, *Türkiye'nin Modern Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Avesta, 2004), p.15.

⁹³ Lewis, *Ibid*, p.131.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.55.

“liberty”, with its sense coming from Europe, became a war cry for the struggle against domestic despotism and imperialism. The organized freedom necessitated constitutions, representative government and rule of law.⁹⁵

In short, when 1876 came, the reform movement and liberal ideas had a history of one century, an identified tradition, a driving force and a product that totally belongs to it.⁹⁶

C. THE REIGN OF ABDULHAMID II

1. General Conditions of the Empire in the Hamidian Era

As W. Miller correctly mentions, it is seldom that once had a sultan begun his reign under greater difficulties than the Sultan who acceded the throne.⁹⁷ Sultan Abdulhamid II, actually in very hard conditions, acceded to the throne of an Empire declining for two centuries. Particularly, in the era of Abdulhamid II, the sick man of Europe⁹⁸ was in a total chaos, there was no public order and security within the Empire. Domestic and international conditions had changed drastically and instability was dominant in every aspect of the country. It is possible to understand that there was no stability and continuity even by considering the fact that; since the Grand *Vezir* and ministers could be changed at will; during the Abdulhamid reign, there were 28 changes at the Grand *Vizierate*.⁹⁹ All state apparatuses of the Empire were broken. The state was about to collapse in terms of loss of military supremacy against Europe, the outworn conditions of the military system, financial crisis, rising nationalisms, strengthening of Russia,

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.66.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.165.

⁹⁷ Miller, *Ibid*, p.368.

⁹⁸ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.5.

⁹⁹ Feroz Ahmad, *From Empire to Revolutionary Republic*, Vol. 1, (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2008), p.1.

losing territory, and changes in the power balance in interstate platform. When Europe was rapidly improving in science and technology, the Ottoman Empire contented them with remaining in the level of their ancestors in the Middle Ages concerning the fields of agriculture, industry and transportation.¹⁰⁰ There were serious problems in agriculture which was a sign of collapse for an agricultural empire.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the declining economy of the Empire, more and more increasing expenditures, declining value of the money, selling of civil servant posts, and land tenure system in tax collecting, increasing cost of state and war obliged the Empire to feed an increasingly becoming clumsy and expensive superstructure.¹⁰² Moreover, the finances of the Empire were in a hopeless situation due to the debts owed to the European capitalists when Abdulhamid II accessed to the throne; the Ottoman government was forced to declare itself bankrupt in 1881 under the international body known as the Administration of the Ottoman Public Debt.¹⁰³

Before the reign of Abdulhamid II, at the western ends of the Empire an unreturnable adventure had already started: the separatist winds started to blow.¹⁰⁴ In the Hamidian period the interest was concentrated in the Balkans since the Balkan territories had been lost rapidly. The main visible motives lying behind the accumulation of enmity towards the Ottoman administration and nationalist aspirations in the Balkans were compounded by the so-called unprogressive Ottoman administration and crop failures.¹⁰⁵ In the 1880s, the Empire was confronted by serious troubles. Russia declared war against the Ottoman state in 1877. The Balkan peoples started to declare independence and detach from the

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, *Ibid*, p.32.

¹⁰¹ Sir Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, (New York: Arno Press, 1973), p.25.

¹⁰² Lewis, *Ibid*, p.30-31.

¹⁰³ Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur, *The Young Turks, Prelude to the Revolution of 1908*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p.6.

¹⁰⁴ Martin van Bruinessen, *Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), p.268.

¹⁰⁵ Sina Akşin, *TURKEY: from Empire to Revolutionary Republic, the emergence of the Turkish nation from 1789 to the present*, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), p.38.; Ramsaur, *Ibid*, p.6.

Ottoman Empire with the Treaty of San Stefano signed after the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War; in 1876, the Christian communities in the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina revolted against the Ottoman dominance. Moreover, in the 1878 Congress of Berlin, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro were declared themselves as independent nations and the Bulgarians became autonomous.¹⁰⁶ So, the national consciousness was increasing swiftly in the Balkans. Like the Greeks, Bulgarians and Macedonians looked back to their Hellenic and Slavic origins, the Empire's Muslim subjects -such as the Arabs and Albanians- also started to differentiate themselves as ethnic groups within a distinct territory.¹⁰⁷

By considering these data, it can be easily predicted that the Ottoman Empire, which maintained the middle Ages mentality and economy, had barely the chance to survive in the world of rapidly modernizing states¹⁰⁸ and it had to conform to changing conditions and transform itself.

2. Reform Attempts inside the Empire

The Sultan, similar to his successors, had only one choice reforming the institutions if it was continue to survive in the modern world conditions. Regarding of the Western model and drawing on “the knowledge of the skills of Europe”¹⁰⁹, the main aim in carrying out the reforms was saving the state and reasserting the central control over the provinces. Particularly after 1877- 78 defeat, Sultan Abdulhamid II promoted administrative and material aspects of

¹⁰⁷ Denise Natali, “Manufacturing Identity and Managing Kurds in Iraq, Turkey and Iran: A Study in the Evolution of Nationalism”, (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2000), p.33.

¹⁰⁸ Lewis, *Ibid*, p.36.

¹⁰⁹ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, (Walkington, England: The Eothen Press, 1981), p.81.

modernization for the purpose of strengthening the Empire politically¹¹⁰. Many of the state reforms planned to prevent the disintegration of the Empire also served to strengthen the capitalist relations.¹¹¹

The reforms put in practice by Abdulhamid II were a product of his politics' basic trivet.

- a-To counterbalance with big states of Europe, especially with Britain and Russia
- b-To enable peace and development in the country by uniting the Ottoman community around the basis of religion
- c-To use caliphate as a tool of threat against colonialist states, especially Britain and Russia, that had Muslim colonies.¹¹²

The Sultan was essentially an Islamist, however he was also “a reasonable” Turk.¹¹³ In fact, he was against the liberal and reformist ideas, since he was considering them as a threat to the existence of state and his authority. Although the Sultan considered liberalistic ideas with hostility, he realized the necessity of institutional modernization as a means of consolidating his own position and strengthening the Empire.¹¹⁴ Therefore he would not avoid putting reformist ideas and actions in action, since there was not any other chance for the survival of the Empire. He was not totally against westernization and reforms, provided that they would be wisely identified and implemented.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ M. Naim Turfan, *Rise of the Young Turks; Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), p.62.

¹¹¹ Recep Boztemur, “State Making and Nation Building in Turkey: A Study of the Historical Relation Between the Capitalist Development and the Establishment of the Modern Nation State”, (Ph.D. Diss, The University of Utah, 1997), p.317.

¹¹² Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdulhamid ve Islam Birliği: Osmanlı Devletinin Islam Siyaseti 1856- 1908*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 1992), p.190-191.

¹¹³ Naci Kutlay, *Kürtler*, (İstanbul: Pêrî Yayınları, 2002), p.50.

¹¹⁴ Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.3.

¹¹⁵ Lewis, *Ibid*, p.176.

Thereby the first ten years of Abdulhamid II period turned into an era of active alteration and reform period likewise any other period in the 19th century; many unfinished reform sets of 1839 (*Tanzimat*) were completed in that period.¹¹⁶ The apparatuses of the modern state were started to be built in that period. The institutionalization practices started after the *Tanzimat* (such as mass schooling, postal service, railways, clock towers, museums, censuses, birth certificates, passports, parliaments, bureaucracies, and armies)¹¹⁷ were reached its peak during the Hamidian era in the Ottoman Empire. As Deringil correctly points out, the Hamidian period represents a critical turning point in time when the only Muslim world empire did in fact succeeded in joining the modern community of nations.¹¹⁸ The Sultan successfully maintained the territorial integrity of the Ottoman State during a 30-year period in the modernization process and he prepared the ground for the rise of modern Turkey.¹¹⁹

a- Constitutional Monarchy

With Abdulhamid's accession to the throne in 1876, studies to draft a constitution and to establish a regime which have a parliament started for the first time in the Ottoman Empire. Sultan Abdulhamid II hoped to prevent European intervention¹²⁰ and the system was replaced by a representative government. All the Ottoman communities were to elect representatives to the parliament which would enact the necessary reforms.¹²¹ Obviously the constitution was part of a great effort to hold the Empire together in a period of mortal crisis.¹²² The Muslims mainly

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.177.

¹¹⁷ Deringil, *Ibid*. p.9.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.3.

¹¹⁹ Karpat, *Ibid*, p.VI.

¹²⁰ Eraslan, *Ibid*, p.86.

¹²¹ Akşin, *Ibid*, p.42.

¹²² Davison, *Ibid*, p.88.

regarded the constitution as an opportunity to unite all races and creeds again like in the glorious past.¹²³

The Parliament was opened in March 1877, then, it was prorogued and the constitution was shelved in February 1878. After suspending the parliament, the Ottomans were condemned to a downward slide into an increasingly repressive absolute monarchy in the 1880s.¹²⁴ The constitution seemed to be in practice in that period however the country was ruled by an autocratic regime. This autocratic nature of the regime was embodied with hard censorship practices; the widespread informing, a spy organization which spread to every corner of the country; even limitations on domestic freedom of travel; and hindering of incorporation activities (hence economic development) as a principle since it makes people to come together.¹²⁵ He excessively used his rights to suppress alternative political actions and actors between 1876 and 1908.¹²⁶

An organized and effective reaction against the police regime of Abdulhamid appeared so lately, the Committee of Ottoman Union, as a secret society of the students from the modern state schools, could be founded in 1889 and it transformed into a political organization in 1906.

b- Islamism

Sultan Abdulhamid II played his card of Islamism for the salvation of the Empire against the actual developments and requirements on the slippery slope that we mentioned above. He constructed state policy on Islamism in the last quarter of the 19th century and in the first ten years of the 20th century.

¹²³ Price, *Ibid*, p.74.

¹²⁴ Akşin, *Ibid*, p.42.

¹²⁵ Sina Akşin, (ed.), *Türkiye Tarihi, Vol. 3, Osmanlı Devleti 1600-1908*, (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1988-1989), p.166.

¹²⁶ Boztemur, *Ibid*, p.328.

When Abdulhamid came to the throne, he wanted to make Ottomanism dominant in the Empire. With the aim of maintaining *Tanzimat* reforms within a pragmatist framework and in the borders of the Empire, he got ready to solve problems of the state by following the policy of “not displeasing any of the nations”¹²⁷, or in other words, a policy of uniting all communities in the Empire under his rule (*ittihad-ı anâsır*). However, not long after, he saw that, the ideal of Ottomanism did not work and the idea of equalizing all components inside in terms of rights within the framework of the idea that “everyone living in the lands of the Ottoman state is Ottoman” was not useful anymore. When it was understood that Ottomanism would not prevent the increasing nationalist waves of the Christian subjects in the Ottoman lands, he rapidly went into action to keep Muslim subjects in the remaining lands. After the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, since most of the Ottoman lands in Rumelia was lost, for the first time Arab and Muslim subjects became much more dominant when compared to previous times. It is when the idea that the belonging of a nation could be substituted by Islam.¹²⁸ Thereby Abdulhamid should have given priority to Muslim elements in government as a requirement of the conjuncture to preserve the state as large as possible; because the state was “*ebed müddet*” which means that state is eternal. To preserve it whatever is required should be done.¹²⁹ Consequently, with a sudden maneuver, the people of Anatolia –the single land remained under the Ottoman domain– should have been satisfied and firmly held. Islam would be the uniting factor in the conservative Hamidian period.¹³⁰

In the period when the political, military and economic power of the state was roundly declining, Abdulhamid II used the ideal of Islamism that had started to shape before his period both in domestic and foreign politics. He was aiming to provide his people with a new social and religious motivation by sensibly

¹²⁷ Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1992), p.72.

¹²⁸ Şerif Mardin, *Türk Modernleşmesi*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1992), p.95.

¹²⁹ Eraslan, *Ibid.*, p.22-23.

¹³⁰ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.169.

promoting Islamic thinking in domestic politics. The reputation of Islam was tried to be improved by the hands of state by the means of several practices such as following the rules of Islam, celebrating religious day and nights grandiosely, control of clothing and morale of community by state.¹³¹ Together with these decorations, the presentation of copies of the Qur'an or ceremonial banners was also part of the symbolic dialogue between the ruler and the ruled.¹³² Furthermore, the Sultan, in foreign policy, was aiming to use pan-Islamism as a shield against pan-ideologies used by Europe by highlighting the Islamic character of the state.¹³³ The post of caliphate was popularized and caliphate was used to assemble the Muslims of foreign countries around the Ottoman Empire.

However the policy of Islamism was also not enough to keep the distorted imperial system up. The new policy of Islamism, led to dissolution instead of centralization. Also Muslim nations took their share from the actual trend and chose the way of establishing their own nation-state. A new generation took over the government in the Empire. This new generation of rulers was aiming to govern the state with liberal and constitutionalist principles. The ideology of Islamism succeeded in Muslim subjects to a certain extent: the Anatolian people who lacked the sense of unity, started to gain a consciousness build on the distinctive qualifications of Islam in the last years of the reign of Abdulhamid. The Muslims who were ignored for a long time and were tolerating all kinds of unjust treatment of their state, were likely to make peace with it after the maneuver of Islamism; the Muslims also felt that they were obliged to protect their substance, spiritual and material values when they saw that Western states were fronting against Islam and the Ottoman state by supporting each other.¹³⁴ In short, Islam was used during that time period both as a tool of change and an opposition to colonial domination of the West.

¹³¹ Eraslan, *Ibid*, p.32.

¹³² Deringil, *Ibid*, p.36.

¹³³ Bozarslan, *Ibid*, p.20.

¹³⁴ Eraslan, *Ibid*, p.37.

Consequently, we may safely assure that, in the Hamidian era in the late 19th century, as a result of an obligation to mobilize the Ottomans within the frame of Islamic culture and religion, Islam lost its previous robe and gained an “ideological” axis in the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁵

3. Failure of new policies

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire had continued to go on steadily in the Hamidian Era. The Ottoman Empire had become that much smaller for the first time in its history.¹³⁶

Meantime the hatred against Abdulhamid II among soldiers increased to its peak in the period of dissolution of the Empire. The six-century old Ottoman Empire was no longer one of the greatest European powers after the defeats, the European intervention started to intensify and there was a total instability inside the Empire; the primary responsibility of that situation was considered to belong to the Sultan. The military structure which functioned as the backbone of the Empire started to have notice of the world by means of reform practices and opened itself to modern thinking under the influence of European ideas. The military cadre, who were educated in the modern-style schools, was considering Sultan Abdulhamid II incapable and shortsighted enough not to see the requirements of the era. One of the highest ranked soldiers of the military class, Kazım Karabekir, was mentioning about the politics of Abdulhamid era with a critical tone in his memoirs as: “Europe is making the Christians revolutionize by supporting them, we do nothing. Martini rifles are old, missiles are old and broken and also since shooting practices were not made properly, very bad results were taken”.¹³⁷ Soon

¹³⁵ Mardin, *Ibid*, p.88.

¹³⁶ Pears, *Ibid*, p.18.

¹³⁷ Kazım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, 1896- 1909*, (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1995), p.100.

the military section started to search for the remedies of salvation of the motherland by their own means and the 1908 Revolution happened.

4. International circumstances in the Hamidian era

It is necessary to take the main characteristics of the world conjuncture into consideration to understand the basis of the era of Abdulhamid II and the policies implemented in that period. The Ottoman Empire was the sole single Muslim state in the states' platform of the classical ages. In the classical discourse of European history, from ages, the Ottoman state had emerged as the single most serious threat to European Christendom during the period when Europe was expanding as a result of the voyages of discovery and colonization in the late 15th and 16th centuries.¹³⁸

Then, the conditions have started to change gradually in favor of the European world from the dawn of the 16th century. Europe has started to develop a new modern state of mind in all manners. So those paved the way for determining a new political order in the international scale. The Ottoman Empire thus became the periphery to the system; lose her hands towards the world political arena. Situating the Ottoman State and the state of affairs in the context of world changes, we may smoothly predict that the Ottoman Empire was under constant pressure from the outside world during the Hamidian era. The main motive behind the Hamidian foreign policy was the struggle to secure the acceptance of the Ottoman state as a legitimate polity in the international system.¹³⁹

Throughout the 19th century, along with the economic peripheralization of the Empire to the capitalist world economy, the Ottoman state also gradually integrated itself into the European political system.¹⁴⁰ The Ottoman State with its

¹³⁸ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.1.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p.166.

¹⁴⁰ Boztemur, *Ibid*, p.288.

ethnic structure vulnerable to foreign intervention did not provide Abdulhamid with the chance to act confidence. In this situation plurality in foreign policy seemed to be unavoidable. Anyhow, according to Ernest Ramsaur, Abdulhamid was a man of consummate skill in the game of playing off opposing forces, internal and external, against one another.¹⁴¹ The Ottoman State, in the second quarter of the 19th century, integrated itself to the system through establishing relations with foreign states -especially with Britain and Russia- by means of a policy called “policy of balance”.¹⁴²

Actually, the European powers were very interfering in the Ottoman domestic matters. The Ottoman state was under growing pressure from England, France, Russia, and Italy. Their impact over the Ottoman palace has increased; they interfered to the internal affairs, supported one Ottoman statesman against another, pressed reforms of all sorts, particularly for the rights of Christian minorities, , insisted on capitulatory privileges.¹⁴³ The initiative of the implementation of reforms passed to Europe; while the Ottoman State was losing valuable lands of motherland with several civil rebellions and wars, on the other hand the state was enfeebled by reforms implemented to the demands of the foreigners, civil rebellions were promoted and loss of lands were increasing.¹⁴⁴

The Hamidian period also witnessed the rise of a new nation-state, Germany in the world political arena. Having completed its unification in 1871 and achieving its economic, mostly industrial developments, Germany appeared in the 1880s as a great power within the world politics, especially as a rival to British supremacy in the struggle for global hegemony. The Ottoman Empire became a sphere for Germany not only to find an ally in this struggle, but also an arena to expand its influence in economic, political and military issues. The Hamidian regime, on the

¹⁴¹ Ramsaur, *Ibid*, p.11.

¹⁴² Eraslan, *Ibid*, p.28.

¹⁴³ Davison, *Ibid*, p.79.; Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.268.

¹⁴⁴ Bilal Şimşir, *Kürtçülük: 1787- 1923*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2007), p.21.

other hand, focused mainly on keeping a balance between the powers in order to protect its autonomy in the international system.

5. The Orientation of Europe to East and Its Policies

Starting from the late 18th century, in Europe, a competition of influence on the Ottoman lands under the name of “the Eastern Question” concerning the future of the eEmpire and its possibility to dissolve had started. The European powers, led by Britain and Russia, started to intervene in the domestic issues of the Ottoman Empire by benefiting from the weakening of the state in different fronts such as domestic problems in the Balkans and its defeats against Russia. In addition to that, after accomplishing its goal of leading to disintegration in Rumelia, Europe, started to focus on Ottoman lands in Anatolia. Russia, which achieved victory in 1877- 1878 Ottoman-Russian War, dictated the Treaty of San Stefano to the Ottoman state. As a result of this war and agreement, Rumelia was detached from the Ottoman state and the process of disintegration of Anatolia has started.¹⁴⁵ According to Bilal Şimşir, Treaty of San Stefano (Ayastefanos) meant the Sevrés of Rumelia and it was also the beginning of the Sevrés of Anatolia.¹⁴⁶

In the context of my issue of focus, Eastern Anatolia, the Eastern policies of Russia have significance. In the beginning of the 19th century, some Kurdish tribes which pursued the goal of benefiting from conjuncture occasionally wanted to contact and collaborate with the Russians. For example, after the collapse of the Kurdish emirates, although the Kurds asked for the assistance of Russia in their struggle of regional interests, each time they were responded negatively. Because assisting Kurds was not conforming to the interests of Russia; especially the weakness of national consciousness among the Kurdish people and tribal fragmentation were important factors for Russia’s refusal of collaboration.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.141.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.143.

¹⁴⁷ Naci Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1997), p.35.

The first agreement mentioning about the Kurds, the San Stefano, was formed under the patronage of the Russians and the British. Just after the Ottoman-Russian war started, the British and the Russians started a campaign against the Kurds. They tried to influence international public opinion with rumors such as “the armed Kurds attacked to the Armenians, they pillaged and destroyed villages”. Moreover, with the Treaty of San Stefano, the Ottoman Empire was obliged to leave the cities Kars, Ardahan, Batum and Doğu Beyazıt to Russia. Moreover, a reform would be made for the Armenians in Anatolia; according to the article 61:

The *Bâb-ı Ali* undertakes the obligation of making reforms, without any delay, required by the local needs in the six provinces in which Armenians live and providing security and peace of the Armenians against the Circassians and Kurds. It will notify the measures taken to big states and states will supervise their implementation.¹⁴⁸

In this way, the first step towards an Armenian state in Anatolia was taken, and both the Russians and the British have prepared the Armenian question by the means of the Kurds.¹⁴⁹

Indeed, Europe started to turn its face to the Muslim Kurds even in the *Küçük Kaynarca Treaty* period. It was not enough to detach the Christian components from the Empire, it was also necessary to categorize the Muslims and divide them in themselves.¹⁵⁰ As we have mentioned before, even in the *Küçük Kaynarca* period, Vatican sent missionaries to the Ottoman Empire through the thesis that the Kurds could detach from the Empire since they had a different language and it enabled a priest to write a dictionary.¹⁵¹ In Europe and Russia institutes and

¹⁴⁸ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.153.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.24.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.18.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.18.

research centers were established to enlighten Kurdish history and experts of the issue were raised.¹⁵²

In addition, European states allocated more space to that region in their imperialist agenda in the Hamidian era. In that period the Christian missionaries frequently visited Eastern Anatolia and they sought to promote Christian beliefs. Even in the 1860's, boarding schools for Christian girls in Eastern Anatolia, particularly in Armenia, Antep, Maraş, Bitlis, Erzincan, Harput and Mardin were already established. These missionaries also published holy books in Kurdish.¹⁵³ The American missionaries established a press in Antep on April 1880. They published books in Kurdish, Armenian and English. Hymn books in Kurdish were published in the press of Antep Missionary School for Girls.¹⁵⁴ 660 hymn books in Kurdish were published in the first year. Furthermore, the Fırat College was established in 1878 in Harput; this college attempted to make regulations to educate the Kurdish people, however since the Armenians in America opposed, these regulations were not put in practice.¹⁵⁵ Besides, the Kurdish region, as an untouched market, was attractive for the Europeans. In that period mostly European commodities entered in the market of the Kurdish districts.¹⁵⁶ And finally a Kurdistan Embassy was established in Anatolia. However it was not established to communicate with the Kurds but to protect the Armenians from the Kurds.¹⁵⁷

When the political developments of the period are analyzed from the view of Kurdish population in Eastern Anatolia, it is seen that the competition of European powers on the region enabled the Kurds to derive several opportunities from the situation. Opportunities available for the Kurdish communities increased. European councils have arrived in Van for observing and controlling the local

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p.21.

¹⁵³ Naci Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, (Ankara: Beybun Yayınları, 1992), p.14.

¹⁵⁴ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.49.

¹⁵⁵ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.14.

¹⁵⁶ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.158.

¹⁵⁷ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.174.

conditions of the Armenian people. Christian ascendancy and competing territorial claims made by the Armenians have vocalized intensely against the Kurdish violence at that period of time. So, the Kurdish leaders started to mobilize against the Porte not on behalf of the Ottoman Administration or any other Kurdish nationalist demand but for their own local gains against this new state of affairs. Popular Ubeydullah revolt apparently shows how a local ruler has revolted against the Porte for the sake of his own benefits.

6. Hamidian Policies towards the East

Since the reforms put in practice in the country had created their own dynamics in time, the Muslim people in the Empire were also influenced from the national awakening movements. Thus, the Ottoman rulers faced the challenge of nationalism, not only from their Christian subjects and ex-subjects in the Balkans but also from their own Muslim people.¹⁵⁸ In a short time, new reactions, demands, political actors and actions such as those searching the salvation of the Empire in Turkish nationalism, attempts of Arab provinces to detach from Empire, the emergence of Kurdish identity and awakening of Kurdish nationalist feelings appeared in the scene of the Empire.

In the Ottoman Empire the Kurds along with other Muslims were part of a broader Sunni Muslim core within a multiethnic Empire.¹⁵⁹ Although non-Muslim communities were granted a certain degree of autonomy and Muslim subjects could not gain privileged status since they constituted the single “Muslim *ummah*”¹⁶⁰, the Kurds had concessions. The Kurds, as part of the Sunni community of the Ottoman Empire, were already treated as a distinct group by the sultan in the 16th century when a number of independent principalities of fiefdoms

¹⁵⁸ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.44-45.

¹⁵⁹ Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, (Lanham, Md: Rowman& Littlefield Publishers, 1998), p.6.

¹⁶⁰ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.1-2.

(emirates) were established.¹⁶¹ They remained relatively autonomous for ages. Besides, the Ottoman administration bodies were varying in itself to rule different Kurdish tribes. The degree of autonomy devoted to the fiefdoms was mainly depending on accessibility and geopolitics of the region and work force of the Kurdish tribes.¹⁶²

a. Kurdish Existence in Ottoman Domains before the 19th Century

The region including Bitlis, Dersim, Diyarbekir, Hakkari, Musul, Mamuretulaziz and Van provinces, to a great extent, was the homeland of Kurds living in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶³ According to Naci Kutlay's quotation from Yusuf Akçura's book "*Zamanımız ve Avrupa Siyasi Tarihi 1870-1887*", 1.240.000 Kurds were living in the region until the last quarter of 19th century.¹⁶⁴ The Kurds were organized as tribes and they were maintaining their life by engaging in agriculture and stockbreeding in the agrarian living conditions.

Basically the tribal identity and feudal ideology were dominant in the Eastern Anatolia. Especially geographical conditions affected living standards of the Kurds in the region. The main reason why the Kurdish region had a limited relation with the central administration was geographical conditions. Since the region was far away from the imperial center, the infrastructure, such as industrialization and transportation was weak and it led Kurds to live as isolated from the central administration.¹⁶⁵ That geographical reality contributed to the development of a strong clan and tribal structure. Moreover, since they inhabited in an enormously mountainous region, pastoral way of life in many areas for long

¹⁶¹ Barkey and Fuller, *Ibid*, p.6.

¹⁶² Hakan Özoğlu, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kürt Milliyetçiliği*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005), p.75.

¹⁶³ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.69.

¹⁶⁴ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.14.

¹⁶⁵ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.30.

periods strengthened the divergence of several Kurdish dialects.¹⁶⁶ Geography did not only result in Eastern Anatolia to be far away from imperial center but it also led to fragmented social structure within it.

All these realities were affecting the political positioning of the region in the Ottoman state. The fragmentation of feudal structure¹⁶⁷ and strong tribal connection among the people were factors which prevented the development of a national identity. This isolation from imperial centers slowed their development as a united and strongly self-conscious people.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, Kurdish regional lords fighting against the Ottoman rule could not agree with each other and act together, even though they had kinship relations among themselves.¹⁶⁹ Anyhow the actions of the Kurdish chiefs rebelling against the Ottoman centralization policy were not in conformity with the characters of the national movements in the Europe of that period.¹⁷⁰ Besides the tribal structure of Kurdish society, it was difficult to mobilize the Kurds as a whole, because of several different factors such as the absence of a modern leading cadre, commitment to religion and personal interests.¹⁷¹ Actually, these internal realities were superior to a real sense of nation were preventing the construction of a grand Kurdish movement among the Kurds. In short, in political terms, these divisions and diversities seriously constrained the opportunities to develop a more comprehensive national vision.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ Barkey and Fuller, *Ibid*, p.6.

¹⁶⁷ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.24.

¹⁶⁸ Barkey and Fuller, *Ibid*, p.6.

¹⁶⁹ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.131.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.30.

¹⁷¹ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.90.

¹⁷² Barkey and Fuller, *Ibid*, p.6.

b. Administrative Policies of the Ottoman State in Eastern Anatolia in the 19th Century

Starting from the second half of the 19th century, many significant political changes, social and economic developments have happened in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman State has always paid close attention to Eastern Anatolia, which was a borderland, because of its strategic importance. In the beginning of the 19th century, the semi-autonomy of the Kurdish principalities was cancelled and centralization policies were implemented to integrate them to the Ottoman system. As a result of that about 20 Kurdish principalities which had fragmented and scattered structure were removed.¹⁷³ The abolishment of semi-autonomous Kurdish principalities started the period of unlawfulness and disorder in the Eastern Anatolia. The first step towards the policy of administrative centralization in the Eastern borders was taken and Kurdish principalities were removed, however law and order could not be provided. In the period of “tribal re-building process”¹⁷⁴, the cancelled Kurdish principalities were replaced by lesser *beyliks* and landlords. According to the belief of the Ottoman governors, these newly emerging lesser *beyliks* could easily be controlled and this social situation would prevent the emergence of a bigger and serious Kurdish movement.¹⁷⁵ And after the abolishment of the Kurdish fiefdoms, the *Vilayat-ı Şarkiye* would be governed by the Ottoman governors as a requirement of centralization policy.¹⁷⁶

As a result of the centralization policy, the relations between the Kurds and the state gained a new direction. The Kurdish principalities were removed in Eastern provinces however governmental control in these lands could not be provided. The Ottoman state could not fill the gap occur after the centralization policy and a new form of leadership emerged in Kurdish regions, the *sheikhdoms*. The sheikhs undertook the role of leadership in this gap of power and raised themselves to a

¹⁷³ Bozarlan, *Ibid*, p.17.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.17.

¹⁷⁵ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.33.

¹⁷⁶ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.270.; Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.32.

prestigious position. Since the required and qualified temporal leaders did not emerge, the spiritual leaders, sheikhs, started to be consulted.¹⁷⁷ Above all, 95 % of the Kurds were Muslim and their religious identity was an inseparable part of the Kurdish identity. Consequently, spiritual leaders have always been respected by the Kurdish people. Moreover, these new figures of sheikhs seemed to have been a safe authority to which people can tie to in the insecure environment of Kurdish lands which were in turbulence caused by centralization and land reforms. Furthermore, in contrary to bureaucrats in the regions, the sheikhs could easily find resolutions to conflicts emerging among tribes, a tradition which was a reality of the region.¹⁷⁸ Since they gained influence in the context of their relation with the Empire, they became more effective, widened the area that they govern after the land reform, became rich of lands. Additionally, the Sultan and the bureaucrats provided them with offices and gave presents to them; they became enriched and strengthened.

i. Land Reform

According to Naci Kutlay's quotation from Rıfkı Aslan, the land regulation in Eastern Anatolia was depending on three types of land ownership.

1-The lands directly subject to Ottoman state-owned (*mirî*) land regime

2-*Yurtluk* and *ocaklık*, which are dependent to the Ottoman administration and subject to its tax regime; but which are given to local *beys* or tribe chiefs and are lineal succession

3-Lands directly managed by autonomous rulers which are administratively dependent to the Ottomans, however which are independent in their internal affairs.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Wadie Jwaideh, *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihi*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p.15.

¹⁷⁸ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.341-347.

¹⁷⁹ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.38.

The Land Act enacted in 1858, was aiming to re-regulate the Ottoman state-owned land regime and to prevent feudal landlords' abuse of local people especially in the Eastern lands. This act intended to reconstruct the fact that ultimate owner of the land is the state, to start compulsory land registration and to break the tribal structure which was the major reason of decentralization in Kurdish regions.

After a time, the results of this regulation started to emerge and big changes occurred in the land ownership. In practice, just a cast of elites benefited from the act. The lands used arbitrarily by the landlords found their new owners with the act. The feudal Kurdish *bey*s expanded and legalized their lands. After the abolishment of the Kurdish emirates, it was the sheikhs that had mostly expanded their lands.¹⁸⁰ Actually the law was aiming to grant the peasants the right to manage the land that they cultivate, they settle in the lands they used so tribal structure of peasant people dissolved¹⁸¹ The disregard of registration officers let the high ranked people, landlords, sheikhs and tradesman to register vast land pieces on their name; the peasants realized this fact so lately¹⁸² and could not protect their land. The peasants expropriated from their lands became workers in their own lands. The actual result of the land reform was the expansion of the scope of private property indeed.¹⁸³

The act was also paving the way to Ottomanisation. Nomadic tribal chiefs were replaced by big landlords. The urban notables also strengthened by the way of acquisition of lands after this new regulation and they started to participate in provincial affairs. The state offered to some nomads "land" incentive to settle in;

¹⁸⁰ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.34.

¹⁸¹ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.281.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p.281-282.

¹⁸³ Boztemur, *Ibid*, p.313.

land was now becoming a valuable resource.¹⁸⁴ During the reform period the value of land increased by seventy five percent which benefited some of the Kurdish wheat growing regions like Erzurum and Diyarbakir.¹⁸⁵ Although advanced capitalist relations did not exist, in this way, the door of modernization in cultivating the land was opened in the Eastern provinces.¹⁸⁶

In the land ownership alteration process, the situation of Kurds in the periphery did not change positively, but it worsened. Many Kurdish cultivators lost their land rights. Their isolated, introverted living conditions caused them to be unfamiliar with the economic and social developments in the Empire. Another reason why this region drew apart from cultural and economic development of other Ottoman cities and of the imperial capital was the unfamiliarity of the Ottoman central administrators and intellectuals with this region; such that, they were stranger to the region.¹⁸⁷

c. Administrative Policies of Reign of Abdulhamid and its Effects in Eastern Anatolia (1876-1909)

The Ottoman sovereignty in the Eastern Anatolia was shattered at the end of the 19th century. After the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, because of the damage of war in the North-eastern provinces, unexpected social and economic distortions, starvation, poverty, immigration and disturbance have emerged in the Kurdish populated areas.¹⁸⁸ The Kurdish identity was strengthened more in that period and

¹⁸⁴ Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (ed.), *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World*, (Madison, Wisconsin: the University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p.158.

¹⁸⁵ Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p.274-279., c.f., “Denise Natali. *Manufacturing Identity and Managing Kurds in Iraq, Turkey and Iran: A Study in the Evolution of Nationalism* p.37.”

¹⁸⁶ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.37.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.39.

¹⁸⁸ Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.155.

the region witnessed to many revolts such as the very popular revolt of Sheikh Ubeydullah.

In comparison to previous period, in the second half of the 19th century, there was decomposition in the tribal structure, and more communication with the central government and interaction with the outer world. The rural masses in Eastern Anatolia left the nomadic way of life and adopted a settled and urban life style to a great extent. The oppression and exploitation of leaders of tribes and landlords were continuing in the Kurdish regions; they were capturing the lands of the weak peasants and the Christians, thus the regional chiefs and notables were expanding their lands more and more.¹⁸⁹

Because of these reasons, the administrative centralization policy led to serious problems and rebellions in Eastern Anatolia; there were a total of 50 various Kurdish rebellions against the Ottoman state; they were not nationalistic in character and their suppression led to the strengthening of the power of sheikhs and religious leaders.¹⁹⁰ There were much more rebellions in that period compared to previous periods; the rebellion of Osman and Huseyin Beys from the family of Bedirhan Beys in 1878 and the rebellion of Ubeydullah two years after are the most known ones. This also shows that the Kurds were not passive in their relation with the state and starting from the 19th century they recognized their increasing importance for neighbor states more.¹⁹¹ It enabled them to acquire local interests by highlighting their Kurdish identity. Generally tribal, feudal and religious aspects of rebellions in that period are obvious.¹⁹²

The autonomous Kurdish principalities which were assigned by the Ottoman State with border guardianship since the 16th century¹⁹³ did not have their old

¹⁸⁹ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.48.

¹⁹⁰ Barkey and Fuller, *Ibid*, p.7.

¹⁹¹ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.89.

¹⁹² Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.49.

¹⁹³ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.244.

effectiveness in the 1870-1880 period. On the contrary, religious leaders started to gain power. Abdulhamid's benefiting from the Kurds as a factor of balance against Armenian nationalism in the region assisted Muslim Kurdish sheikhs to increase their influence.¹⁹⁴ The Kurds built up good relations with the Sultan in that period. Especially, Sultan Abdulhanid II started to be called as "*Bâve Kurdan*" (the father of Kurds) by the Kurds, particularly by the religious authorities, because of the concessions devoted by the Sultan to them.¹⁹⁵

i. Administrative Centralization:

The centralization policy was implemented with a hope of preventing disintegration in the last years of the Ottoman State. The economy of the Empire, which was deteriorating since there were not any military conquests any more, relieved with the centralization which opened the way for direct tax collection.¹⁹⁶ But the political centralization required to save the Empire and to create a modern state quite naturally came at the expense of social decentralization in a multiethnic empire.¹⁹⁷

In Eastern Anatolia, however, the situation was different than the other parts of the Empire regarding the centralization efforts. Rather than the decentralization tendency, many Kurdish elements remained relatively pleased – although the existing power structure in favor of some local Kurdish rulers weakened and some discontents occurred- from the new conditions appeared in the Kurdish domains. The general atmosphere in the region was not reflecting as opposition to the Sultan, since many Kurdish notables could maximize their interests by collaborating with the Sultan.

¹⁹⁴ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.43.

¹⁹⁵ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.286.

¹⁹⁶ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.82.

¹⁹⁷ Boztemur, *Ibid*, p.260.

The aims of the permanent settlement of the Kurdish nomads, securing the Eastern borders and gaining the support of powerful Kurdish chiefs were somehow achieved with the Abdulhamid II's administrative centralization policies.¹⁹⁸ The settling of the traditionally nomadic Kurdish population to the Ottoman lands was somehow accomplished. With the Ottoman official discourse, the aim of bringing civilization and progress to the Kurds who "live in a state of nomads and savagery" (*hal-i vahşet ve bedeviyetde yaşarlar*) was mostly achieved in the Hamidian era.¹⁹⁹

Moreover, the power structure controlled by local Kurdish rulers, generally speaking, relatively weakened and the central government strengthened in the provinces established after the replacement of the state system (*eyalet sistemi*) by the province system (*vilayet sistemi*) in Eastern Anatolia in 1864, namely in Erzurum, Van, Diyarbakir, Mamüretülaziz and Sivas, as a result of the centralization policy of Abdulhamid period. The connections of peoples in the periphery with center had relatively increased; consequently tax collection increased and conscription activities were regularized. Following the development of communication between big provinces of Eastern Anatolia and the imperial center and other big provinces of the Empire, and also the beginning of modernization in agriculture; commercial bourgeoisie and artisan class developed. The Kurdish notables who were doing large-scale business in cities were relocated in Istanbul where they could be supervised and oriented.²⁰⁰ The re-consolidation of central control in that period eased the tax burden on the peasants. The emirates that were autonomous in their internal affairs, in exchange for their autonomy, provided the sultan with taxes and soldiers in that era.²⁰¹ The Ottoman tax-farmers assigned by the state after the centralization reforms as well

¹⁹⁸ Tezcan and Barbir, *Ibid*, p.163.

¹⁹⁹ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.41.

²⁰⁰ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.89.

²⁰¹ Barkey and Fuller, *Ibid*, p.7.

as the tribal chiefs were collecting their own tributes/taxes as before. Therefore poor peasants, Muslims and Christians, continued to be taxed twice.

Thus, the Kurdish tribal leaders, landlords and notables gained influence in Abdulhamid's court by being proponents of the Sultan. They gained access to the court, landlords, sheikhs and tribal chiefs profited much from Abdulhamid's pan-Islamist ideology, his broader security strategies and his taxation policies for large landowners.²⁰²

It is obvious that privileges such as benefits gained by being opponent of Sultan and being under the protection of the Sultan contributed a lot to Kurdish leaders and notables to increase their interest.²⁰³ The Ottoman state preferred to cooperate with notables and to consolidate security in borders by giving privileges, posts and degrees to them. Sultan Abdulhamid II gave the descendants of the Kurdish notables such as Bedirhan, Şerif Paşa, and Abdurrahman Baban Paşa high posts in the administration, military and universities; they even became prime minister in the Empire.²⁰⁴ In brief, the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II was a very dynamic, progressive but also a painful period for Kurdish lands and people of the region.

ii. Agrarian conflict between Kurds and Armenians

Another vital part in the panorama of Eastern Anatolia in the Hamidian period was the rising Armenian nationalism. The land ownership question created by the 1858 Land Law in Eastern Anatolia in the reign of Abdulhamid II constituted one of the main reasons of the Armenian-Kurdish conflict. The Armenian question made Kurdish people known in the international arena and the disputes among two communities resonated in the international public opinion.

²⁰² Natali, *Ibid*, p.36.

²⁰³ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.183.

²⁰⁴ Natali, *Ibid*, p.35.

The conflict between the Armenians and Kurds stemmed from agrarian concerns. The nationalist activities of the Armenians started in the period of Abdulhamid II and progressed rapidly. The Muslim Kurds were very displeased concerning the sanctions of the Treaty of San Stefano and they had already started to think that Armenians were collaborating with the Russians and aiming to detach the region from the Ottoman control.²⁰⁵ After 1877-78 War, the rumors that the Armenians were claiming right on Eastern provinces mobilized the Kurds. The Kurds, with their reactions to the Armenians, gained sympathy of the Ottomans and Europeans' *Red Sultan* Abdulhamid.²⁰⁶ The Kurds oppressed and persecuted the Armenians by taking the approval of the Sultan. As a result of those oppressions many lands in large-scale were passed to Kurds from the Armenians. The Hamidiye Regiments murdered so many Armenians and grabbed their lands by complaisance of the Sultan.²⁰⁷

iii. Reforms in Military Area

The Abdulhamid reign was a beginning of a new period for Eastern Anatolia following the rebellions and regional unrests occurred after the centralization policy of 19th century. The state started to establish warmer relations with the Kurds, especially after the rise of Armenian nationalist movements. Abdulhamid secured the Kurdish elements of the population who were loyal to himself, and to whom he granted special privileges.²⁰⁸ In the year of 1892 he founded a special cavalry in the Eastern provinces, called the Hamidian forces for the following purposes: to achieve a total centralization in the Empire, to meet the soldier requirement after the loss of Rumelia lands, to settle nomadic people, to protect the Eastern borders of the state from the Armenian and Russian threat, to

²⁰⁵ Tezcan and Barbir, *Ibid*, p.155.

²⁰⁶ Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.181.

²⁰⁷ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.291.

²⁰⁸ Price, *Ibid*, p.78.

eliminate threats against the political and regional status quo in the region, to prevent Kurdish rebellions, and to make propaganda of pan-Islamism policy.²⁰⁹ These forces were directed by tribal chiefs and joint to the Ottoman army. The 4th Army Commander, (Marshal) Mehmet Pasha started to found these forces in April 1892 and forty forces were formed in Diyarbekir, Cezire, Nusaybin, Van, Erzurum, Bitlis and Sivas provinces.²¹⁰ The Kurdish tribal forces were used by the Empire until 1912-13 Balkan Wars.

As we have mentioned before, the Ottoman state had aimed to keep the Kurdish districts under control throughout the history because of the geographical, strategic and social conditions of it possessed. As the main priority of the bureaucrats was the “saving of the Empire”, the Sultan tried to convince the Kurdish chieftains and elites of eastern Anatolia²¹¹ in order to co-opt them to control the eastern provinces of the Empire. More significantly, it was also aimed to make foreign states’ incitements on tribes against the state fail.²¹² The Sultan anticipated connecting them firmly to himself by granting the Kurds with the right to loot and by providing them with high paid and prestigious jobs.²¹³ This initiative was also important for the reason that, it was the first time that the state could directly supervise the region and could establish close relations with the Kurds. The tribes assigned in Hamidiye light cavalries were chosen from the weak and little ones instead of the big and powerful tribes; the reason of this preference was to avoid a possible problem of rising of a Kurdish fiefdom. The commanders of cavalier troops in the Ottoman Army were appointed to lead these forces and tribal chiefs or landlords were appointed to assist them. These

²⁰⁹ Davison, *Ibid*, p.95.; Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.31.

²¹⁰ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.31.

²¹¹ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.36.

²¹² Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi VIII. Cilt*, 2. baskı, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1983, s.363-364. c.f., “Bilal Şimşir, Kürtçülük; 1787- 1923, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2007), p.214.”

²¹³ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.286.

local managers were put on a salary and they were given grade and flag. The tribes turned into a force were exempted from tax.²¹⁴

The state's use of the Hamidiye regiments in the campaign against the Armenian nationalist protests made these forces to be remembered together with the Armenian massacres. The discontent of Armenians which goes back to even the rebellion of Sheikh Ubeydullah, increased to a new level. The irregular Hamidian regiments benefited from their special situation and utilized from it as a mean of looting and plunder and they invaded Armenian lands, damaged their properties and killed so many Armenians.²¹⁵ The Hamidian forces also participated brutally in the first Armenian massacres in 1894-96. The reason of the Armenian rebellion was the issue of double-taxing; the Armenians had also to pay taxes both to the tax farmers and Kurdish tribal chiefs.²¹⁶ Many protest demonstrations by the Armenians led to large-scale massacres in the *Vilayat-ı Şarkıye*. Because of that, Sultan Abdulhamid II was considered not only a tyrant, but also the bloody/red sultan, namely, "abdul the damned"²¹⁷ for the Armenian population, whereas the same person was known as the "father of the Kurds" for the armed Kurdish neighbors of the Armenians.

Of course it would not be a correct prediction that those Hamidiye cavalries would be as beneficial as they were expected to be. After a few years, some abuses by the Hamidiye forces, and thereby complaints from the local people started. It was told that they were disturbing peace rather than providing it. Since they were uneducated; they were not recognizing authority and they have never complied with military discipline.²¹⁸ The tribal chiefs appointed as military officers were gaining new authorities and powers. Therefore some tribes were strengthening against others and also the power balance was changing

²¹⁴ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.215.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.183.

²¹⁶ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.291.

²¹⁷ Davison, *Ibid*, p.91.

²¹⁸ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.32.

asymmetrically.²¹⁹ Some little pro-Hamidian tribes were rapidly growing and thriving; and also they were using their powers against non-Hamidian tribes as a factor of threat. At the end of 1892, there were some Hamidians in each village in Eastern Anatolia, and they were wearing their uniforms even when they were dealing with their daily work in the village.²²⁰ Since no matter what happens the Sultan was protecting them, they were intimately seeking to use the advantages of their statuses.

The Young Turks, who had dethroned Abdulhamid, also removed the Hamidiye regiments, the loyal proponents of him. After it was understood that a regular army was beneficial in the Eastern borders of the Empire, the forces like Hamidiye were re-formed and the Ottoman State utilized them until 1912-1913.

iv. Education

In the second half of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire came into its own as an “educator state” with a systematic program of education/ indoctrination of the subjects it needed to mould into citizens.²²¹ Education as a tool, which was used by many imperial states to ensure commitment of their subjects to the motherland, was also put in practice in the Hamidian period to make different communities in the Empire loyal to and altruistic for the state. In that context, the Sultan established tribal schools to educate the Kurdish people. These schools were attached a great importance in terms of controlling the balances of region.

²¹⁹ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.286.

²²⁰ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.31.

²²¹ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.93.

A. Tribal School (Mekteb-i Aşiret)

Sultan Abdulhamid II established tribal schools to educate and raise the children of tribal chiefs as the commanders of the future in line with the interests of the Empire. As the Hamidiye Regiments were formed, those schools were opened in 1892. Primary education accompanied by religious education was started in Patnos, Söylemez, Toprakkale, Van, Madrak and in some other places. Turkish teachers gave weight to religious education to consolidate religious belief. Since the language of education was Turkish, education would also serve as a tool of the Turkification policies.²²² One of the tribal schools was established in Besiktas and another one in Baghdad.²²³

The tribal schools were not just for the Kurds. The school was initially founded for the purpose of training the children of leading the Arab sheikhs and notables to be the good Ottomans and to counter increasing British influence around the Arabian Peninsula.²²⁴ Afterwards, the notables of Kurdish Hamidiye regiments also notified their demand of sending their children to these schools and they made pressure for that. In time these schools started to be remembered with the name of children of Kurdish notables; although they were few, Albanians, Karapapak Turkmens and those from Arabic Tay Tribe²²⁵ also found some place in these schools. There emerged enthusiasm among the Arab and Kurdish sheikhs for their sons to be admitted to those schools because the prestige of the school was high. Powerful families were using their influence with local authorities to pass their children off.²²⁶ There was indeed a serious demand in the Kurdish population for education in those schools.

²²² Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.86.

²²³ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.101.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, p.101.

²²⁵ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.62.

²²⁶ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.102.

Kurdish and Arabic children were educated to acquire separate professions. The Kurds were educated in cavalry system, which was the profession of their families; the Arabs were educated in civil services. These schools had a strict curriculum and education policy. The children who were far away from their families could not speak their mother languages in the *Mekteb-i Aşiret*. According to Selim Deringil, the students of these schools were kept as if they were under virtual house arrest and strict supervision.²²⁷ It can be said that Abdulhamid II was also pleased with these sanctions of schools on Kurdish and Arabic children. The Sultan was regularly informed about the courses and grades of each child.²²⁸ After graduation from these schools they would be expected to attend the *Mekteb-i Sultani* in order to be officials in their provinces in the future.²²⁹

Tribal schools were closed around 1907. Although intense propaganda of the Committee of Union and Progress and nascent Arab nationalism were likely to lie under the closure; the visible reason was a foot riot among the students.²³⁰

v. Press

The development of the means of communication reflected to every corner of the Empire in the reign of Abdulhamid II and many publications started to emerge from every side of the country. Despite the strict censorship and control policies, the Ottoman press has developed, as an imitation of European press.

The so-called Kurdish street was feeding from the knowledge of sheikhs, religious and local authorities in the relevant period. Their relation with books and information was very limited. They were not benefiting from abstract theories and

²²⁷ *Ibid*, p.102.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 103.

²²⁹ Kodaman, Bayram, Sultan 2. Abdülhamid'in Doğu Anadolu Seyehati, İstanbul, 1983, p.116, c.f., "Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, p.104."

²³⁰ Deringil, *Ibid*, p.104.

also they were not interested in intellectual studies such as philosophy.²³¹ That intellectual weakness in the Kurdish regions was increasing the distance between it and European nationalisms. The establishment of printing press and publication of newspapers were much later than the other regions of the Empire.²³²

The first and almost the single publication of the region in the reign of Abdulhamid II was the journal of *Kurdistan* published by Mikdat Bedirhan Paşa. The journal *Kurdistan* and its statements were the tools to call Kurdish people. Modern schools, workplaces and salvation of people from oppression and heavy tax were demanded in them.²³³

Furthermore, via publications, Kurdish intellectuals in the CUP struggled against the Armenian-Kurdish conflict provoked by Abdulhamid II. Since they did not have enough printed materials except *Kurdistan*, they also voiced their demands in other Armenian, Arabic and Turkish publications.²³⁴ Some Kurdish intellectuals submitted articles to some Armenian journals, which condemned the persecution on the Armenian people and organized the idea that the Kurds and Armenians should not be deceived by state; instead they should live together in peace. In and after 1898, the Armenian journal *Droshak* (the official press organ of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, *Dashnaksutiun*), the Kurdish intellectuals wrote some articles emphasizing that the Kurds and Armenians should struggle for their rights and they should be in peace. For instance, quoting from Tezcan and Barbir's article, one of the notables of the Young Turk movement, Abdullah Cevdet, blamed the Hamidiye for causing strife between the Kurds and Armenians in an article which appeared in *Droshak*; he wrote that

²³¹ Mardin, *Türk Modernleşmesi*, p.87.

²³² Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.181.

²³³ *Ibid*, p.49.

²³⁴ Natali, *Ibid*, p.41.

Abdulhamid had created the Hamidiye in order to achieve his goal of destroying the Armenians.²³⁵

Afterwards, the Ottoman Kurdish elites, who would found the Community of Kurdish Ascent (Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti) later on, published Kurdish journals and periodicals in Istanbul, Cairo and Geneva.²³⁶ In the beginning the journals were discussing the ways in which the Empire would be saved in the frame of Ottomanism and the Eastern provinces would develop. As a result of the spread of the ideal of Turkism, the journals started to refer to modern and bourgeoisie-type of Kurdish nationalist demands later on.

7. Kurdish National Identity among the Kurds in the Hamidian Era

I will complete this chapter by trying to answer two noteworthy questions as “did the period of Abdulhamid II contribute to the awakening of Kurdish national feelings?”, if it did so, “to what extent and in which areas they contributed?”.

In contrast to separatist-nationalist demands of the Christian components, the Muslim communities of the Empire were not aware of their separate ethnic identities. Similarly, the Kurds, who constituted one of the most crowded components of the Empire, were identifying themselves mainly on the basis of religion and tribe. Kurdish tribes and clans were well aware of their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness at the local level, but this was not an age in which national concepts were well formed.²³⁷ Kurdish nationalism, the roots of which can be found in this period, was far away from being a well-based, well-structured political movement. Instead, it is possible to find Kurdish nationalist feelings at the tribal level and in the local dimension. Some writers argue that Kurdish rebellions in the 19th century contributed in Kurdish nationalism gradually and

²³⁵ Tezcan and Barbir, *Ibid*, p.164.

²³⁶ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.85.

²³⁷ Barkey and Fuller, *Ibid*, p.7.

after Kurdish nationalism reached its turning point with the rebellion of Sheikh Ubeydullah and the reactions emerging against Turk, Iranian and Arab nationalisms rose on this basis.²³⁸ Although writers like Wadie Jwaideh claimed that those rebellions had effects that accelerated the institutional formation of modern Kurdish nationalism, the character of rebellions in that period, remained at feudal, tribal and local level. Although many calls for rebellion were made for Kurdish nationalism and independence, like the call of Ubeydullah, these actions could not meet with the bedrock of society and they were very limited. Early awakening of the Kurdish identity occurred in the period of Abdulhamid II and even until the foundation of Republic lacked a common ethnic self- awareness and sense of unity; consequently, they could not form a united national movement.²³⁹

In conclusion, the intellectual accumulation of the Kurdish people gradually increased in that era. Despite the facts that Abdulhamid followed strict and closed policies²⁴⁰ in the first ten years of his reign and he was not troubled by any organized movement against himself and his policies, the intellectual accumulation was rapidly increasing even if it was operating in underground. After that conservative period has passed, it was apparently seen that the new ideas could not be kept out of the Empire. Indeed, in the Hamidian era, the knowledge of the West and of modern thought gradually increased.²⁴¹ Although the Kurdish people in Eastern Anatolia did not have such a concern of political identity, Kurdish notables and intellectuals were appearing on political platforms. The Kurdish intellectuals, in the beginning, tried to fix the defections of the Empire instead of emphasizing Kurdish nationalism. The Kurdish intellectuals and the CUP activists were working together to save the country from the rule of Abdulhamid II and to emancipate society with a constitutional parliament, with a feeling which can be described as a patriotism integrated with modern nationalist feelings. After the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy as “a system which

²³⁸ Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.572.

²³⁹ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.83.

²⁴⁰ Ramsaur, *Ibid*, p.12.

²⁴¹ Davison, *Ibid*, p.96.

would treat all nations equally and enable them to participate in it”, the Muslim components of the Empire engaged in their own micro-independence movements. When the CUP appealed to the policy of Turkism, the Kurdish notables started to realize that they should draw some concrete framework for Kurdish nationalist feelings. In short, it is a very reality that, the interactions of the people accelerated all national movements in the Ottoman Empire; it is obvious that nationalisms have fed each other.²⁴² However, in my opinion, the marks of the existence of Kurdish nationalism should be sought in much later than the end of the 19th century, because of, above all, the inner dynamics of the Eastern Anatolia. In that timeline, before anything else, the inner conditions of the region were not ready to host a flourishing nationalist movement.

²⁴² Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.32.

CHAPTER 3

The Condition of the State and the Kurds in the Aftermath of 1908

In the Western world, modern socio-political processes, revolutions and transformations were in general realized with the participation of the masses from “below”. Starting from the 16th century, the bourgeoisie whose socio-economic status underwent a change started to seek for their political rights, and thus wanted to have a voice in the governmental issues. All of these social processes functioned at a completely different route in Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the following centuries. The law-makers, bureaucracy and the intelligentsia, on realizing that the system needed to be replaced by a modern way of governance and nation- states should be established, set up the infrastructure and brought the change to the people by ruling the whole process from “above”. In Germany, for instance, in the 19th century, the formation of the unified state and its modernization were realized by an alliance of the landlords, civilian bureaucracy and the military. Accordingly, the changes in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century were mostly done by the bureaucratic elite and the intelligentsia. The Revolution of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which ended the rule of Abdulhamid II, is also an example to the revolution from above. In the absence of an Ottoman bourgeoisie, the CUP adopted the ideals of nation and nationalism and became “the vanguard party of the Turkish bourgeoisie”.²⁴³ The intelligentsia, as well as the bureaucracy, was the main driving forces of the Revolution. The carriers of the Revolution actually consists of a group of people who can be regarded as elites, were trying to answer the political problems of the country, and dealing mostly with the war conditions, could not find enough time and chance to cope with the problems of the society they are living in. In this sense, the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 is an elite coup d’état.

²⁴³ Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.23.

The place of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the following CUP government in Turkish modernization history is unique. Although the politics of the CUP aimed at keeping the country alive could not save the Empire from collapsing, the ideological foundations of the impending Turkish Republic were laid in this period. Again in this period, the form of and the dominant ideology of the Ottoman government were irreversibly changed. The members of the CUP, who took over the government in its most troubled condition, were the last products of the Young Ottoman tradition; in fact, if we are to generalize it, of reformism and modernism movements which were tried to be maintained in the Ottoman Empire for a long time. As Shaw pointed out rightly,

the Young Turk era, the era of renovation during which the accomplishments of the Tanzimat and of Abdulhamid were combined in a manner, deepened and accelerated the major views that had been gathering momentum in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century such as Ottomanism, nationalism, liberalism, conservatism, Islamism, Turkism, democracy, autocracy, centralization and decentralization.²⁴⁴

The Ottoman Empire, which headed towards the 20th century with its potential, welcomed a brand new period and renewed the system after the 1908 revolution of the CUP. First of all, intellectual status quo reigning in the country started to shake. The Ottoman Empire, despite taking steps towards Westernization since the Tulip Era in the beginning of the 18th century; it maintained its ideologically and intellectually orthodox structure for long periods. Even in the 20th century, culture in the Ottoman society, which was preserving its traditional way of living and thinking, was established on traditional relationships marked by loyalty to person, such as father and son, master and disciple, *pîr* and *mürîd*, the sultan and subject.²⁴⁵ In the Ottoman Empire where such traditional codes of thought were dominating the social life, CUP was seeking to reinforcing the revolution and modernizing the country by cooperating with the Ottoman peoples. Approaching a

²⁴⁴ Shaw and Shaw, *Ibid*, p.273.

²⁴⁵ Şerif Mardin, *Ibid*, p.85.

social structure, in which such sort of pre-modern relations were accepted, from a modernist point of view and goals was an effective maneuver as can be seen particularly when the outcomes of the policies of CUP after 1908 are investigated. The intellectuals of CUP imagined that a Western sort of revolution could be applied to an Eastern society; we can clearly see that CUP could not comprehend the inner dynamics of Ottoman society and the *Zeitgeist*, since they did not know their own people and as a result of the education they received they were alienated to the Ottoman society. If we are to think particularly in the context of Eastern Anatolia, which is a region where such a traditional tribal structure and feudal order prevail, the CUP's objective of transforming the country was an arduous one.

In this chapter, in the aftermath of 1908, we will trace the rise of Kurdish identity, the early awakening of the Kurdish nationalist sentiments, which we assume to have arisen at this period, and if ever, Kurdish nationalism which will burgeon in the future, on the basis of the policies implemented by the CUP after taking over the government. The policies of CUP in the period between the dates on which they took over the government, 1908, until the First World War, 1914, and in particular policies aimed at Eastern region are notable. The CUP's frame of mind and policies reflecting their ways of perceiving and interpreting the events will be evaluated with regards to its effects on Eastern Anatolia. What the policies espoused by the CUP after 1908 brought to the Kurds and to what extent they helped or hampered the awakening and development of early Kurdish nationalist feelings will be analyzed in this part.

A. The Era of the Committee of Union and Progress

1. The conditions of the Ottoman Empire when CUP took over the government

As we have covered in the previous chapter, the system and methods of ruling the country employed by Abdulhamid II led to discomfort in many parts of the Empire. There was no modicum of safety and peace in the country. Power was completely in the hands of the Sultan. So much so that, a heavy autocracy was reigning and in this autocratic order all of the decisions were taken by one person, Sultan Abdulhamid II. The destiny and peace of the whole country were at the mercy of the arbitrary rules of the Sultan. In this era, country and the tools of government started to corrupt; economy, army and administration were in a complete chaos. Besides, intrigues, graft, peculation, inefficiency and total absence of stability, that system also gave the opportunity to participate in political life to very few.²⁴⁶ That is, Sultan did not allow the existence of any dissenting person or any formation; set tortures, exiles and assassinations²⁴⁷ by way of espionage and spying, in brief, he did not leave anyone alive who could oppose him. Abdulhamid paid attention to keep the press and collective acts, which were the voices of the rising dissention under control. Meetings were met with suspicion and checked; newspapers and journals were censored and mostly closed down. For example, on May of 1318, (1900- 1901) 150 bags of books and papers were burned down at once in Çemberlitaş Turkish Bathhouse because of their inconvenient and dangerous contents.²⁴⁸ Through these precautions, the aim was to keep society under control, to prevent the introduction of foreign-originated ideas into the country and their effects on the masses, and in total, to keep the Empire alive; however, these efforts did not come to fruit. As Davison correctly points out, with using those kinds of stringent policies, the new ideas

²⁴⁶ Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.1.

²⁴⁷ Karabekir, *Ibid*, p.33.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.53.

could not be kept out of the Empire; once the door had been opened to Westernization it could not easily be shut, so the knowledge of the West and of modern thought increased at that period.²⁴⁹

2. Intellectuals from peripheries; the arrival of the Young Turks

Abdulhamid II, although he tried to preclude the oppositions via using force, he could not succeed. There emerged discontent with the Sultan's repressive rule among the educated Turks who angered at the absolutism and espionage of the regime, antagonized by its obscurantism, protesting Western diplomatic and military intervention in their country.²⁵⁰ Oppositions started to raise its voice by the educated Turks from two main sides; the first one being domestic opponents - military schools which are government institutions, and the second one from abroad, which consisted of the exile or fugitive Ottoman intellectuals. The foreign opposition included the liberal intellectuals who escaped the despotic rule of Abdulhamid and protested the corruption of the Empire in European countries. The second leg of the oppositions was a secret student community entitled the *Ottoman Union of Association* founded in 1889 by a group of students studying in the Royal Medical Academy in Istanbul. The community was founded by five medical students, named Hikmet Emin of Konya, Abdullah Cevdet of Arapkiri, Ishak Sukuti of Diyarbekir, Ibrahim Ethem Temo of Ohrid and Mehmet Reşit of Caucasia. These students were from five non-Turkish constituents of the Ottoman Empire. Each of these Kurdish, Albanian, Azerbaijani, and Caucasian students, the founders of the Ottoman Union of Association, came from the troubled regions of the Empire. M. Reşit of Caucasia, Huseyinzade of Baku, Ibrahim Temo of Ohrid, Abdullah Cevdet of Arapkiri and Ishak Sukuti of Diyarbekir realized that their country was under the threat of Bulgarian, Serbian, Russian, Armenian,

²⁴⁹ Davison, *Ibid*, p.96.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.99.

Georgian forces; anticipated the intervention of powerful states and held on to the idea of Ottoman union.²⁵¹

The opposition of Young Turks was the first organized and effective reaction to the long lasting police regime of Abdulhamid.²⁵² Until the 1900s CUP was a platform working as a thought association where the students read books and made discussions to find solutions for the survival of the country. In the memoirs of Ibrahim Temo, we can find the clues of the feelings leading to opposition movements among the students in the Royal Medical Academy during the Abdulhamid's reign. The Albanian-origin doctor Ibrahim Temo, one of the founders of CUP, which was in fact established as "the Committee of the Ottoman Union" in 1889, and then assumed the name of CUP, stated in his memoirs that they studied the secretly provided literary and political books, and thought over the condition of the country and current polity with the masters coming from the provinces, particularly with Ishak Sukuti of Diyarbekir, Ziya Edhem and Cevdet Osman.²⁵³ The Committee, embarking upon its journey as a student board, flourished constantly, expanded to civil and military schools, to military offices and independent businesses, and even to the bureaucracy and ulema with its increasing number of members. Those who wanted to spread their ideas more freely and who were repressed fled to Europe. These intellectuals who went to Geneva, Paris and Egypt supported the opposition movements by sending publications from abroad. By 1895, the Committee came into contact with these opponent Ottoman intellectuals (especially with Ahmed Rıza) and attempted to declare its ideas explicitly.

²⁵¹ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.34.

Here, a misunderstanding may raise in the point that as if the ethnic origins of the founders determine the revolutionary movement intensely but they actually did not. It would be wise to point out that at that time period (in 1889) Ottomanism ideal has still sustains its significance and in operation. Ottoman unity (İttihad-ı Anasır) was still valid and be the main factor in uniting the Ottoman subjects. Ethnic concerns did not matter much among the Muslim subjects so Ottomanism was defended by the intellectuals so equally by those students. They were primarily perceived themselves as Ottoman subjects.

²⁵² Sina Akşin, (ed.), *Ibid*, p.154.

²⁵³ Ibrahim Temo, *Ibrahim Temo'nun İttihad ve Terakki Anıları*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1987), p.8, 13.

In the CUP movement, which was formed despite these conditions and difficulties, diverse fractions were present, yet we can speak of two main factions. These are the proponents of decentralization/Liberals and the Unionists. The Congress of the Young Turks, held in Paris in 1902, caused an ideological faction between these two groups. After this year, the Unionist factor led the CUP movement. To be precise, the liberal intellectuals were generally from upper classes and non-Turkish circles and advocating minimum state intervention in all fields, including economy.²⁵⁴ While the liberals, in general, came from wealthy circles and included non-Muslims, the Unionists comprised the middle-class people working at various state offices. The Unionists, on the other hand, may not have wanted to destroy the whole social structure; they just wanted a centralized government controlled by an elected assembly.²⁵⁵

3. The Existence of the Kurds among the Young Turks

A number of Kurdish people had been active in the Young Turk movement from the beginning. The Kurds took part in the founding the cadres of CUP such as Abdullah Cevdet and Ishak Sukuti. Most of the Kurds engaged in politics in CUP were coming from aristocrat families residing in Istanbul. Being the children of chieftains, they were largely educated in Kurdish tribal schools and then military medical schools. These elite Kurds living in Istanbul cannot be said to be the representatives of Eastern Anatolian provinces and its people in real terms. Since they were living in big cities, they did not know in what condition the Eastern regions were. As a matter of fact, what they championed were pure intellectual desires. They supported decentralization in political sense, and in cultural sense, that each group under the roof of the Ottoman Empire should maintain its traditions and receive education accordingly. Moreover, they thought that the state should intervene in social and economic domains in minimum levels. Moreover,

²⁵⁴ Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.4.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.5.

those Kurdish notables, who were affected from the concept of nationality so long after, have considered themselves Turks- or at least “Ottomans” rather than Kurdish nationalists.²⁵⁶

The Kurdish intellectuals, who could not find what they expected in CUP policies, were disillusioned by centralizing and Turkification policies and started to break off with the party after 1908. The best alternative for them was the *Freedom and Alliance Party (Hürriyet ve İtilaf Partisi)*. They participated in this party with the other liberal intellectuals, and struggled for partial autonomy like education in mother tongue and opening up minority schools, together.

4. Characteristics of the Young Turks

In the 20th century, the actors of the revolutionary transformation came out of the government officers, from the resorts of civil and military elites watched out by the Sultan very carefully.²⁵⁷ This new social class emerged as a result of the reforms carried out during the last quarter of the 19th century consisted of officers and professional people. That emerging professional classes were composed of teachers, lawyers, journalists, officials and new military men who were trained in and working according to Western principles in all those professional fields.²⁵⁸ This new military and bureaucratic class was a new generation who thought, felt and acted like the masters of the government rather than just as officers, contrary to the usual passive image.²⁵⁹ They studied modern disciplines such as science, history, and language in military academies of the Empire which offered education in the Western style, and subjected to an education system completely different from long-lasting Islamic education system.

²⁵⁶ Ramsaur, *Ibid*, p.63.

²⁵⁷ Lewis, *Ibid*, p.192.

²⁵⁸ Feroz Ahmad, *Young Turks*, p.16-17, c.f., “Recep Boztemur, *State Making and Nation Building in Turkey: A Study of the Historical Relation Between the Capitalist Development and the Establishment of the Modern Nation State*, p.345.”

²⁵⁹ Bozarlan, *Ibid*, p.18.

S. Akşin, while analyzing the Unionists in his work, enumerates their characteristics as follows

Young Turks, above all, are graduates of Western-type schools, more or less modern and educated. The CUP consisted of bureaucratic officers and military officers. They were originally Turk and Turkist. The members were audacious, energetic and impatient mostly because of their youth. And lastly, the bourgeois mentality was predominant; they were cognizant of the fact that feudal order of society had to be ended, and the government had to head towards the aim of serving the public according to the impersonal and institutionalized principles, not to the will of the Sultan or some certain pashas.²⁶⁰

Besides, CUP served as an umbrella organization with a number of fractions and contradicting interests in its body until the Congress of the Young Turks in 1902.²⁶¹ The Young Turk *Weltanschauung*²⁶² reflected the union of various ideas on the necessity of abolishing the reign of Abdulhamid; this structure harboring various tendencies from Ulema to biological materialists; from positivists to minority separatists; from radical nationalists to humanists²⁶³ took a stand to join forces in order to overthrow Sultan Abdulhamid II. Of course, the motivation of all these sub-groups to espouse the objectives of CUP was different; some of them favored a renovation in the imperial system; on the other hand, some wanted a revolution and the others autonomy of their own nation. As one of the CUP members stated, CUP was not even a flag in the beginning; it was just an empty flagpole on which everyone wished to raise their own flags.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ Akşin, *Ibid*, p.184.

²⁶¹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.213.; Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.205.

²⁶² Hanioglu, *Ibid*, p.214.

²⁶³ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1981), p.74.

²⁶⁴ Muhittin Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006), p.69.

Furthermore, since the young members of CUP did not lead an elite life in society and have a high status, they knew that they would not be accepted by the people. So, being aware of their youth and immaturity with regards to administrative affairs because they belonged to a new middle class, the CUP did not prefer to rule the country fully although they had an upper hand in the parliament.²⁶⁵ Additionally, there was not a consensus as to how they would use the power they acquired. The minority of the members wanted to make the best of this power, but the majority was inclined not to take this power beyond political phase²⁶⁶; they did not have a plan or program as to what would be done after the overthrow of Abdulhamid II. Because of this fragmented structure, the policies implemented by CUP in office would be reflected on the state agenda as inexperience and duality.

5. Ideological Foundations of the Committee

The CUP consisted of an intellectual class who broke away from the moral values and contradicted with all of the value systems of the society. The CUP mentality, developed on the long-lasting tradition of Westernization, considered the prompting of modernization in every field in order to save the country from chaos. The intellectuals of the era thought the only solution was the unconditional Westernization process. Abdullah Cevdet, one of the founding fathers of the CUP stressed that “There is only one civilization, and that is European civilization. Therefore, we must borrow Western civilization with both its rose and its thorn.”²⁶⁷ The CUP’s patterns of thoughts and *Weltanschauung* were shaped by social Darwinism, biological materialism and positivism within the framework of westernization and modernization. Particularly, military schools sheltered the intellectuals educated by the help of the patterns of modern thought systems.

²⁶⁵ Masami Arai, *Jön Türk Dönemi Türk Milliyetçiliği*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), p.78.

²⁶⁶ Feroz Ahmad, *İttihadçılıktan Kemalizme*, (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1986), p.12.

²⁶⁷ A.Cevdet, “Şime-i Muhabbet”, *İchidat*, no.89 (January 29,1914), c.f., “M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, p.17.”

Positivism and materialism were highly regarded movements of thought around scientific and intellectual circles and they reached the peak of their popularity in Europe at that time. These movements were introduced to the Empire via books and teachers brought from Europe and proved to be influential in the schools of the Empire that started to offer a modern education. As we have mentioned above, the youngsters educated in modern curricula and styles in these schools formed the seeds of the new modern middle classes in Ottoman society.

Along with this, biological materialism had an effect on the Young Turks since it was anti-clerical.²⁶⁸ Some of the CUP members, starting from a materialist frame of thought were opposed to Islam, which was a determinant factor in the socio-political life of the Ottoman Empire, and it's regulating the governmental affairs. Intellectual standing and political programming were displaying secular features for CUP, leading the Ottoman Empire on the turning point of the century. For example, Abdullah Cevdet, a founding member of CUP, regarded Islam as a means to ensure the Ottoman unity, and thought that religion was not sufficient to explain compared to biological materialism.²⁶⁹ They decided to analyze the modern world through newly developed thought systems and modern arguments, instead of resorting to traditional patterns, which resulted in falling behind the West. According to them, it was necessary to do away with what belongs to past, because the dogmas such as religion cannot help us understand the world we live in anymore. In the newly constructed world system, the Islamic tradition lost its effect. What meant the CUP by new thought systems is the positivist perception of the world and science. All of the founding members of CUP were influenced greatly by biological sciences, particularly chemistry, anatomy and physiology. These intellectuals did not hesitate to look from the perspective of these sciences. Among the intellectuals, the tendency to explain the problems of the country and social events by using positive sciences spread. These military officers used the tools of modern sciences to explain the technical and natural phenomena, which

²⁶⁸ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak 'Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti' ve 'Jön Türklük'*, Cilt I, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), p.24.

²⁶⁹ Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, p.20.

they internalized while studying in the medical academy, with the aim of analyzing social problems. As Rıza Nur pointed out,

We are studying chemistry; we even see that heat, force and electricity are produced as a result of friction of two small objects. As these two small objects become one precious object, let us unite! Let us unite and there will emerge an enormous force. Then let us attack and destroy the fortress of autocracy...²⁷⁰

In another example we can easily see how the CUP activists attempted to explain social problems in the light of science and rationality;

A society is like a human body, because each is composed of varied and numerous living cells. Just as an individual requires therapy to recover from an illness, so a society needs to take cures for its special illnesses- the doctors are dubbed lawmakers, administrators, and politicians. If a society is without such doctors, or if in spite of their presence an oppressive group dares to violate the balance of order and aided by luck attains strong power... the remedy to save a nation from so dangerous an illness, which would surely reap grave effects, is the rebellion of the violated people against their oppressors. Rebellion is the only way in which a weak and sick nation may heal itself.²⁷¹

Briefly, regarding these historical data, we can assume that the Young Turks were alienated to the society they lived in. The founders of CUP were mostly unaware of social dynamics and transformations. They did not search for the roots of the corruption of the Imperial system in the analyses of class and social structure, but found the answers in concepts such as race, religion, constitution and blamed Abdulhamid's autocratic rule.²⁷² Therefore, the intellectuals who were

²⁷⁰ Rıza Nur, *Tıbbiyet Hayatından*, Matbaa-i Hayriye, İstanbul 1327, s.7, c.f., "M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, p.12."

²⁷¹ "Kıyam", *Osmanlı*, no.5, February 1, 1898, c.f., "M. Şükü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, p.208."

²⁷² Naci Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.122.

ideologically in conflict with the people could not understand their needs. That is right, the CUP took over the rule of the government in great hopes and aims, and also as a result of intense criticism; however, their policies were completely detached from the people, and this situation led to the adversity of ethnic groups, triggering the disintegration in the country. As Şerif Mardin asserts the CUP members were detached from the moral roots that they and the society had.²⁷³ The analyses of the activities of the CUP in the following chapters will shed light on our way.

6. The Objectives of the Young Turk Movement

Political ideas and the principles of the CUP were simple and naïve; they were seeking to exalt the revolutionary concepts such as “homeland”, “advocacy of constitution”, “government”, which arose from the European state of mind and which they admired as a result of the literary works they read and modern education system they received. Within the framework of the tenets and their motto “liberty, justice, equality, fraternity”, they aimed at ending the rule of Abdulhamid, re-instituting the last Ottoman constitution, reforming all the tools of the Empire and transforming it into a modern constitutional state. The concepts of unity and progress, which they accepted as the name of their community, reflected the aim of their movement. It was progressing by uniting all of the subjects under the Ottoman flag, in other words, realizing the “unity of all Ottoman subjects” and providing the necessities of a modern civilization within the Empire.

In the *Meşveret*, the official organ of the CUP, on December 3 1895, in the article of “*Our Program*” they set forth the background of the CUP’s political program as there was a crucial need of “Ottomanizing” the inhabitants of the Empire and the necessity of reforms for the entire Empire.²⁷⁴ In another source, it is stated that between 1876 and 1895 the greatest ideal of the Young Turks was protecting the

²⁷³ Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri*, p.59.

²⁷⁴ Ramsaur, *Ibid*, p.25.

state from a decline.²⁷⁵ So, we can say that Young Turks desired to establish freedom and equality with the intention of keeping the peoples together and preventing separations²⁷⁶, rather than dissolving the state for the sake of a romantic ideal of freedom and constitutionalism. Apart from being a modern symbol, some of the members (like Ahmed Rıza) considered the constitution a useful tool in fending off the intervention of the Great Powers in Ottoman politics.²⁷⁷ That is, they made use of the ideas of constitutionalism, parliamentary system, freedom and fraternity, inspired by Europe, for the sake of stopping the disintegration of the Empire and ending the tyranny of Abdulhamid.

Young Turks, who took action by thinking that the state should be saved from its troubled condition, yet that Abdulhamid II was quite unsuccessful, attempted a firm opposition movement. The members of CUP witnessing the actions of the Armenian separatists in Istanbul, at the center of the Empire, concluded that the end of the state was at hand. Relating the reasons of these separatist actions to the lack of healthy administration, calling the people to suppress the Armenians and foist the gates of the state on the tyrants²⁷⁸, they set to work. The rule of Abdulhamid increased oppression towards the CUP, but these Young Turks were willing to sacrifice everything so as to save their fatherland and nation on their difficult way.²⁷⁹ One point to be underlined is that the members of CUP were aware of their lacks regarding their own field of specialty and targeted at innovation at this field. Smart, young and educated military officers serving for an outdated army realized the insufficiency of the Empire's defending force in the face of an impending threat and chose to take action swiftly.²⁸⁰ Tidying up the Ottoman army and the navy, which Sultan Abdulhamid II kept under great control and left to decay on purpose in order to ensure the safety of his power was the

²⁷⁵ Mardin, *Ibid*, p.305.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.301.

²⁷⁷ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, p.31.

²⁷⁸ Akşin, *Ibid*, p.173.

²⁷⁹ Karabekir, *Ibid*, p.465.

²⁸⁰ Lewis, *Ibid*, p.203.

main goal of the military officers. The opponents in the army and navy were also eliminated one by one by the Sultan.

In foreign policy, the CUP opposed to the intervention of European powers into the Ottoman economy and finances, and the domination of non-Muslim minorities in the commercial activities. The Great Powers intervened in the Ottoman policies by using the ethnic groups for their own interests and via commercial capitulations. The Christians and Armenians in the Empire enabled these powers, as their so-called protectors, to interfere with the domestic policies and so the Empire was left under the domination of the foreign states. The CUP was aware that this foreign domination, which was a burden on the country, had to be ceased, and ready to act; however, on the other hand, they were ardently in need of the capital and know-how of the West. Right at this period, as Feroz Ahmad ascertained, there was a love-hate relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Europe.²⁸¹

During the time of 1908 elections, CUP shaped its political programs fundamentally and promulgated to public. According to the agenda of CUP in the 1908 elections, the first policies promised by the party to be implemented were as follows: establishing a strong government where the intellectual elite dominates; realizing anti-imperialism for the Empire; raising and encouraging the individual initiatives of the public in various ways; remembering the importance of education; opening up new schools, finding new teachers, preparing books for educating the people, sending skilled students to Europe; promoting the chambers of commerce, agriculture and cultivation; working in order to raising experts in every vocation and art.²⁸²

²⁸¹ Ahmad, *From Empire to Revolutionary Republic*, p.147.

²⁸² Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1987), p.106.

B. An Evaluation of the Events Taking Place During the Rule of CUP between 1908-1912

In 1908, CUP succeeded in carrying the constitution and parliament in effect after a long period of struggle. Especially, the spread of nationalist ideas in the Empire was the trigger of the gun pointed to Abdulhamid. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 broke out as a result of one these rising nationalist demands; the Macedonian unrest. Resneli Niyazi and his friends, military officers in Macedonia, settled in the mountains and started an insurgence with the concern of a possible intervention of the Great Powers in Macedonian affairs and in order to prevent the injustices in both the army and the state. Through this insurgence, brought about by the military wing of the opposing parties, the way to constitutional monarchy was opened. On 24 July 1908, the new era was declared by Abdulhamid II as “all the individuals of this nation are members of the Committee of Union and Progress, and I am their leaders. Let us work together and ameliorate our country.”²⁸³ So, the CUP started its second term along with these events, in which it turned into a political party. The CUP, thinking that the disintegration of the Empire would be prevented and ethnic groups would stay in the Empire with the declaration of constitutional monarchy, went into finding solutions for the problems of the country wholeheartedly.

1. From *Committee* to *Party*

Until the 1900s, the CUP was active in sharing books secretly, organizing conversations and as a thought association. In 1908, the agenda of these activities changed after the insurgence of Resneli Niyazi and his friends. After this date the Committee will take to the stage as a political party and accordingly organize and develop policies.

²⁸³ Karabekir, *Ibid*, p.413.

The most serious step taken on the way of being a party was to expand from the Balkan lands to Anatolia. CUP was basically organized in the Balkans; however, their first project to be implemented after taking over the rule was introducing the party to the people, informing the people and expanding by opening branches in various cities. The branches of CUP were being opened, associations were being established in diverse names and aims, conferences were being organized in almost all of the cities in the country, particularly large cities, and people were being informed as far as possible about the new system. As cited by Ş. Hanioglu, the CUP network chose to be organized as branches in a number of Ottoman cities. CUP formed in branches in Beirut, Damascus, Crete, Lesbos, Rhodes, Salonica, Izmir, Trabzon, Cyprus, Bosnia, Tripoli, and Syria.²⁸⁴ The organizations in the Eastern provinces were scarcer than those of other parts of Anatolia and the Rumelia. N. Kutlay points out that CUP attempted to open a branch only in Erzurum, Elazığ and Diyarbakir before the declaration of the constitutional monarchy.²⁸⁵ Briefly, we cannot see a serious groundwork organization of CUP in the East.

Besides, political organizations of nearly all of the Ottoman subjects (Greek, Armenian, Albanian and the like) in the Empire emerged in a short time. The first unions, woman organizations and culture centers of a plenty of Muslim communities, culture societies and other social activities became visible at this period.²⁸⁶ The press, on the other hand, was relieved. From the beginning, the most basic works of the Young Turks were in the sphere of the press. The chief principle of CUP was to blow the cobwebs away cast on the Empire by using the tools of the press, and bringing life to the country. All of the obstacles in front of the press, which suffered a lot from the intense censorship policies of the Abdulhamid rule, were removed with the Revolution. The free press started to be the free voice of various groups in the country. In the aftermath of constitutional monarchy, the tools of the press raised the number of its publications

²⁸⁴ *Arkivi Qendror Dheteror*, Tirana, 19/57/33/209, c.f., “M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, p.86.”

²⁸⁵ Naci Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.189.

²⁸⁶ Bozarlan, *Ibid*, p.24.

dramatically. By the 1890s, the most interesting and important products of Ottoman journalism, newspapers and journals ever-increasing in number were the works of the Young Turks in France, Switzerland, England, Egypt and other countries.²⁸⁷ It was determined that a total of 116 newspapers were published by the Young Turks in various countries; 95 of which were in Turkish, 12 of which in French, 8 of which in Arabic and 1 in Hebrew.²⁸⁸

On the other hand, the Second Constitutional Monarchy and the influence of Young Turks were welcomed by the people of the Empire. In July of 1908 all the communities in the Empire embraced the declaration of the 2nd Constitutional Monarchy, celebrated the end of oppression and the beginning of a new era. The prisons in Erzurum, Harput and Diyarbakir were immediately evacuated.²⁸⁹ The Kurds also participated into the atmosphere of the constitutional monarchy; Kurdish insurgents were content with the Kanun-i Esasi (the Constitution) and declared that they would quit their guns as long it is in force.²⁹⁰

Thus, 2nd Constitutional Monarchy, in a sense, helped people become conscious about politics and virtually turned into a movement of revitalizing them. Since the foundation of the Ottoman Empire to the date concerned, there had not been a social ground demanding from the rule to acquire their own rights protect them. With the new era, serious awakening movements have emerged among the people; by the help of the encouragement of the intellectuals, meetings and boycotts were organized, speeches were made, fervent articles in the newspapers were published, civil protests were done against Austria that annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, during the Balkan Wars and when Crete united with Greece.²⁹¹ It is not an exaggeration to claim that these were the first collective and society-based events, appropriated by the public itself. All the country took interest in politics

²⁸⁷ Lewis, *Ibid*, p.191-192.

²⁸⁸ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.243.

²⁸⁹ Naci Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.70.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.366.

²⁹¹ Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.236.

and started to participate in political processes relatively. Yet, in the classical Ottoman society, the people, apart from the elite, did not take part in political processes which were completely in the hands of the elite. As the name suggests, the “subject” (that is, those who are “subjected” to the rule) were charged with obeying the ruling class.

2. 31 March Incident; *waters uncleared, a new chaotic period in the Empire*

Besides all these revolutionary developments in the Empire, the opposing factors against the CUP came up, as well. Sultan Abdulhamid, the chief of the opposing forces, is said to have waited for an opportunity to take over the rule again and set his authority to bring all opposing parties together. Although it was not clear and no matter who started the counter-revolution, the efforts of Abdulhamid gave their fruits and on 31 March/13 April 1908 in Istanbul a revolt was started by the soldiers, who did not accept the activities and enforcements of CUP, with the aim of enthroning Abdulhamid instead of the heretic CUP.

When CUP regained the power after the 31 March counter-revolution, its returning back to the stage of politics happened magnificent after the Action Army, which came from Salonica under the command of Mahmut Şevket Paşa, suppressed the counter-revolution and brought order to the army. Abdulhamid II was overthrown and Mehmet Reşat V was enthroned. As the Palace of Yıldız was plundered, restoration works rapidly started so as to put the imperial capital in order.²⁹² In addition to these, the CUP assumed a tighter attitude towards ruling the country considering that as a result of the international and domestic developments, it was necessary to act firmly in order to maintain the power and stop disintegration. Internal and external blows coming in succession during the first years of the Constitutional Monarchy laid bare that all the efforts of constitutionalism, equality and freedom were in vain. The *Ahrar* Party (Liberal Party), the main opposing party of Prince Sabahattin, was closed. Everything

²⁹² Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.18.

related to freedom and pluralism was being terminated; even the press was kept silent.²⁹³ Non-Muslim, liberal and other opposing factions within CUP had to be dissolved now. Seeing that the Empire was on the point of disintegration, the thing that had to be done was to form oneself under one identity and fight the separatists.

Also, drastic international political changes and the malfunctions created by them in the same years were used by the opponents against the CUP. After the 1908 Revolution of the Young Turks, the Ottomans lost their last land in the Balkans. Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose rule was acquired in 1878 in this period; Crete proclaimed unification with Greece (namely *Enosis*); the Albanian revolt broke out in 1910-1911 and Italy occupied Tripoli in 1911.²⁹⁴ In 1912-1913, the Balkan Wars, one of the most tragic wars of the Ottoman history and the prolegomena to the World War I erupted; the union of Balkan countries, consisting of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro mounted an attack against the Ottoman armies in order to expel the Ottoman Turks from the Balkans. They caused the Ottoman Empire to be forced to withdraw its borders to Çatalca, yet only two weeks later, they had to cede back Edirne and Eastern Thrace in consequence of the Second Balkan Wars.²⁹⁵

3. Reflections of the 1908 Revolution on Eastern Anatolia

Looking at the conditions of the Kurds and Eastern Anatolia during the rule of CUP, whether the replacement of Abdulhamid rule by a new system was a favorable development on their sides should be discussed. In general, the relationship between the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia and CUP was not good. Kurdish tribes and the Kurdish notables who assumed the role of leadership in the region were discontent with the change in the rule owing to the fact that their

²⁹³ Bozarslan, *Ibid*, p.27.

²⁹⁴ Macfie, *Ibid*, p.9.

²⁹⁵ Birgen, *Ibid*, p.155.

privileges were taken away. It was out of question for them to have a positive view of the CUP since they were at a loss with respect to their short-term interests. On the other hand, the fall of Abdulhamid II, who ensured co-optation by means of presents, prizes and positions and made the Kurds his servants, may have been beneficial to the Kurds. The fall of Abdulhamid may have also contributed to freedom, free thought and an early form of nationalist awakening in Eastern Anatolian lands, and accordingly to politization; however, since there was not an intellectual pursuit in the Kurdish lands in question at that time and social system was carried out by the tribal leaders, his fall from power was received with grief and reaction.

All of these developments had a different meaning for the Kurds living in Istanbul. The members of the notable Kurdish families in the capital were in good relations with the CUP at the beginning. Although CUP could not find supporters among the Kurdish tribal leadership in the rural areas of Eastern Anatolia, the Kurdish intellectuals supported the Committee; those living in Istanbul even took part in the CUP. Two of the founding members, Ishak Sukuti and Abdullah Cevdet had Kurdish-origin and served actively on behalf of the CUP. Within the first months, religious and ethnic minorities were happy to get free of the oppression. However, their organization and attempts to publish in their native tongues attracted the antipathy of the Committee. Not so long after, the CUP mobilized against those alternative voices in order to cease their activities which were being perceived as disruptive for the Empire.

As a matter of fact, though there were members of the Committee of all sorts of ideologies from Islamism to Westernism, the CUP was generally inclined to advocate the ideal of Ottomanism until 1914:

This country belongs neither to the Turks, Bulgarians, nor the Arabs. It is the property of every individual who bears the name "Ottoman". Every citizen who accepts and confirms this truth, regardless of his race or religion, is a patriot. Those who is thinking the contrary and trying to

disintegrate the country into parts or races, even if he is a Turk, are our enemies.²⁹⁶

Departing from this sentence, it would be appropriate to think that CUP was only highlighting the Ottomanization objective of the Committee in that time. Turkification and stereotyping, which were not profitable at all during the prime of the Committee, was the last resort. However, there occurred a serious duality problem within the organization in the following years; while some of the members began to resort to Turkist discourse, some, such as Abdullah Cevdet, found it necessary for the national and ethnic groups to develop their own cultures and consider their own interests:

Look at me, I am a Kurd. I like the Kurds and am content with being a Kurd. However, now that I am equal to the citizens of Ottoman State in concern with law and duties, I am a Turk above all... Now I am a citizen of Turkey. I am not saying that let the Kurdish language be forgotten, my Kurdishness be forgotten. On the contrary, let the Kurds maintain their Kurdish, and the Armenians maintain their Armenian. Those who think this will bring harm to Turkey are either traitors or baldheaded.²⁹⁷

Both the heads of CUP in Europe and the young military officers in the Balkans considered it necessary to empower the central rule and decreasing the activities of ethnic minorities in local and remote regions in order to establish a government in the European sense.²⁹⁸ Therefore, the situation was challenging for the Kurds; even their partners started to act with a Turkish nationalist mind after a while.

As the policies of the CUP became apparent and were implemented with the passage of time, the CUP was to be protested strongly by the Kurdish elites and religious authorities. At the beginning, the members of the Committee were criticized harshly due to their unfavorable relationship with Islam; they were even

²⁹⁶ Erdal Aydođan, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Dođu Politikası (1908- 1918)*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2005), p.39.

²⁹⁷ Mekatib: 20 Mart... İçtihad, s.255, c.f., "M. Şürkü Haniöđlu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, p.217."

²⁹⁸ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.117.

deemed as foes by a certain circle. The secularist aspect of the movement disturbed the regional Kurdish leaders. Islam, being a kind of social cement for the Kurds, meant nothing for the CUP, and thus would not be a determinant factor in the state and policy making processes. Their brand new religion, positivism, was much more attractive for them instead of a dogmatic one. Moreover, they were angry and distressed because of losing their privileges during the rule of Abdulhamid. The Kurds did not support the Young Turk Revolution, because the CUP took over the rule by overthrowing Abdulhamid, who was a much more favorable partner for them. The first act of CUP after taking over the power was to terminate Hamidiye light cavalries. As a matter of fact, the troops were established again before long, nevertheless, since the policies of Abdulhamid II concerning Eastern regions were unacceptable for the CUP, the Committee wanted to destroy the order which was in favor of the notables of Kurdish society of the region. Furthermore, the Kurds lost their privileges in taxation, land issues and in a number of other spheres. Due to the abolishment of the tax of infidelity paid by the Armenians to the Kurds and their right to confiscate Armenian lands, the hatred of CUP and Armenians among the Kurds increased.²⁹⁹ That the constitutional monarchy brought about the principle of equality led the Kurdish landowners to take a stand against it. Especially, the Kurdish landowners who formed a habit of oppressing the Armenians could not stand being equal to the Armenians.³⁰⁰ Briefly, being a member of CUP contradicted their interests.

When the policies of CUP were applied to Eastern Anatolia, it also becomes clear that the CUP was dealing with the notables and the merchants, not with the local people and the crowds. Since Eastern Anatolia was located at a relatively isolated from the center, and family and tribal bonds were too strong, the CUP realizes that they could not penetrate into Eastern Anatolia. Also, pro-Western, libertarian and secularist ideas were not accepted in any era of the CUP government in Eastern Anatolia. The CUP, on realizing that strong tribal bonds and feudal system were unbreakable, sought to develop their relationships with the Kurdish local notables

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.159.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.186.

and the feudal landlords, instead of introducing itself to the people. It was profitable to get along well with the Kurdish local notables and the merchants, because of the feudal and tribal system. The CUP had a commercial company in almost all of the Anatolian cities and in most of the occasions local branches of the CUP were responsible for founding these companies.³⁰¹ For this reason, it can be said that it was the Kurdish bourgeoisie of commerce and city, as well as the Kurds living in the cities who felt intimacy to the 1908 Revolution.³⁰²

On the continuum of organization of the CUP in the cities and among the people, the CUP had almost no influence over the Eastern part of the Empire. In this region, religious leaders and tribal chiefs still had an unshakeable effect. We have data concerning the organization of CUP in Eastern cities only in Diyarbakır. In Diyarbakır, in 1894, when he was in exile, Abdullah Cevdet had formed the first CUP branch nucleus with some preparatory school teachers and officers who had helped him.³⁰³ Abdullah Cevdet was involved in fruitful activities in Diyarbakır, in the mean time, met Ziya Gökalp, who was to be the ideological leader of CUP in the following years, and ensured his involvement in the Committee.

Most important of all, as we will see in the next chapter in detail, the Turkist nature of CUP and its policies, later can be named as Turkification, caused destructive effects for the Kurds. These members of CUP, who were also the founding elites of the Turkish Republic, started to form the basis of the events which would bring about a Kurdish nationalism with their policies. So, the Kurdish intellectuals withdrew their support from CUP after a short time. Despite the cosmopolitan nature of CUP hosting all kinds of differences in its body, it was dominantly Turkish. Particularly, in the policies of the organization after 1908, the inclination towards Turkification and nationalism were apparent. As for the non-Turks, they struggled to push their ideas on the people by oppression and force

³⁰¹ Ahmad, *İttihadçılıktan Kemalizme*, p.71.

³⁰² Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.187.

³⁰³ “Ziya Gökalp’ın Muallimi Kim idi?” *İkdam*, October 27, 1924, c.f., “M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, p.120-121.”

since they did not know how to reach those people and could not speak their languages.³⁰⁴ Upon these events, Kurdish intellectuals joined the *Ahrar* Party (Liberal Party) known for its liberal tendencies. On the other hand, the Kurdish intellectuals considered that the Kurds were abused in the Armenian problem, which composed the first article of the Eastern policies of CUP, just as in the Abdulhamid rule, and contravened. The leading Kurdish intellectuals stated in various newspapers not to be at variance with the Armenians.

Although both Kurdish regional leaders and Kurdish intellectuals in the cities were disturbed by the existing CUP rule, they did not seek for separatist movements like the other nations in the Empire. Being void of a leading staff, who could be the bearer of nationalist feelings, the people's lack of education, reality of tribal order in the region and loyalty to the caliphate did not give to a strong Kurdish nationalist awakening. While the Turks and non-Turks united against the Sultan and the CUP government, the Kurds displayed a different attitude; they were more "Ottoman" than the other components of the Empire.³⁰⁵ Most of them defended Ottomanism until the disintegration of the Empire. After 1911, some Kurdish notables chose to take part in the party Freedom and Alliance (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf*). The followers of that party were in search of protecting their identities while not giving up on Ottomanism, and they were supporting Ottomanism in the face of CUP's Turkism.³⁰⁶

In short, the CUP, which could not seize the opportunity to be a vigorous and participant political organization at this critical turning point, failed in embracing the new social factors in face of the ever-growing oppositions by means of an ossified, main staff most of whose mother tongue is Turkish and who represents a narrow region.³⁰⁷ Because of their rigid and stereotyping policies, and their

³⁰⁴ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.125.

³⁰⁵ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.116.

³⁰⁶ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.236-238.

³⁰⁷ Hasan Kayalı, *Jön Türkler ve Araplar, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Osmanlılık, Erken Arap Milliyetçiliği ve İslamcılık (1908- 1918)*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı ,Yurt Yayınları, 1998), p.62.

inability to get in touch with various parts of the people, the CUP lost its ground, support and legitimacy in society in time. Uniting, yet centralizing policies of the CUP alienated the state and the nation, and different groups of Ottoman society to each other.

C. CUP's Second Term of Government; Full Control After 1913

After the 31 March Incident and 1912 *elections with the stick*, the CUP became the sole actor in politics and established the CUP government after the 1913 coup d'état. From that time the military, who lacked any ideology and had intervened just in the name of order, has become more influential than the intellectual capacity of the CUP.³⁰⁸ The leading staff of the CUP which turned into a political party after the 1908 Revolution was filled up by the military officers. The policies of this military organization which took power in an environment where the military wing was more influential than the intellectual wing³⁰⁹ turned out to be harsh and authoritative. Pan-Turanist soldiers and nationalist intellectuals started to take possession of the inner organization of the Committee before long.³¹⁰ The CUP leaders of military origins deemed suitable to act in line with their professions in order to save the country from the bottleneck it was in. They chose to solve the malfunctions in the country by resorting to military techniques, leaving aside all the necessary social policies. Concrete, military and technical solutions, instead of benefiting from the intellectual sources, surely did not result in positive outcomes for the Empire. People, who were fed up with the authoritative policies during the rule of Abdulhamid, faced CUP just to experience a harder version of these policies. With the popular triumvirate of Enver, Cemal

³⁰⁸ Ahmad, *From Empire to Republic*, p.21.

³⁰⁹ Suavi Aydın, "İki İttihat- Terakki: İki Ayrı Zihniyet, İki Ayrı Siyaset", *Modern Türkiye'de siyasi düşünce, Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, Cilt 1, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p.124.

³¹⁰ Bozarlan, *Ibid*, p.29.

and Talat Pashas, the trend was again toward authoritarianism rather than toward democracy.³¹¹

1. The Situation of the Eastern Anatolia during the CUP Government

a. Policies of the Great Powers of the Time

The region of Eastern Anatolia, particularly the Diyarbakır *vilayet*, has always been an arena of rivalry and interest due to its geopolitical importance. Its adjacency to Caucasia, Russia, Iran and the Arab lands earned the region a great geo-strategic position, thus is witnessed a lot of wars, migrations and turmoil. If we are to look at the backward Kurdish regions, they had always lived in the peripheries of Great Powers; as it was far from the central regions, living in a sort of isolation, and as a result of the Ottoman policy as such, they could maintain their independence. Throughout the history, highland Eastern Anatolia had been mostly a tampon region among the neighboring countries; therefore, the relationship of center-periphery worked as a pendulum: when the central government weakened, the Kurds stopped paying their taxes, did not give military support, and even reacted to the point of declaring independence if the circumstances were convenient.³¹²

The foreigners who knew the details of this reality very well seized the opportunity and sought to increase their interests in the region. At the onset of the 20th century, the great powers of the time developed strategies in Eastern Anatolia as they did on many other regions. Also, they went in for a race of populations in the region because of imperial desires and reasons such as the Armenian problem, discovery of oil in the Arab territories of the Empire, possible Russian danger and domination in the Straits, the desire of holding the World's trade routes at hand, and the search for the new markets. Especially, Britain and Russia worked on the

³¹¹ Davison, *Ibid*, p.110.

³¹² Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.203.

region through various policies in order to break each other's influence and acquire these areas. Some of them abused Kurdish tribes and some Armenians and some gave financial support with the aim of provoking the people in Eastern Anatolia to start a revolt. England, sent the missionaries to make the socio-economic and ethnic maps of these regions in which Ottoman Empire was politically and financially weak; and Russia resorted to training agents in the education centers they set up in Petersburg and Tbilisi in order to increase their influence on Kurdish tribes and used Kurdish landowners against the Ottomans via prizes such as military support.³¹³ The Ottoman authorities did not overlook the interest of the foreign countries in the Ottoman regions which are far from the center, and that these states supported the people for provocation. So, the Empire tried to make balancing attacks against these policies.

3. Policies of CUP after 1912 and their Reflections on the Eastern Anatolia

In 1913, right after they took over power and became the only party in the Empire, the CUP embarked upon a series of reform and innovation movements. Reforms were felt in every area of the state and every region of the Empire. In general, they tried to transform the system within the framework of Westernization by the year of 1912; what the West had in terms of political parties, parliamentary forms, role of press, hiring of European advisors for finance and irrigation, law, customs administration, military and naval training were adapted to the Empire.³¹⁴ Of course, as this adaptation was not realized as a result of the natural social processes, some troubles arose. Policies were being implemented for the people, yet despite the people. It was not expected of the people to join the reforms because they were not acquainted with the ideology and principles of the elites. During the last years of their government, on realizing that the people were isolated, the CUP felt the need of returning to the people and

³¹³ Aydođan, *Ibid*, p.31, 27, 165.

³¹⁴ Davison, *Ibid*, p.114.

awakening the national consciousness.³¹⁵ Instead of relying upon the governmental power that they monopolized, making the people adopt their policies was definitely a more rational alternative; CUP dealt with this issue as well.

The policies of Abdulhamid and of the CUP concerning the Eastern region and the Kurds were mostly in accord. As both political attitudes were directed to the same objective, the implementations were common, too. However, their methods differed. Abdulhamid tried to discipline the Kurds with the help of money and status just to use them against the Russian and the Armenian threats. The CUP, on the other hand, had promised a multicolored and multi-voiced rule at the beginning, yet as the turmoil began to arise in the country they tried to keep the Kurds under control by using harsh administrative methods.³¹⁶

a. Political Reforms

The CUP planned to attain political sovereignty by administrative reforms in the Empire. Important political changes were seen in this period; right after the Revolution of 1908, the CUP tried to settle parliamentary by a range of reforms such as assuring the freedom of speech, moderation of censor laws, and the right of founding associations. These reforms were well-received by the people, the number of associations, communities, newspapers and journals increased instantly. But, this festive air in social sphere was replaced by conservative, harsh and inhibitive policies after the counter-revolution in 1909. Besides, political development reached its peak with secularization attempts; science and modern education were promoted instead of religion, the CUP undermined the position of the ulema and Seyhulislam removed from the cabinet in 1916.³¹⁷ The CUP,

³¹⁵ Ahmad, *İttihadçılıktan Kemalizme*, p.53.

³¹⁶ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.202.

³¹⁷ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, (London; New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2001), p.125.

moreover, followed an assiduous policy in order to balance the political effects of Britain, France and Germany on the country.³¹⁸

i. Centralization

At the same time, the chief article of the CUP reformations was centralizing administrative protection. They aimed to carry out structural changes in the countryside in order to keep the Empire unified and far from foreign domination. The Rumelia lands lost as a result of Tripoli and Balkan Wars and non-Muslim elements laid bare the fact that the only way to save the Empire was ensuring centralization and uniting the Muslims under the roof of one identity. They actually recognized what remained of the Empire could only be maintained by a policy of stringent reform and decentralization.³¹⁹

The CUP had sufficient argument to justify their policies. The most urgent problem for the Empire at that time was protecting the unity of borders. As a matter of fact, in September 1908, the Empire of Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria declared independence. The blame for the Empire's land losses in the Western borders in the aftermath of the Revolution was put on Abdulhamid and on his past policies; the reaction against the losses were successfully turned into support.³²⁰ CUP knew how to benefit from this support; the Committee could go into the rural cities and towns of the East, and organize. Administrative centralization was assured by a new Provincial Administration Law in 1913. That law strengthened the governors and extended bureaucratic reforms.³²¹

³¹⁸ Shaw, *Ibid*, p.309.

³¹⁹ Ahmad, *From Empire to Republic*, p.129.

³²⁰ Kayalı, *Ibid*, p.61.

³²¹ Shaw, *Ibid*, p.306.

A. Administrative Centralization Measures in Eastern Anatolia

When the need of revision in the country arose, the first problematic region to be intervened in immediately was Eastern Anatolia. The position of Eastern Anatolia, as it was in the era of Abdulhamid, attracted the attention of CUP for a few reasons. Its idiosyncratic structure, which composed of sheikhdom, landlords, notables, tribal and religious orders and territorial unrest, was challenging to establish central authority in this fragmented structure; the new policies were called for in that time period. First and foremost, CUP wanted to make use of the Kurds against the reformation and independence demands of the Armenians. According to that aim, the Kurdish community should mobilize in order to protect Eastern Anatolia on behalf of the government and to provide security, all that was needed to be done, would be done immediately. Another reason for the administrative centralization measures implemented in this region was that small and fractured systems of tribes meant a number of focuses of opposition against the state, that is, became a threat.³²² In addition, Eastern Anatolia, mostly a Sunni Muslim region, was protecting the Eastern borders of the Empire against external sources of threat. Shortly, so as to make central administration dominant over Eastern Anatolia, it was necessary to act because of a plenty of reasons. The CUP wanted to take this region under a strict control by means of, if necessary, exiles or forcing to migration with the aims of having the tribes settle down, using the Kurds against the Armenians and protecting the Eastern borders of the Empire. Because of this, provincial code of law (*Vilayet Nizamnamesi*) was enacted and the ground to organize the settlement of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes was prepared.³²³

³²² Hamit Bozarlan, "Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898- 2000)", *Modern Türkiye 'de Siyasi Düşünce, Milliyetçilik*, Cilt 4. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p.844-845.

³²³ Aydoğan, *Ibid*, p.205.

The CUP decided that a sociological ground was needed for the works to be done in Eastern Anatolia, which is the Eastern Anatolian leg of centralization attempts. It was apparent that the ruling elites did not know the circumstances in the countryside and thus having difficulty in producing policies. Determining the socio-cultural and ethnic patterns for the following reform activities and accordingly developing policies were necessary, because the non-Turkish Muslims had to be made loyal citizens. In this term, according to Erdal Aydođan, the observers were sent to Anatolia in order to establish the social bases and open the “closed box”³²⁴ of Anatolia for the CUP governance. By 1913, the officers were to be sent to Anatolia to write reports on the ethnic structure of the Eastern provinces. These reports would form a base for the migration and settlement policies to be implemented in Anatolia.³²⁵ Furthermore, similar works made in different countries in socio-ethnic spheres were translated into Turkish from second-hand sources.³²⁶ In addition, some of the intellectuals who knew much about the dynamics of Anatolia, such as Ziya Gökalp (who himself had Kurdish origin) started to express in journals that Ottomanism had its day, decentralization was incontestably a betrayal; instead of these alternatives, the Empire had to be centralized administratively and Turkicized at an ideal stage.³²⁷ They thought that Turkism could save the Ottoman Empire, rather than Pan-Islamism or Ottomanism.

Also, in the context of administrative centralization policies, some files which included maps showing civil organization in the villages including the number of the people in towns according to nations were prepared.³²⁸ A unit was also set up to follow up the centralization policies and implementations: The Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants (*Aşair ve Muhacirîn Müdüriyet-i*

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p.44-45.

³²⁵ Fuat Dündar, “Milli Ezber: Saf Türk- Karışık Öteki”, *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Milliyetçilik*, Cilt 4, p.894.

³²⁶ Aydođan, *Ibid*, p.46.

³²⁷ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.94.

³²⁸ Aydođan, *Ibid*. p.45.

Umumiyesi). This directorate was to serve as a center for data collection about ethnic issues and be responsible for the settlement of tribes and immigrants.³²⁹ By the year 1913, Habil Adem (Naci İsmail Pelister) was brought to the region to study the Kurds and the Turks. Adem examined mostly the lifestyles of the Turkomans.³³⁰ Along with it, a number of measures were taken for the cities in Eastern Anatolia; some attempts were made regarding the Armenian problem. The CUP established research committees to deal with the Armenian issues and complaints. As is known, the most important cause of the turmoil in Eastern Anatolia was the disagreements between the Kurds and the Armenians. Land issues were at the center of these disagreements. The Grand Vizier Said Pasha allocated 100.000 liras so as to guarantee the return of the Armenians whose properties were confiscated and dispel of the Kurdish occupiers in February 1912; besides, the representation of the Armenians was to continue in the government.³³¹ In 1913, a delegation charged by the government was to go to East Anatolia to examine the discontent. The delegation assumed the role of a mediator in the disagreements between the Kurds and the Armenians and was spared 120.000 gold coins; the new methods were to be followed after the evaluation of the results accordingly.³³² The Hamidiye regiments, which received complaints from the Armenians, were reformed in this period. Its name was changed into “*Tribal Regiments*” in 1911 and into “*Reserve Cavalry Regiments*” (*İhtiyat Süvari Alayları*) in 1913.³³³

When the Armenians of Eastern Anatolia were deported within the conditions of World War I, some of the Kurdish tribes were also subjected to obligatory settlement. These Kurdish refugees were sent to cities such as Urfa, Maraş, Ayıntab, Niğde, Kayseri, Ergani, Behramaz, Maden, Amasya, Malatya, Darende,

³²⁹ Malmîsanij, *Kürt Talebe-Hêvî Cemiyeti*, (İstanbul: Avesta, 2002), p.20.; Aydoğan, *Ibid*, p.46.

³³⁰ Dündar, *Ibid*, p.894.

³³¹ Macfie, *Ibid*, p.68-69.

³³² Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.158.

³³³ Aydoğan, *Ibid*, p.142-143.

Tokat, Kütahya, Eskişehir, Ankara, Konya, Kastamonu, Yozgat, Canik.³³⁴ Furthermore, in the thin line on which centralization passed into Turkification, the works to prove that those areas were Turkish lands in the face of separatist movements, like those of the Armenians in the East, gained impetus.³³⁵ As a result of the rigid policies, such as compulsory Turkish education in the schools, using the Arabic alphabet, contents of the lessons and military law, the relationship between the CUP and its subjects was getting worse, accompanied by increased discontent in Eastern Anatolia.³³⁶

The CUP's ideal of administrative centralization reflects on Eastern Anatolia as a rigid centralist perception and the obligation of the settlement of the tribes. The CUP increased its oppression on Eastern Anatolia and the tribes with a rigid centralist understanding rising after 1912. When the CUP, completely forgetting about its promises concerning autocracy, started to increase taxes, make military service compulsory, and stripped the landlords off their privileges after the Revolution, revolts broke out.³³⁷ There had always been an opposition between CUP and Kurdish periphery; even in 1906-1907 revolts erupted against the taxes collected in Anatolia and mismanagement of local officers.³³⁸ Revolts such as Sheikh Said Berzenci (1908), Bitlis, Barzan and Soran (1914), Millili İbrahim Pasha (1909) and Mullah Selim indicated that the relations between the CUP and the Kurds was pretty bad. Again at this time, Abdurrahman Bedirhan targeted at an autonomous Kurdish rule under the auspices of Russia.³³⁹ According to Kurdish viewpoint the CUP has caused traumatic experiences in the Kurdish regions particularly with centralization policies and because of these kinds of forcible events, the Kurdish people named the Young Turks as "*Zalimên Con*

³³⁴ Aydoğan, *Ibid*, p.208.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, p.54.

³³⁶ Macfie, *Ibid*, p.68.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, p.71.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, p.32.

³³⁹ Aydoğan, p.214-224.

Tirkan”, the cruel Young Turks.³⁴⁰ Implacable and harsh attitudes of the CUP gave way to a phrase among the Kurds: “*Eskerê reş hat*”, the Black Soldiers came- because the soldiers of the Ottoman Empire wore black uniforms until 1908.³⁴¹

Moreover, the economic nationalization by the CUP together with political reforms that gained pace especially after the Balkan Wars fairly reduced the loyalty of the Kurds to the state.³⁴² Actually, the CUP did make some renunciations to surmount the discontent of the Kurds; they wanted to constrain their opposition by keeping its silence against Kurds’ confiscation of the Armenian lands.³⁴³ A series of reforms were made with regard to administration; the CUP took over the power in central and rural administrations since it was decided that the loosened administrative structure needed a reform to be placed in order. Reforms such as building roads and bridges, warning the local administrators³⁴⁴ to enrich the commercial life were given impetus. Along with the centralization and Turkification attempts, CUP dealt with removing the Kurdish names and putting names implying Ottomanism and Turkism to the villages and towns; some of the town names in Erzurum, Bitlis and Diyarbakır were changed accordingly.³⁴⁵ In the following part, we will meet with that issue again in the context of how the Kurdish elites reacted against changing names of the Kurdish villages by the CUP administration in the Kurdish journals. Also, decisions were taken concerning the necessity of organizing the local people. CUP showed effort to organize in the region. In Erzurum, benefit society was founded among the craftsman and a charity fund among the villagers for the purpose of

³⁴⁰ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.164.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.170.

³⁴² Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.219.

³⁴³ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.233.

³⁴⁴ Aydoğan, *Ibid*, p.58.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.67-69.

increasing the loyalty of local people to government.³⁴⁶ In addition, CUP attempted infrastructure services in some fields concerning local administrations; building roads and railroads in Eastern Anatolia during this period was given much significance. The project of Anatolian Railroads started for the consignment of the soldiers during war times and removing the isolation of the region from the center. The franchise of this project was granted to the Germans.³⁴⁷ Developing communication facilities (such as telephone lines), setting up trolley line in Diyarbakır and bringing electricity to the region were some of the other activities.³⁴⁸ Although the CUP endeavored to improve life conditions in Eastern Anatolia, the project did not succeed actually due mainly to the “feudal” interests in the region. It was since those efforts were perceived as “in appearance” to the Kurdish public and particularly to the Kurdish regional notables. The reforms were going to diminish the influence and interests of the Kurdish notables, so, they prevented the CUP rule from penetrating to the region pervasively.

In short, the reaction against these merciless policies of settlement/centralization, which were even treated in dirges³⁴⁹ reflecting the intensity of feelings of the people, are important and have certainly quite an effect on the development of Kurdish identity. Obviously, the CUP deprived those, whom it allegedly Turkified by making settle down systematically, of their social, political and cultural rights.³⁵⁰ This deprivation signaled the fact that the Kurds, who were one of the Muslim, thus loyal subjects of the Empire showing no indication of separation until the First World War, had to save themselves.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.58.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.107.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.107.

³⁴⁹ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.162.

³⁵⁰ Kayalı, *Ibid*, p.92.

ii. Reforms in the field of commerce and economy

Tripoli and Balkan Wars witnessed and caused a collapse in economy as well as in political sphere. After these wars made between 1911 and 1913, CUP sadly realized that the activities of the Greek and Armenian bourgeoisie, which was the traditional executives of the Ottoman economy, had to be replaced immediately by Turkish capital and the domination of foreign countries had to be promptly prevented. The aim of the CUP was to realize economic independence, namely national economy, and fostering and developing economic activities, which were the most critical factors of the revolution. Creating a national bourgeoisie that would realize national economy bore utmost importance. Thus, a national, that is a Turkish, bourgeoisie could take over economic activities from the Greeks and the Armenians, who united with modern sectors and international trade nets³⁵¹, with the help of economic revolution done in Europe. Apparently the Empire had a class of tradesman in the past, which carried out the economic functions of bourgeoisie yet did not act with a political purpose or oppressed the government for their own interests.³⁵² However, it was the era of parliamentarism; it was high time for the CUP to create an Empire free of the oppression of Europe, completely national capital, and a true bourgeoisie who would appropriate and work for the revolutions and reforms. Turkification and nationalization of the economy was the chief goal. In the circumstances of the period, it was appropriate for the CUP to act with statist methods in order to carry out these policies in economic sphere; progress in the economy, protecting the industry and trade for the benefit of the Muslims, legitimating state intervention in the economy and making the arrangements by the hand of the state. In order to stimulate economic enterprise and reinforce the scope of national industrial development, the CUP issued a law for the Encouragement of Industry in 1909 and 1914 with a revised version.³⁵³ As a matter of fact, with the removal of the capitulations unilaterally in 1914, the CUP started to determine its policies relatively far from the intervention of the

³⁵¹ Ahmad, *İttihadçılıktan Kemalizme*, p.38.

³⁵² Ahmad, *From Empire to Republic*, p.23.

³⁵³ Boztemur, *Ibid*, p.360.

foreigners. CUP put some financial changes on its agenda such as forming the yearly balanced budgets and public finance, distributing land to the villagers, giving credit at low interest, changing the current ownership system and replacing it by cadastral system, revision of taxation system.³⁵⁴

iii. Economic Reforms in Eastern Anatolia

Eastern Anatolia was the most underdeveloped part of the Ottoman Empire in terms of economic activities and of development. Economic activities in the primordial “feudal” system and the regions’ being far away from the center and developments had a share in this fact. The CUP paid attention to the development of trade and industry in Eastern Anatolia, so that the Kurds could settle down and their life standards would be enhanced. With the purpose of advancing the economy, the foundation of “Community of Trade and Industry” and “The Society for Education” in Van was encouraged.³⁵⁵ Although we do not have enough resources on how and in what level the CUP have encouraged economic activities in Eastern Anatolian region, a successful Middle East expert, McDowall asserts that, in spite of such local difficulties, the Unionists substantially improved the economy and general level of order in the region after 1908 and the Armenian and Kurdish peasantry were more secure and prosperous than they had been in living memory.³⁵⁶

iv. Agrarian Reforms

The first reform area for CUP was the activities of the Empire in trade and industry. Yet, notable reforms were attempted in agriculture, as well. Policies encouraging modern techniques and the use of machines were carried out. The

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.346.; Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.5.

³⁵⁵ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.153.

³⁵⁶ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, (London; New York, I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2004), p.97.

government attempted to protect the agricultural goods of the Ottomans by imposing quotas, and raised the government subsidy. However, as the capitulations were still valid at that time these implementations were not much effective. Besides, in the first place, CUP increased mechanization all over the country, opened land colleges and prepared the irrigation project of Konya valley under Deutschebank.³⁵⁷

After the revolution, both large-scaled landowners and small-scaled peasant landowners were attentive to the land policies in the countryside. The CUP government developed a program after the 1908 CUP Congress, in order to further elaborate the laws concerning relations between the workers and the employers, to work out a land distribution and ownership program to peasants and a credit system for the peasantry.³⁵⁸ The villagers and the farmers did not make use of these developments effectively, the policies of CUP after the revolution disappointed them, too. The position and interests of the large-scaled landowners were not shaken at all, though. Although Feroz Ahmad claimed that Turkish agriculture had been commercialized and integrated into the world market to some extent³⁵⁹, that argument was not viable for Eastern Anatolia. As for the repercussions of agrarian reforms in Eastern Anatolia, the people in the regions of Bitlis, Beyazıd, Diyarbakır and Mosul manifested their discontent against the oppression perpetrated on the poor people, living on animal husbandry, who could not pay the raised taxes in Eastern Anatolia particularly after the Balkan Wars.³⁶⁰ CUP took some precautions to do away with the discontent of the Kurds. For instance, In 1913, CUP decided to decrease the cattle taxes and completely abolish the agrarian taxes.³⁶¹ The only aim that lies under these precautions was indeed to please the local notables carrying medium scaled and large-scaled businesses. The government came up with policies paying regard to the interests

³⁵⁷ Ahmad, *İttihadçılıktan Kemalizme*, p.50.

³⁵⁸ Boztemur, *Ibid*, p.348.

³⁵⁹ Ahmad, *From Empire to Republic*, p.56.

³⁶⁰ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.161.

³⁶¹ Shaw, *Ibid*, p.300.

of these notables. Consequently, we may safely assert that those improved communication, irrigation and mechanization facilities brought profitability to the Eastern Anatolian lands and that situation encouraged local notables to expropriate commons unable to enforce their rights and claims.³⁶²

v. Social Policies

The CUP was endeavoring to bolster the reforms by social projects as well. Providing an education for the “Turkish” people in accord with the CUP mentality was a lofty aim for CUP. They rapidly embarked upon opening new schools and applying modern, secular methods of education, reinforcing the system of education. The curriculum of the higher *medreses* was modernized, even the study of European languages being made compulsory in those institutions.³⁶³ Besides, they launched at a good many of new activities such as freedom of travel, building of roads and railroads, expanding of communication tools, construction of power plants, usage of trams in large cities.³⁶⁴ Among the aims of CUP enunciated at the first Congress in 1908 were opening of private as well as night schools, finding proficient teachers particularly for industry schools and encouraging the chambers of trade, agriculture and industry, publishing practical books and pocket books, and sending students to Europe.³⁶⁵ Moreover, during this period, avant-garde ideas in every field, such as feminism and turban, found place in the discussions under the leadership of CUP intellectuals.³⁶⁶ Shortly, as we have mentioned before, social policies of CUP, and also its mentality, politicized the people than ever before, raised their consciousness and opened the gates of a new world of meanings.

³⁶² Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.85.

³⁶³ Zurcher, *Ibid*, p.126.

³⁶⁴ Ahmad, *Ibid*, p.76-77.; Ahmad, *İttihadçılıktan Kemalizme*, p.51.

³⁶⁵ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, 1988, p.65., c.f., “Hasan Kayalı, Jön Türkler ve Araplar, p.86.”

³⁶⁶ Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, p.308-309.

A. Educational reforms in Eastern Anatolia

CUP placed education at the center of the revolution as is the case with the other revolutions. Schools were important for the indoctrination of Turkification policies. Education was a helping force in raising the consciousness of Ottomanism, making the Ottoman people open to the modern ideas and enlightening them, and creating a complete order in the country. One of the reasons of starting educational projects in this region was the continuing missionary activities. In Eastern Anatolia, there had been a lot of minority and foreign missionary schools for a long time. Accordingly, one of the performances of CUP in the area of education was to establish a *medrese* for the Kurds in Erzurum, in the eve of the Balkan Wars. This medrese, planned to save the Kurds from the jahiliyya (ignorance) and nomadic way of life, would serve as both primary and junior-high school, and also accept boarding students.³⁶⁷ The CUP started the construction of “Medrese of Union and Progress” in Van at the time.³⁶⁸ In addition to these, Tahsin Bey, the governor of Van, presented an offer to the government to open up a few schools for the Kurds to benefit from the boon of education; he also demanded the admission of about 20 children of the loyal and honest families from Van to Mekteb-i Sultaniye at the beginning of the term.³⁶⁹

On the other hand, the Kurdish writer Naci Kutlay makes a judgment contrary to these developments in educational level. Also, many other Kurdish resources made similar comments accordingly. For Kutlay, the CUP did not want any kind of reform or innovation, including new schools, in Eastern Anatolia for fear of nationalist demands.³⁷⁰ Therefore, CUP nearly did not make any conscious attempt in the sphere of education in Eastern Anatolia. According to Kutlay,

³⁶⁷ Aydođan, *Ibid*, p.210.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.137.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.137.

³⁷⁰ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.209.

whatever made in the area of education in the region and Istanbul during the rule of CUP, it was thanks to the efforts of the Kurds themselves. Kurdish books, newspapers and opening up schools whose language of instruction is Kurdish were among the activities achieved by the notable Kurdish families. For example, “*Gihandin*” Education Community was founded in Eastern Anatolia on the side of Iran in 1913, and a Kurdish school was opened under the leadership of Abdurrezak Bedirhan Bey in Hoy.³⁷¹

These educational activities of the CUP directed at the Eastern provinces, did not leave a marked effect on the Kurdish society which had a fragmented tribal structure under the effect of the “feudal” landlords. Yet social activities (publishing newspapers, student associations, charity funds and culture associations) of the Kurds burgeoning in this period have importance. But those activities have not promoted by the CUP at all; instead of encouraging those, they closed them down completely. Kurds began to participate in the activities manifesting their consciousness of Kurdishness for the first time in the CUP rule, and this development was to result in the awakening of nationalist sentiments in cultural sense. This issue will be treated in detail in the next chapter.

b. Ideological Bounce: *Pan-Turkism*

One of the chief points to be mentioned while studying a social development regarding the CUP administration is the ideology of Turkish nationalism, formulated by the Committee. Elaborating on the Pan-Turkism blossoming in this period bears vital importance for the social analyses of the era. Turkism ideology of CUP, which was adopted to save, but facilitated the collapse of the multi-ethnic Empire, should be analyzed carefully in order to understand the events that took place in Eastern Anatolia and the interaction of Kurdish people and government at the time.

³⁷¹ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.102.

The Ottoman Empire, from the end of the 19th century until the beginning to the 20th century, clung to the policies of Ottomanism and Islamism. After the Balkan Wars and completely getting the lands of Rumelia out of hand, it became clear that Ottomanism was not a cure-all and replaced by Turkism as the new unifying policy of the Empire. Turkish nationalism, the last attempt of the Empire to provide unity, gained acceleration only after the period when other internal nationalist demands were raised, during the 1880s. Turkism firstly showed itself as a cultural movement. The first Turkist movements were developed by the inspiration of the studies of Turkish linguistics and Turcology conducted in Europe. Şerif Mardin puts forward that we can see the impending steps of this linguistic Turkism in the newspapers of the time. According to Mardin, publication of the *İkdam* newspaper under the title of “Turkish newspaper” in 1893 signaled that Turkism was to develop as a cultural movement.³⁷² Moreover, during that period, Turkism did not mean forming a disparate ethnic society. This movement was suggested by the Muslim-Turks who sensed the decentralization process to be realized by the other groups in the Empire, and was influenced by the nationalist demands.

Authoritarian attempts of CUP after 1908 did not conduce to auspicious outcomes. Enthusiasm in the Empire gave way to sorrow in the Empire before so long. The reason was that CUP accepted the necessity of uniting all the non-Turk, yet Muslim groups under one supra-identity in order to protect the borders of the Empire and form nation-states thereafter. CUP, in pursuit of rendering the doctrine of Turkish nationalism dominant in the country, succeeded in terminating the weak Ottoman pluralism via these policies³⁷³ and turned gradually into the unique dominating force in the Empire.

In the meantime, a serious chaos was unfolded on administrative level. All the opposing parties criticizing the CUP were repressed and kept silent.

³⁷² Mardin, *Ibid*, p.62.

³⁷³ Bozarlan, *Ibid*, p.25.

Administration passed to an illegal troika consisting of Enver, Talat and Cemal.³⁷⁴ They put their aim of nationalization and Turkification of the Empire into effect after taking over the power in 1913. That radical group of Young Turk leaders forbid and closed all Ottoman political associations, publications and non-Turkish schools³⁷⁵ in order to eliminate non-Turk elements within the Empire.

The CUP, attempted to identify the existence of the state on a “given” Turkish subject and establish the state of a “Turkish” subject united around the concept of common culture³⁷⁶ turned Turkism into such a political movement. In line with the idea that the valid ideological basis in the Empire should be Turkism, they swiftly embarked upon a Turkification process in cultural and economic spheres. Departing from the claim that a consciousness of Turkishness, along with Turkification of Anatolia, was required, a lot of nationalist organizations showed up to investigate the historical and cultural issues of Turkish nationalism; some of them being Community of Turkish Homeland (*Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti*, 1911), Turkish Power (*Türk Gücü*, a military organization founded in 1913), and Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocakları*, 1912).³⁷⁷ Those associations founded clubs all over the empire. Via the journals, discussions, meetings and other social activities they aimed to spread Turkish nationalist ideology. The nationalists like Akçuraoğlu Yusuf and Ağaoğlu Ahmet published nationalist messages through these associations’ periodicals.³⁷⁸ Particularly after the Revolution of 1908, the offer of spreading Turkish among all the peoples of the Empire and imposing it upon those people was put forth as the party policy of CUP and also by the organizations aforementioned. The CUP, ultimately realizing that the issue of language was a unifying factor to be built upon the ideal of nationalism, thought about the effects of making Turkish compulsory among Anatolian people; in

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.28.

³⁷⁵ Denise Natali, *Ibid*, p.40.

³⁷⁶ Aydın, *Ibid*. p.127-128.

³⁷⁷ Bozarslan, *Ibid*, p.29.

³⁷⁸ Shaw, *Ibid*, p.289.

1911, Turkish was accepted as the language of instruction in all of the schools within the body of the Empire.³⁷⁹

When we talk about CUP, we come across a number of studies contributing to Turkism ideology, and even preparing the intellectual ground. Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura, who were one of the founding fathers of CUP's Turkism ideology, published the ideas of Turkism, Turkish nationalism and Turanism especially in their periodicals. As a matter of fact, Ziya Gökalp, as a Kurdish-origin Turkish nationalist, prioritized Ottomanism until 1909 and believed in its unifying power. He advocated the idea that Turks and other Muslim groups (such as the Kurds) should live together under the roof of the Ottoman Empire. In this period, a type of Turkism which was not based on race was mentioned. He was saying, "Those who dedicated himself to the enhancement of Turkish ideals, those who say 'I am a Turk' are Turks."³⁸⁰ Ottomanism discourses of the CUP intellectuals were somewhat ignored as a result of the following developments, and instead, a more active understanding of Turkism and Pan-Turanism dominated. For example, as can be seen in the later works of Ziya Gökalp, nationalist policy to be followed in the Empire should realize the objectives of "raising the Turkish nation"³⁸¹ and "developing a modern Islamic Turkishness."³⁸²

In the mean time, deep faction between the Muslim peoples in the Empire and CUP, due to the efforts of Turkification and secularization, influenced not only the awakening of the Kurds, as I shall be dealing with, and also rise of the identity demands of other Muslim peoples deeply. After this forcible Turkism maneuver, all the Muslim groups went into action and tried to save themselves.

³⁷⁹ Fatma Müge Göçek, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Oluşumu: Sosyolojik bir Yaklaşım", *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Milliyetçilik*, p.73.

³⁸⁰ Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 1961), p.17.

³⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.32.

³⁸² Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek- İslamlaşmak- Muasırlaşmak*, (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2006), p.17.

4. Detachment of CUP from the People and its Consequences for the Empire after 1912

CUP had established a new, oppressive regime because of the internal and external separatist demands and the increasing influence of military officers in the community, as well. Especially after 1913, a centralist and authoritarian structure that is alike to Abdulhamid II regime had become a characteristic of CUP. Besides, liberal thought and enterprises were precluded after a few months, and prohibitions and shutting down of political parties and cultural organizations were again the agenda of the country. In a similar vein, CUP isolated itself from the people. The officers of CUP saw that developing policies by taking the people on their sides was an impractical project. The main reason for such an approach was the idea that people from provincial, lower-middle classes would not respect CUP and therefore would not be able to fit in to the role the government considered fit for them. Being incapable of truly knowing its people and the cultural codes it was established in, CUP was trying to realize the revolutionary and enlightening ideals that were borrowed from the West by the help of the Ottoman people, trying to make it similar to the case of the Enlightenment in the West. Due to the lack of people similar to those of the structures in which these theories were developed, and organization of the Ottoman people were in communities or roughly consisted of elites and masses,³⁸³ CUP lost their confidence in their people. When CUP comprehended that it was hard to organize the people, they concluded that it was easier to aim at a certain division of the people, and, as being a typical bourgeois movement, concentrated on gaining the support of the intelligentsia and the middle class.³⁸⁴ In provincial areas, they tried their chance on the local notables and tried to adopt them to their structure.

³⁸³ Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak 'Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti' ve 'Jön Türklük'*, p.613.

³⁸⁴ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.132,199.

Simultaneously, a discrepancy that was similar to the one between the people and CUP was observed inside the CUP. There were essential differences between CUP leaders and members, who were all united under the common ideals of “liberty and constitution”; while the senior executives of CUP were largely influenced by positivism and the contemporary European thoughts, a large majority of local executives and members were uneducated. Some of the CUP members who were favoring pray to survive Cholera is an appropriate example of why CUP chose to ignore the people factor.³⁸⁵ As the metaphor on "birds of a feather" goes, CUP and its target masses were in constant disharmony that resulted from ideological discrepancies. In short, the task of CUP was very demanding in such a fragmented structure. The notion of “homeland”, which was one of the defining and catch-phrase concepts of CUP, was perceived as a blurred concept among the Ottoman people. Naturally, everyone perceived the part of the Empire in which they were living as “homeland”. An important portion of CUP’s senior members had an understanding of dual-patriotism. Ibrahim Temo was an Albanian-Ottoman while Abdullah Cevdet was a Kurdish-Ottoman,³⁸⁶ and those founding intellectuals of CUP served their own micro-nationalistic demands when, after a while, they disagreed with CUP’s centrist politics.

All these discrepancies have paved the way for refinement of the CUP from the masses and some of the inner factions. Not so long after they seized power, CUP has turned to be a pure militarist and authoritarian government.

5. The Effects of Young Turk Administration on Kurdish Community

In the first years of the Revolution, Kurdish elites, who were mostly educated in *Mekteb-i Aşiret* and subsequently offered jobs in the governmental departments and many of whom had relationships with the state, were defending to live in the

³⁸⁵ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Devrim hareketleri içinde Atatürk ve Atatürkcülük*, 1981, s.12, c.f., “Naci Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.123.”

³⁸⁶ Hanioglu, *Ibid*, p.627.

Ottoman homeland with other nations under the supra-identity of Ottomanism. Those Kurds, who identified themselves as Muslim in the first order, as Ottomans in the second, and lastly as Kurds, did cultural studies with those multiple identities and, in fact, defended Ottomanism. In the mean time, after the 1908 Revolution, despite being few in number, some Kurds were elected to the CUP parliament and the Kurds, to an extent, commenced to take interest in politics. Besides, the Kurdish elites in Istanbul became the representatives of various political demands in the Ottoman Empire; some were the Kurdish CUP members, some were leading the Turkists while others were the Kurdish nationalists.³⁸⁷ However, this productive period closed in 1913, when CUP shut down all Kurdish associations and media organs. Being influenced by CUP's harsh centralization and settlement (as well as Turkification) policies, few Kurdish intellectuals voiced demands about Kurdish nationalist demands after 1912. It is a rumor that those Kurdish intellectuals, who came to Istanbul to study law or veterinary medicine, realized their Kurdishness while listening to Turkist conferences of Ismail Gasprinski and Hamdullah Suphi.³⁸⁸ Even freedom to the Diyarbakır *vilayet* was considered by some Ottoman Kurdish elites even in 1908.³⁸⁹ The Bedirhan family, which was living in Istanbul, developed ideas concerning independence also by the support of external forces. Of course, those aforementioned nationalistic inquiries were limited to a small circle and a Kurdish nationalistic discourse was established only after the Republic of Turkey was founded. They, indeed, became aware that they had to save themselves by elaborating a nationalistic discourse after the collapse of the Empire.

In addition, the local Kurdish leaders were traditionally in contact with the government because of the Armenian problems and Hamidiye regiments. Nonetheless, it was unacceptable for local Kurdish leaders to lose their exclusive positions from the Hamidiye regiments, which they gained in times of the

³⁸⁷ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.77.

³⁸⁸ Baskın Oran, "Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Diyalektiği", *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Milliyetçilik, Cilt 4*. p.874.

³⁸⁹ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.89.

Hamidian era. Apart from CUP's oppressive centralist policies, their opposition against the religion has irritated them. Moreover, liberal ideas which CUP was trying to promote were also problematic for the Kurdish regional notables. This was because the local notables directed the people as they pleased.³⁹⁰ Those reasons led Kurdish feudal landlords to oppose the CUP. Especially the sheikhs who composed a substantial amount of the Kurdish elite transformed into zealous nationalists in accordance with the contemporary developments.³⁹¹ In contrast to the urban Kurds, who was transformed into "urban Ottomans" in Istanbul and was unaware of the developments in Eastern Anatolia, the sheikhs had more influence on the Kurdish people and played a role no less than urban Kurds in evoking nationalistic feelings. Furthermore, they made progress on this line of thought so much that they even dreamed of independence. Although various sources attribute uprisings of sheikhs to complaints about taxes or military services, it seems reasonable to incorporate Wadie Jwaideh's hypothesis to some extent. According to Jwaideh, during the 19th century, Kurdish national consciousness developed with every new Kurdish riot, and uprisings, Sheikh Ubeydullah being the most important and Ismail Simko, Said Berzenci to name a few others, accelerated the formation of a nationalistic discourse.³⁹² The main reason for the uprisings of this period was a reaction to the politics of that era. Reactions were realized with benefiting from the communication and transportation opportunities that were developed inside the country also in that age. As can be seen, after the Turkification and centralization policies, the structure of the region which favored tribes was not harmed much and the "feudal" order was not destructed. In order to analyze the Kurdish nationalist/feudalist demands in the Kurdish region at that time, it is crucial to have a look at a petition cited by Jwaideh:

The following reform demands were included in the petition offered by Sheikh Abdulselem Barzani and Sheikh Nur Muhammed of Duhuk to the government of CUP after 1908:

³⁹⁰ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.76.

³⁹¹ Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.212.

³⁹² *Ibid*, p.572.

1. Kurdish shall be accepted as the official language in five Kurdish districts.
2. The language of education shall be Kurdish in Kurdish regions
3. Governors and officers speaking Kurdish shall be appointed
4. Law issues and justice shall be in line with the principles of the Shariah
5. *Kadis* and *muftis* shall be elected from people who belong to Shafiism
6. Tax shall be determined according to the Shariah
7. The taxes collected from the region shall be in force on condition that it will be used for the maintenance of roads in five Kurdish districts

These religious-based and so-called nationalist demands are micro-samples of the Kurdish feudal mentality, which constructed its demands within the framework of religion, language and political aims, during the rule of CUP.³⁹³ We cannot regard these demands as purely nationalist, because the Kurds did not have the self-awareness and self-perception, indicators of a nation in modern sense, at that time.³⁹⁴ Moreover, the activities in the regions did not have an intellectual aspect; surely, the feeling of “Kurdishness” had been existent since the 17th century (as seen in Kurdish historical books such as *Mem-û Zîn*, *Şerefname*), yet these activities were not the outcomes of a national consciousness. As Kutlay further points out, local fighters did not come together with the Kurdish intellectuals in metropolises until 1918.³⁹⁵ So, the grand Kurdish identity’s principal creators, the Kurdish urban intellectuals and local Kurdish notables, did not come together and follow the similar nationalist path at that time period yet. That shows a Kurdish nationalism at a social level did not yet arise.

To sum up, the imperial disorder and the international wave of nationalism were inherently intertwined and affected to the formation of the individual Kurdish identity. In the CUP era, the ultimate aim of the Kurdish intelligentsia was not a

³⁹³ Siddig Damaluji, *Bahdinan*, p.94-95., cf., “Wadie Jwaideh, *Kürt Mliyetçiliğinin Tarihi Kökenleri ve Gelişimi*, p.214.”

³⁹⁴ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.5.

³⁹⁵ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.76.

separate nation-state for them but just to inspire their people's minds, awaken the nationalist sentiments in the Kurdish society. The early Kurdish nationalist sentiments have begun to appear and sharpen with the help of CUP's "Turkification" policies. In this respect, nationalist movements affected the Kurdish people not long after; but the early Kurdish nationalist activities which have existed in the CUP period in the Ottoman Empire, were accepted in a non-political and cultural manner.

The Kurdish nationalists, showing up until the foundation of the Turkish Republic, could not achieve to form a united and nationalist movement, because they lacked an ethnic self-awareness³⁹⁶, and had the problems of leadership and public and elite mobilization. Besides this, even during the period when CUP emphasized the Turkish constituents, the Kurds did not have any claims reaching the point of self-determination, unlike the other Muslim or non-Muslim groups in the Empire. The Kurds, Kurdish leaders and organizations chose not to be active within the Ottoman system; while protecting their communal identities, they maintained decentralist and Ottomanist identities.³⁹⁷ Prominent Kurdish elites did not try to bring about a movement among the Kurds with the help of cultural and political associations founded after the Revolution of 1908, and Kurdish newspapers, journals and books; nor did they make nationalist demands. This period can be named as a sort of research and development period for the claims of Kurdish nationalism. It goes without saying that these culture-based claims would bring forth to a mature Kurdish nationalism later on, but Kurdish cultural associations and press tools have an undeniable role in the arousal of Kurdish nationalist feelings. This period of "early awakening" will be the subject of the following chapter.

³⁹⁶ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.83.

³⁹⁷ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.111.

CHAPTER 4

Kurdish Cultural Activities in the Period of CUP: Their Contributions to the Awakening of Kurdish Nationalist Feelings

The reason why the Ottoman society started to politicize in the aftermath of the 1908 Revolution should be understood as a consequence of development and mobilization of the press.³⁹⁸ The Committee of Union and Progress' promotion of liberal thinking and removal of obstacles to individual and collective freedoms, indeed, resulted in an unbelievable cultural explosion in the Empire. With the entitlement of the freedom of press and association in the months following the Revolution, many political and cultural organizations appeared one after another. The Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian, Jewish, Albanian and Arabic communities of the Empire instantly started to publish newspapers and to organize clubs. It is the period when the Kurdish associations and publications emerged for the first time and started to legally conduct their activities in the Empire.

However, not long after, it was seen that the reforms caused to unexpected results in the Empire; the CUP's efforts to institutionalize, the concepts with which it had started its way like liberty, justice and equality, were knotted at an unexpected point. The host of liberal and equalitarian ideas and the actor pioneering publication of 116 different newspapers in the Empire and servicing the ideas against the administration of Abdulhamid to the peoples of the Empire; the CUP, not long after, would become aware of the fact that the publications that it was promoting would also pave the way for the other communities in the Empire to advocate their own national identity.³⁹⁹ So, the way to acquirement of national self-consciousness by the communities was given in the leadership of the increasing cultural activities. The main reason of this boomerang effect was the

³⁹⁸ Kayalı, *Ibid*, p.62.

³⁹⁹ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.216.

CUP's initiation of maintaining a rigid attitude in policy making. Since the CUP could not govern the state administration as it aimed at and had failures inside and outside one after another, it found the way out in hardening its policies. According to the ruling power, the source of their failures was not the system that they established or their policy preferences. But they were deriving from the centers of separatist ideas inside, which were considered to be disruptive for the Empire by the CUP, and from the external forces. So, they gradually lost their tolerance to different approaches and voices. In that context they closed down political associations formed by different communities, prohibited the publication of newspapers and tried to terminate any nationalist action flourishing in the Empire. Because, according to the CUP, these formations were actually trying to damage the unity of the Empire and were engaging in disruptive activities. However with the attempts of closure and prohibition, these activities did not end; oppression just caused them to strengthen their determination to resist against the governmental pressure.⁴⁰⁰ Each group started to severely criticize the policies of the CUP with the means of their own publications in the same way the CUP did, to communicate their political discourse to masses. By following and imitating international trend, the Armenians, Arabs and Albanians started to construct their own nationalisms against the Ottoman state. So, with the rise of the new separatist-nationalist aspirations, the Empire found itself in a big chaos again. The administrative centralization goal of the Young Turks, which was based on the ideal of "Turkification", was effective in the Kurdish pursuit for expressing themselves by manifesting their own identity. In short, the CUP, which had promised an equalitarian, liberal and unifying administration to the subjects of the Empire in the beginning of its rule, adopted a separatist form of nationalism, was greeted with discontent by the all components of the Ottoman Empire. Likewise, the Muslim peoples in the Empire responded intensely to this ideological shift; that ideological preference of the ruling elite accelerated the formations of nationalisms among the Muslim components.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.209.

⁴⁰¹ Although it seems as if Albanian, Armenian, Arab and Kurdish nationalist activities were only built upon internal dynamics and rose up as a reaction against the CUP policies in my paragraph, it should be added that various external factors and influences had also significant importance in all

Despite the fact that both the internal and external reasons played an important role in the development of these nationalist awakenings, in accordance with the relatively free atmosphere of the CUP era, which provided liberty for publications, we will try to analyze in this chapter to what extent Kurdish cultural publications and associations, which appeared in the period of the CUP administration, contributed to the awakening of the nationalist sentiments of the Kurds. We will also search to what degree these cultural organizations gave birth to the Kurdish nationalist discourse. In the period till 1908, the students from all peoples, was getting together and exchanging their ideas about national issues in the colleges. However, some Kurdish intellectuals noted in their memoirs that those pursuits could not go beyond than emotional limitations.⁴⁰² It means that the early Kurdish cultural activities appeared in the CUP period were realized in a non-political form.

Besides, the Kurds engaged in looking back to their past and building up their own history; they started to re-write their own cultural inheritance. Because of these reasons, Özoğlu asserts that the period following the 2nd Constitutional Monarchy can be considered as the Kurdish enlightenment.⁴⁰³ I think that we can entitle this period when the nationalist perceptions burgeoned in the Kurdish people as “the early awakening of the Kurdish national sentiments”. Again in this era, the Kurdish intellectuals claimed the fact that the average Kurdish people’s

these movements. Each of the movements was affected from different internal and external dynamics in building their own nationalist discourse in the Ottoman Empire. For instance, in the case of Albanian revolt, regional notables seriously criticized and revolted against the CUP’s centralization reforms since these centralist efforts could reduce their economic benefits and influence in the region. Annexation of Bosnia in 1908 was also perceived as a threat to their influence and authority by the notables. For the Kurds, one of the most significant uprisings of them, in Ubeydullah revolt, individual and regional interests played the major role. Likewise, in all the Armenian unrests (which started in the 1890s, before the CUP era) an external factor, Russian policies towards the Eastern Anatolia and the Straits were influential. On the other hand, World War I and the English policies were surely effective in the Arabian uprisings. In short, it was not only the internal –CUP- policies that constituted the “nationalisms” problem. External factors were also influential and each of the nationalist reactions was composed of different internal and external dynamics in the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁰² Silopi Zinar, *Doza Kürdistan*, 1969, p.22., c.f., “Naci Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.59.”

⁴⁰³ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.101.

falling behind the age was a factor pushing them to a position of “subordinate” and they mentioned that it was so natural for the Kurds to want to develop their language and history: these developments are also clear evidences of the fact that this process was the apparent beginning of the period of the Kurdish enlightenment.⁴⁰⁴

A. Kurdish press and cultural association activities blossomed after 1908

It was mentioned that we witness that the Kurds benefited from the liberal atmosphere created by the 1908 Revolution of the Young Turks and a Kurdish cultural-nationalist awakening started in Istanbul as well as in Eastern Anatolia’s provincial centers. The Kurds started to form cultural organizations, in order to develop the life conditions of the Kurdish population and improve intellectual conditioning of the Kurds, as the other Muslim subjects of the Empire did. Not only cultural, but the Kurdish political organizations also gradually increased in both Istanbul and big cities of Eastern Anatolia. The Kurdish notables started to prepare a ground for the formation of the Kurdish nationalist sentiments with the first cultural activities that they made.

The Kurdish notables in Istanbul started to publish newspapers, journals and establish cultural associations to assist each other as the members of the Kurdish community. By looking at the main purpose of these cultural activities appeared after the second Constitutional Monarchy, it is possible to say that most of them did not intent to detach from the Ottoman Empire. In the beginning, the founders of the associations sought to improve the conditions of the communities that they belong to under the flag of Ottomanism. The situation was also similar for the Kurdish organizations; the intellectual activities of the Kurds were primarily made to support the Empire and to re-establish the order which had corrupted. Cultural activities were not oriented towards detachment from the Empire; many Kurdish

⁴⁰⁴ Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, p.317.

notables were aiming to live under the administration of the Ottoman Empire, in which they could experience their culture and traditions.

Besides the transforming effects of the Kurdish media and associations, the nationalist discourse was spreading among the Kurds in a different way. The Kurdish notables in Eastern Anatolia were utilizing nationalist sentiments even if for their individual interests or economic purposes; in contrast to the urban Kurdish notables publishing newspapers and journals in big cities, it was the sheikhs that were active in the region and they were contributing to the transformation of the Kurdish identity in one sense. The basic motive triggering the nationalist pursuits in Eastern Anatolia was the sheikhs who were the regional notables of the region. The role of the sheikhs in the formation of the Kurdish nationalism was important, nationalist ideas were spreading from dervish lodges; and the sheikhs, who constituted a great part of the Kurdish regional elites, were passionate nationalists at the same time.⁴⁰⁵ For example, Sheikh Ubeydullah, a leading sheikh of the region, could come up with a separatist discourse arguing that the Kurdish people constituted a separate and indivisible nation⁴⁰⁶ and also could collaborate with foreign states with a demand of independence. If the development of nationalist demands is analyzed in the context of the activities of sheikhs, it can be said that their attitudes that can be called as nationalist was just rebellions which had the characteristics of an uprising. Moreover, since they did not want to lose their advantageous position in their region and they wanted to protect the status quo in favor of them, they were looking suspiciously on the pro-Kurdish activities in the cities. Without any doubt, the rising awareness and self-development of the Kurdish people would affect their position. Consequently they did not welcome progresses such as education in Kurdish, concentration on Kurdish literature and seeking its development, and secular discourse used by the Kurdish elites and the Kurdish associations.⁴⁰⁷ As it is obviously seen, there were two separate tendencies which had different characteristics in the formation of the

⁴⁰⁵ Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.212.

⁴⁰⁶ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.61.

⁴⁰⁷ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.99.

Kurdish identity in the Ottoman Empire; one of them was defended by the urban Kurds and the other by regional “feudal” landlords.

As the Kurdish nationalist activities had become widespread, the closure of them came to the agenda. After Abdulhamid who had implemented pro-Kurdish and pan-Islamist policies, the CUP, who started to implement administrative centralization (compulsory settlement) policies and Turkification policy, was not approved in the Kurdish lands.⁴⁰⁸ The Kurds objected to administrative policies and also coercive and oppressive policies of the Ottoman state in Eastern Anatolia. When the reformist Ottoman government began to follow centralization and Turkification policies, Kurdish organizations started to draw away from Ottomanism and to concentrate on ideas more related with Kurdish nationalism.⁴⁰⁹ Kurdish organizations considerably increased their separatist activities when Turkist ideas became dominant ideology in the CUP; as much Turkism was emphasized, a phenomenon called the “Kurdish” started to appear. After the action against the CUP on 31 March 1909, the Kurdish schools, newspapers and organizations were closed by state.

B. Kurds become organized

1908 is the year when a great advancement of the Kurdish identity started. Onwards this year efforts for legal organizations concerning Kurdish history and identity increased. The consciousness of Kurdish identity began to rise; the people started to voice honor of being a Kurd.⁴¹⁰ Moreover, the young Kurds, especially the youngsters of notable Kurdish families such as Bedirhan and Baban, went to European countries such as France and Switzerland for education and there they were introduced to Western political concepts and nationalism; this situation

⁴⁰⁸ Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.215.

⁴⁰⁹ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.86.

⁴¹⁰ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.94.

resulted in an increasing awakening towards their own national values and traditions.⁴¹¹

After the declaration of Constitutionalism in 1908, with the spread of liberal ideas in the Empire, many associations, parties and publications mushroomed among the Kurds. In the enthusiastic environment of freedom where imams and priests hugged and kissed each other, some large and small associations entitled “Kurdish” came to the scene for the first time.⁴¹² Kurdish political clubs and communities were formed in many Ottoman cities like Istanbul, Baghdad and Diyarbakir. Also Kurdish elites published Kurdish newspapers and journals in Istanbul, Cairo and Geneva.⁴¹³ As it is seen Kurdish cultural activities mainly flourished in Istanbul; many associations formed by the Kurdish elites started its activities in the imperial center. Istanbul was an important place for the rise of the Kurdish identity; the Kurdish elites living in Istanbul were caught to the nationalist current and they began to develop Kurdist discourses. The coffee houses and hotels in Istanbul of the Kurdish people from Diyarbakir, Bitlis or Siirt were the early schools of the Kurdish identity.⁴¹⁴

Therefore, development and transformation of the Kurdish press is seen as the indicator of the evolution of consciousness of Kurdish identity. The Kurds published 119 registered newspapers and journals in that period, many of them were published in both Turkish and Kurdish, their frequency of publication was varying and some of them lived very short.⁴¹⁵ The Kurdish publications and journals of Kurdish organizations aims were mainly based on cultural studies. They had barely political content and they did not voice political demands. Political demands were not strongly stated because the intellectual and political

⁴¹¹ Minorsky Vladimir and Thomas Boris, *Kürt Milliyetçiliği*, (İstanbul: Örgün Yayınevi, 2008), p.329.

⁴¹² Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.251.

⁴¹³ Kirişçi, p.85.

⁴¹⁴ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.98.

⁴¹⁵ Minorsky and Boris, *Ibid*, p.201.

accumulation in that period was not enough; instead, demands such as “to be considered in the Ottoman administration as being Kurd” were mostly defended in them.⁴¹⁶ In other words all of the Kurdish cultural organizations were acting by emphasizing their Kurdish identity. The will of integration into the Kurdish people was diligently emphasized; for example the aim article of the statute of the *Kurt Talebe Hevî Cemiyeti* was mentioning that the Association was “to provide unity among Kurdish students and to organize Kurdish language and literature and to publish books on them”.⁴¹⁷ Kurdish organizations and printing houses were publishing articles on the Kurdish history, geography, traditions and literature works for the education of the Kurdish people and development of the entire Eastern region. Another aim was to examine Kurdish culture and to form Kurdish history, literature, language and belated written tradition of it. The efforts to create historical memory of the Kurds were the signs of awakening of the nationalist sentiments gradually in the minds of intellectuals.

In short, there was an apparent “group consciousness” triggering the “self-awareness” of the Kurds and reminding them their Kurdishness in the Kurdish publications and discourses of Kurdish associations appeared in that period. However these studies were not characterized by nationalism although they were the major examples of Kurdish cultural revival.⁴¹⁸ They were not nationalist publications and formations since they did not have an apparent demand of a nation-state.⁴¹⁹ They would just pioneer the re-writing of Kurdish history and consequently contributed a lot to the development of the Kurdish identity. In other words, in the period of Second Constitutional Monarchy which constituted a serious breaking point in the development of the Kurdish identity, the Kurdish elites could not orient their energy to a political form; besides it was not possible yet since it was required to form a self-consciousness among the Kurds before formation of political consciousness. If we ask that whether they could form a

⁴¹⁶ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.159.

⁴¹⁷ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.98-99.

⁴¹⁸ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.102.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.50.

sentiment of unity among people, the answer is negative according to Naci Kutlay. Kutlay argues that the Kurdish intellectual cadres could neither transform their movement into a political form nor created a sentiment of unity among people; and also the contradiction between the educated Kurdish intellectuals in cities and feudal people in Eastern Anatolia deepened.⁴²⁰

C. Kurdish Publications after 1908

In the beginning of 20th century, the Kurds also took their share from nationalist demands in the Empire and they rapidly started to seek for alteration and improvement of conditions for their people. In cultural area, publication activities had started in Kurdistan before 1908. Although it was an organ of the state, the Persian version of “*Takvim-i Vekayi*” was distributed in Kurdistan after the 1830s.⁴²¹ After the Empire adopted provincial system in 1867, a press was established in Erzurum and the newspaper called “*Envar-i Şarkiye*” started to be published in there.⁴²² After the Second Constitutional Monarchy, various local newspapers emerged in Eastern Anatolia, though it was told above, the center of Kurdish cultural activities was Istanbul. A press was established in Aleppo in 1915 and newspapers called “*Çiçayê Kurmanç*”, “*Botan*”, “*Diyarbakir*”, “*Ayıntap*”, “*Avadepar*” and “*Musul*” started to be published there.⁴²³ It can be said that although these newspapers did not directly affect the Kurdish culture, Kurdish social life and political standing; they had limited and indirect effects on them; therefore they can be partially considered as the sources on the Kurdish history and political life.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁰ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.99.

⁴²¹ *Ibid*, p.103.

⁴²² Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.181.

⁴²³ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.103,181.

⁴²⁴ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.181.

In the same period, the Kurdish elites, who were inspired from the CUP and other nationalist components, tried to raise their people's consciousness and information by addressing them with the means of their publications. Following the Second Constitutional Monarchy these efforts increased and the newspapers called "*Şark ve Kürdistan*", "*Kürd Teaviün ve Terakki*", "*Kürdistan*", "*Diyarbakir*", "*Amid-i Sevda*", "*Peyman*", "*Rojî Kurd*" and "*Hetawî Kurd*" was published.⁴²⁵

1. Newspaper of *Kurdistan*

The international trend of the era, the nationalist sentiments and demands of identity began to be felt in the Empire in the end of the 19th century. Each community affected by this trend in the Empire was communicating their ideas to their masses with the means of press. In first place the Kurds published newspaper of *Kurdistan*. Mikdad Bedirhan, who belonged to the second generation of the Bedirhan family which was forced to settle in Istanbul, started to publish the first Kurdish newspaper, *Kurdistan*, in Cairo in 1898. The newspaper moved to Geneva after some time and then it moved to Folkstone, England. *Kurdistan* moved to Istanbul for a period of time in the Second Constitutional Monarchy period, it was closed in Istanbul in 1909 and then moved back to Egypt.⁴²⁶

This newspaper was published by considering the Kurdish nationalist sentiments. Under the title of the newspaper, the following sentence was written: "It is published once in 15 days for now to urge the Kurds and promote Kurdish industry, trade and education, it is a Kurdish newspaper".⁴²⁷ The newspaper was published in both Turkish and Kurdish. Despite many difficulties such as moving from one city to another to publish it, difficulty of entering it into the country, expatriation of owners;⁴²⁸ the newspaper was tried to be published. The delivery of the newspaper from Cairo to its reader was also including many difficulties; it

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, p.75.

⁴²⁶ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.35.

⁴²⁷ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.55.

⁴²⁸ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.169.

was brought to the region through Syria and the Kurdish workers in Damascus were paying attention to it and it was read loudly for the illiterate Kurdish carriers.⁴²⁹

It was small in size, composed of 4 pages and published twice in a month.⁴³⁰ The newspaper was fully in Kurdish in its first four issues and then it started to give place to Turkish articles in its pages and it had 31 issues as far as known.⁴³¹ It is possible to see how the Kurds perceived the period of Abdulhamid, the CUP and Eastern Anatolia in the newspaper which also provided solutions to the problems. When the family of Bedirhan started to publish it, the main aim was to attract attention of the Sultan to the Kurds.⁴³² Therefore it had a pro-Union and Progress publishing policy which was also against the Sultan. Many Kurdish leading intellectuals contributed to the newspaper with their articles and Kurdish literature, culture and history were frequently covered. For example a leading figure of the Kurdish history, Ehmedê Xanî, was covered many times and the *Mem-û Zîn* was published for the first time in it.⁴³³ The paper *Kurdistan* was addressing to the Kurdish people and it was frequently mentioning about how the government neglected the region, how bad the state officials administered the region⁴³⁴, the necessity of the peasants to emancipate from oppression and heavy taxes, the importance of science and the need for modern schools and workplaces.⁴³⁵ This newspaper was writing about the “Kurdishness” and demanding the Kurds to develop their own identity and culture in the Ottoman Empire.⁴³⁶

⁴²⁹ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.243.

⁴³⁰ Abdulhaluk M. Çay, *Her Yönüyle Kürt Dosyası*, (Ankara: Turan Kültür Vakfı, 1996), p.297.

⁴³¹ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.56.

⁴³² Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.50.

⁴³³ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.92.; Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.168.

⁴³⁴ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.50.

⁴³⁵ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.49.

⁴³⁶ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.74.

In addition to that, articles about relations between the Kurds and Armenians were frequently published. Both Abdulhamid and the CUP were using the Kurds against the Armenian uprisings in the Eastern Anatolia. The regional notables of the period and the Kurdish intellectuals in the CUP were stating that the Empire was making two peoples to come up against each other for its own interest and a struggle should be given against it in both newspapers of the CUP and the Armenian publications. *Kurdistan* struggled against the Armenian-Kurdish conflict as well; the Kurdish-Armenian relations were covered in the 7th issue of it published on 5.11.1898 as:

The Kurds should not kill the Armenians. God would also dislike it. Armenians are oppressed people. The People should not face oppressed people with swords... You are also subjected to oppression as they are. Write to Sultan the oppression that he makes and ask him to be just...

In several issues of the newspaper, the Armenian-Kurdish relations were widely given place.⁴³⁷ In the 26th issue of the newspaper (Abdulhaluk Çay says that the newspaper blamed Turkish state a lot as from its 13th issue⁴³⁸ - in other words it hardened its opposition against the government) it was mentioned that the Kurds and Armenians, two peoples who love each other, were pushed into defeatism and discrepancy and it was declared that this situation was caused by the evil provocations of the Sultan.⁴³⁹ Soon after, in the newspaper, it was written that the Kurds and Armenians should resist to administration in collaboration. The statements like A. Bedirhan's in the 27th issue of the newspaper (13.3.1901) as the following "This ignorance is enough. I address you by the newspaper, gather yourself together and unite. Get along with the Armenians and evade from the oppression of the Turks together"⁴⁴⁰ was aiming to encourage the Kurds to rebel by emulating nationalist demands of the Armenians.

⁴³⁷ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.175-177.

⁴³⁸ Çay, *Ibid*, p.297.

⁴³⁹ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.176.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.177-178.

To sum up, Kutlay claims that the newspaper *Kurdistan* which was called as “*Cerideya Kurdi*”⁴⁴¹ was a defender of bourgeois-type democratic thinking; glorifying “enlightenment” and “information”, promoting trade and industry instead of agriculture and animal husbandry and by this way aiming to create a modern “nation”.⁴⁴² On the other hand, according to Özoğlu, the target of this newspaper, which was in aspiration of a modern nationalism, was a Kurdish identity beyond tribes however it did not imagine peoples’ right to determine their own faith.⁴⁴³ All in all, it can be stated that the main effort of the directors of the newspaper was to create a Kurdish awakening and to consolidate Kurdish identity rather than demanding self-determination.

2. The Kurdish Solidarity and Progress Newspaper

The Kurds started to publish a newspaper called *Kürd Teavün and Terakki Newspaper* (the Kurdish Solidarity and Progress Newspaper-KSPN) on 5 December 1908 in Istanbul. Although it was entitled as a newspaper it was a weekly journal⁴⁴⁴; it was the publication organ of the Committee of Kurdish Solidarity and Progress (CKSP) and it was functioning as communicating ideas of the Committee to the people. The newspaper published articles in both Kurdish and Turkish. It had a publication policy that was close to modern way of thinking. It defended a Kurdish identity compatible with the supra-identity of Ottomanism.⁴⁴⁵ In other words this newspaper also defended national awakening

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.168.

⁴⁴² *Ibid*, p.169.

⁴⁴³ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.50.

⁴⁴⁴ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.151.

⁴⁴⁵ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.92-93.

as *Kurdistan* did.⁴⁴⁶ For it was produced by the same mentality of the urban Kurds.

On the front page of the first issue of the newspaper it was written that it was a weekly, religious, literate and social newspaper.⁴⁴⁷ The director of the newspaper was a famous Kurdish poet, *Pîramerd* Süleymaniyeli Tevfik.⁴⁴⁸ KSPN was a legal publication (in contrary to *Kurdistan*) and was published in Istanbul; therefore it was easier to distribute it.⁴⁴⁹ Consequently it can be said that KSPN contributed a lot to the formation of the Kurdish identity and awakening of Kurdish nationalist sentiments. It would not be difficult to estimate to what extent it contributed to the formation of the Kurdish identity if the articles published in the newspapers are looked at. For example Halil Hayalî from the tribes of Motiki, in his article “Our language, Kurdish” wrote that:

The Kurds are a great component among the Ottoman peoples. They are equipped with superior qualifications such as the commitment to religion, generosity and courage. There was not any war, in which Kurdish cavaliers were not seen on borders of motherland, The Kurds did not spill their blood to protect their motherland, they escaped from fighting, and they did not leave a valuable name, fame to the history. However we were denied by the government. We have to take lesson from these situations and work like the Arabs, Turks and Albanians and show the essence that we have...⁴⁵⁰

Another leading figure of the KSPN, pointed out the need of working, information and culture for the Kurdish people in his article “The Kurds and Kurdistan”:

Yes, to work, to work night and day; to work without any break, without softening, without stopping; the first and last thing that, we, the Easterners, and the Kurds among the Easterners would do. If the issue that from where should we

⁴⁴⁶ Kutlay, *Kürtler*, p.151.

⁴⁴⁷ Malmîsanij, *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Gazetesi*, (İstanbul: Avesta, 1999), p.55-56.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.56.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.58.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.132.

start to work is taken into consideration, first of all, the education. After that education again...⁴⁵¹

The newspaper was covering issues such as, the Kurdish language and literature, rehabilitation of the Armenian-Kurdish relations, problems of the tribes and prevention of clashes among them, the difficulty of social conditions of the Kurds and their underdevelopment, provision of unity of the Kurds and restoration of their socio-economic conditions, importance of education, the significance and necessity of constitution and constitutional monarchy.⁴⁵² Besides, the Kurds publishing KSPN was hoping that Kurdish people would progress in education and enlighten and also learn to advance in “development, education, trade, industry and culture” by means of this Committee.⁴⁵³ This newspaper was also locating the Kurdish identity under the roof of Ottomanness. The founding identities of the Kurds were including the identities of Muslim, Ottoman and Kurdish. However KSPN was especially emphasizing the consciousness of Kurdish among them and it was mentioning that the participation of Kurds to the Ottoman state was based on Kurds’ free will.⁴⁵⁴ Again this newspaper was also closed after the 31 March Incident by the CUP.

3. Rojî Kurd

The publication of another Committee called *Kürt Talebe ve Hêvî Cemiyeti* (Kurd Students’ Hope Committee- KSHC) was *Rojî Kurd* (Sun of Kurds) –a monthly journal- began its life in 1913 in Istanbul. It was published in both Turkish and Kurdish, it was defending the Kurdish identity with a modern understanding and it

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.139.

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, p.59.

⁴⁵³ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.152.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.160.

just could publish four issues.⁴⁵⁵ The vision of this journal was a little different than the other ones since it was formed by university students. Since students could discuss the Kurdish identity and Kurdishness with their all aspects in KSHC⁴⁵⁶, the journal looked like more intellectual than the others. Therefore the articles in this journal written by educated people were much more qualified. The purpose of the journal was explained in the first issue of the journal as: “Now the Kurdish youth is under great responsibility to the Kurdishness and world. The Kurdish youth has sworn to accomplish its mission and to reject the insults coming from every side with progress and science”.⁴⁵⁷ As it is seen, in comparison to other Kurdish journals, this journal was voicing demands of Kurdish identity more directly and bravely.

Indeed it is possible to deduce the goal of this journal from an article; an article entitled “*Bir Hitap*” written by Abdullah Cevdet in the first issue of the journal was drawing the road map of this formation:

If a nation lacks a written and accumulated history, this nation is as though has never lived. Do the Kurds have a history? A single Şerefname can not save and secure the historical honor of a nation... Let’s confess together that the Kurds do not really have a history book appropriate for the age that we live in. Besides, do the Kurds have an “ideal”? ... I want to ask the young Kurds and tell them. What do they want to be? Or what they do not want to be? A component in the Ottoman Empire? A component but what kind of a component; is it a component that is decomposing and making things to de-compose or is it a component renewing itself and other things, so be a refresh and refreshing component? ... First of all we should apply to the solution that is increasing the literacy rate to 40 percent at least ... Secondly we should leave old letters behind”.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Malmîsanij, *İlk Legal Kürt Öğrenci Derneği Kürt Talebe-Hêvi Cemiyeti*, (İstanbul: Avesta, 1999), p.138.

⁴⁵⁶ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.69.

⁴⁵⁷ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.140.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.196-197.

Besides them, the writers of *Rojî Kurd* were putting emphasis on usage of machines and good material in agriculture, development of trade in region, generalization of education and art by effort and devotion, translation of foreign classics into Kurdish, formation of a new Kurdish alphabet.⁴⁵⁹ Moreover, this journal, as the others were doing, was emphasizing the Kurds' national demands and Kurdish identity by paying attention not to locate the Kurdish identity against the Ottoman identity.⁴⁶⁰

4. Hetawî Kurd

Another publication of KSHC in Istanbul, *Hetawî Kurd*, emerged in 1913. It is known that this journal published at least ten issues and the franchise owner and responsible editorial officer of it was Abdulaziz Baban.⁴⁶¹ Also many well-known Kurdish intellectuals of the period (e.g. Abdullah Cevdet, Babanzade İsmail Hakkı) were writing for the journal. The major portion of the cost of the journal was paid by the Kurdish public porters and Kurdish university students were dealing with the other works/paper works and administrative works.⁴⁶²

As it was the same for the other publications of KSHC, this journal was also giving place to national and cultural issues and strongly defending the Kurdish identity.⁴⁶³ As it was mentioned in the 10th issue of the journal, it aimed to serve to Kurdishness.⁴⁶⁴ The articles in the journal were pointing out the injustice and inequality experienced in Kurdistan and it was proposing a whole development breakthrough for the development of the region and offering same solutions in that sense. In that context, it is possible to deduce enlightening information

⁴⁵⁹ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.75,145.; Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.255.

⁴⁶⁰ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.69.

⁴⁶¹ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.150.

⁴⁶² Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.224.

⁴⁶³ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.92-93.

⁴⁶⁴ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.150.

concerning Kurdistan, the Kurds and the conditions of the period from the some letters published in the journal. For example, in the each issues of the journal, under the title of “Letters of Kurdistan”, a city or place was introduced and in the first three issues of the journal information about Malatya, cost of Firat and Harput-Mezre was given.⁴⁶⁵ The 10th issue covered the region of Siverek and emphasized that names of the settlements such as villages of Qure Bax, Qaynaq, Êmenî, Êrmenî, Kemşo were changed by the non Kurdish speaking Ottoman officers just for easiness for themselves.⁴⁶⁶ A. Cevdet and other leading Kurdish writers mentioned via this publication that the Kurds should access to a modern life and level. A. Cevdet, in his article titled “*Hetawî Kurd Gazetesi Yazarlarına*” and published in that journal in 1913 provided the Kurdish youth with ideas awakening national consciousness:

It is obvious that you are laboring to serve to the Kurds and Kurdishness. However newspapers are published for literate nations. Unfortunately I am sure that the literate people among the Kurds are very rare ... It is not enough demanding enlightenment of the people. In here, in Istanbul, nothing would change by just talking and writing ... To villages! To villages! To eat cad, to drink goat milk and to feed the villages with divine light and civilization should be demanded with a full determination ... Anatolia is deprived of its most important reason to live: to know. To know means air for the modern life. We should bring air before anything. If and only if when you prefer to be a founder or teacher of a primary school in a Kurdish village to be a district governor or a manager, you will be on the way that you should be.⁴⁶⁷

As it can be deduced from the example, this journal undoubtedly had a “rousing” effect on the Kurdish youngsters taking charge in the Kurdish national awakening and recognizing the importance of Kurdish language and social works.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.154.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.154-155.

⁴⁶⁷ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.247-249.; Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, p.318.

⁴⁶⁸ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.223-224.

5. Yekbûn

A Committee called *Kurd Talebe Hêvî Cemiyeti* started to publish a journal in Turkish-Kurdish called *Yekbûn* (Unity). This journal, which had a publication life of three issues, were highlighting the cultural and national missions of the youngsters and frequently emphasizing that a new Kurdish alphabet would ease literacy.⁴⁶⁹ It was also frequently covering education of the Kurdish language and the Kurdish history and mentioning that the Kurds should especially develop in the cultural area. The journal was also giving place to articles mentioning that an easy alphabet should be made for Kurds who had a low ratio of literacy, the required studies should be made to catch the modern era and to provide Kurds a decent life in their motherland and the sheikhs, who were regional leaders, should not leave the Kurds in ignorance and abuse the existing situation.⁴⁷⁰

Besides these publications that we mentioned above, many other Kurdish publications came to the scene of the Empire after the Revolution of Young Turks. They generally lived for a short time. Their common characteristic was their opposition to the CUP, their promotion of studies concerning Kurdish language, culture and history, the attention they paid to advancement of conditions of education in Kurdistan and especially their preference of choosing developments in cultural area as key issue. Some of them are, *Meşrutiyet Newspaper* (1909) published by Şerif Paşa who was the ambassador of Copenhagen, *Amid-i Sevda* (1908) published in Istanbul, *Şark ve Kürdistan Newspaper* (1908) and pro-CUP newspaper *Peyman* (1900)⁴⁷¹ published in Diyarbakır.

Although *Peyman Newspaper* was a proponent of the state, an article published in it serves as a proper example of the function of the Kurdish newspapers and their relative and prudential transformative effect in Kurdistan (although those studies

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.180.

⁴⁷⁰ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.147,148, 243.

⁴⁷¹ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.82-84, 274-175.

remained as a potential for the development of the Kurdish identity and they could not gain a nationalist form) in the CUP period. Despite *Peyman* was in relation with the CUP, even it was also attaching importance to education of the Kurdish people and hoping enlightenment of the Kurds, detachment of them from tribal bounds and Kurds' acquirement of a modern identity:

Brothers!

The Constitutional Monarchy removed landlordism and "feudal notables".. From now on, a gentleman and a porter are equal. There is no more landlordism. There are not tribes any more. We are the tribe of Ottoman Empire. There is only the Ottoman State; there are no tribes such as Milli, Pencari. The land belongs to the agriculture workers (*rençber*). Sheep, goat, orchards and fields belong to the peasants. The *beys* and landlords should take pity on and give properties of the poor people back to them. From now on, everybody should work on field. Everybody should leave hostilities and animosities behind. Everybody should deal with their own business. Nobody should escape from military service. The military service is for God. Do not call tax as "problem, ill" as it was in the reign of Abdulhamid. They are like alms. All of them will be used for the needs of the nation. Every village needs a *Medrese* and a school. The Kurds have just one trouble; that is ignorance. The cure of it is to read, to write and to learn the world. From now on, books and newspapers in Kurdish will be published. The education will be given in Kurdish in schools. By then the Kurds would be happy, rich and worth to live decently.⁴⁷²

D. Kurdish political and cultural communities after the Revolution of Young Turks

As we have mentioned before the Kurds living in cities welcomed the Second Constitutional Monarchy. They were inspired from the liberal atmosphere emerged after the constitutional monarchy and started to establish social and cultural communities. The general characteristic of these associations was their

⁴⁷² *Ibid*, p.176,179.

voicing of newly flourishing demands of identity. They got organized with the purpose of making studies in culture and education, especially in issues such as the underdevelopment of the Kurds, the Kurds' need of education and development of the Kurdish literature and language. Besides, they were established in the capital city of the Empire, Istanbul, and they were maintaining their activities in there. Each of these communities would involve in conflict with the CUP and since the Turkish nationalism strengthened in the CUP and suspects on these communities increased, all of these communities were closed.⁴⁷³ As it was mentioned in their statutes, those Kurdish groups were seeing themselves as an ethnically different group but meanwhile as a part of the Ottoman society. Although they were implicitly giving voice to political demands they were not political organizations. Therefore it is difficult to qualify them as nationalist organizations, it would be more proper to consider them as milestones of the Kurdish awakening.⁴⁷⁴

The first known Kurdish Committee was “*Kürdistan Azm-i Kavî Cemiyeti*” established in Istanbul by Fikri Efendi of Diyarbakır in 1900, which was in collaboration with the Young Turks against Abdulhamid.⁴⁷⁵ After that, the Charity Association (Fukaraperver Cemiyeti) was founded in Diyarbakır, The Eğin CUP (Eğin İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti) was founded in Eğin, Kurdistan Lovers Association (Kürdistan Muhipleri Cemiyeti) was founded in Istanbul in 1912, Kürdistan Collective Labor Association (Kürdistan Teşrik-i Mesai Cemiyeti) was founded in 1912, “Gehandeni Cemiyeti” was founded in Hoy in 1913; that sort of local communities⁴⁷⁶ and the Kurdish communities centered in Istanbul -which we will discuss in the following pages- operated in the Empire.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid*, p.138.

⁴⁷⁴ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.29.

⁴⁷⁵ Çay, *Ibid*, p.300.

⁴⁷⁶ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.89,98.; Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.135.; Malmîsanij, *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Gazetesi*, p.12.

1. The Committee of Kurdish Solidarity and Progress

The first Kurdish cultural associations started to emerge in social and political tides occurred after 1908. The most famous and effective Committee among them was *Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (the Committee of Kurdish Solidarity and Progress-CKSP) established in 1908. All of the three most known tribes took a role in the establishment of the Committee: Seyit Abdülkadir, the son of Sheikh Ubeydullah from the family of Şemdinan; Mehmet Emin Ali Bedirhan, the son of Bedirhan Pasha from the family of Bedirhan; and Babanzade Ahmed Naim Bey from the family of Baban.⁴⁷⁷ This aristocratic section, which did not have a serious relation with Eastern Anatolia and its Kurdish population and had only paternal feelings towards the ordinary Kurds, paved the way for development of Kurdish society and construction of a modern Kurdish identity by establishing those cultural communities. In that regard, the CKSP, was a social-cultural organization which showed typical characteristics of the early nationalist evolution of the Kurds.⁴⁷⁸

The aim of the Committee was mentioned in the first article of the statute of the committee as:

The Committee of Kurdish Solidarity and Progress is found to provide the Constitution to the Kurds who do not know it, by carrying the superior characteristics of the Ottomans to protect and to defend the understanding of the Constitutional Monarchy and the Parliament which are the main way of progress, to consolidate good relations with the Armenian, Nestorian and other components of the Ottoman Empire and to remove the conflict emerging occasionally among tribes, and to make publications on education, industry, trade and agriculture.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.251.; Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.103.

⁴⁷⁸ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.104.

⁴⁷⁹ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.19-20.

Besides in the statute of the Committee, it was also clearly mentioned that, the boards of the Committee will be composed of just the Kurds (Article 2), to be a member of the administrative board, in addition to other conditions; a candidate shall write and speak Turkish and Kurdish, shall live in Istanbul, shall not be less than 25 years old, shall not be known with bad behavior, shall have good morality, shall not be condemned with crime and murder (Article 5), the Committee will have a newspaper and it will prepare Kurdish grammar book, Kurdish dictionary and religious and science books to ease Kurdish education in primary schools (Article 11), all published and non-published beneficial books in Kurdish will be collected, classified and transformed into a history of Kurdish literature (Article 14), the CKSP will send the proper people to *Kurdistan* for solving the conflicts between the Kurds and Armenians and also the conflicts among the Kurdish tribes and it will also contact with the Armenians and the communities of Armenians to benefit from them (Article 15).⁴⁸⁰ In addition to them, the Committee had started to discuss issues such as opening schools in *Kurdistan* in due course, the appointment of Kurdish officers to the region, acceptance of the Kurdish language officially in official institutions and its usage in there, making required studies for economic development of the Kurdish regions and formation of a Kurdish alphabet.⁴⁸¹

The CKSP was defined in its statute as “a charity committed to the Constitution and to the ideal of Ottomanness”.⁴⁸² Also in the following periods, the writers of the journals of the Committee notified their loyalty to the Empire and they counted to protect the unity of the Empire in the objectives of the Committee. The CKSP was emphasizing that the Kurds were an inseparable part of the Ottoman Empire; so the Committee did not follow a policy of demanding political autonomy.⁴⁸³ Rather than separatism, the declaration of the Committee was

⁴⁸⁰ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.255-256.; Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.109-116.

⁴⁸¹ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.254.; Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.136-138.

⁴⁸² Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, 1952, p.429, c.f., “Abdulhaluk M. Çay, *Her Yönüyle Kürt Dosyası*, p.300.”; Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.110.

⁴⁸³ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.103.

underlying the necessity of the elimination of injustice and equality of the peoples.

The studies of the first Kurdish cultural organization, the CKSP, were concentrated on the aims mentioned in its statute and in its publications. In the first period, they tried to found a branch in every settlement in where the Kurds live; they opened branches of Bitlis, Muş, Diyarbakir, Musul, Erzurum, Hınıs and Baghdad.⁴⁸⁴ They founded a Kurdish school and press in Istanbul.⁴⁸⁵ The Kurdish intellectuals took place in this Committee (e.g. Babanlı Şerif Paşa, Ziya Gökalp, Abdullah Cevdet⁴⁸⁶) labored a lot for intellectual development and advancement of the Kurds. They initiated studies for the Kurdish culture, language and literature in the journal of the Committee and they published articles about the Kurdish history and literature both in Turkish and Kurdish; in other words they tried to accomplish the mission of enlightening the Kurds in every area. Besides these cultural activities, although due to the statute of the Committee was a charity, it occasionally engaged in political activities. The CKSP declared that “Since intellectual and social education of the Kurds necessitates; the CKSP will work, prepare the required programs and publish the required publications for the election of proper deputies who can totally protect and defend the rights granted by the constitution and who know the needs of the country to both the first parliament and the parliaments will be elected in the future”.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore it can be thought that CKSP had effects on the Kurdish deputies. In that direction and maybe by taking power from this reality, the Kurdish deputies in the parliament, oriented to voice just to save the Kurdish regions from the “bad socio-economic situation” and they claimed that they had been treated as if they were orphan children in the Constitutional Monarchy period.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁴ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.45.

⁴⁸⁵ Bruinessen, *Ibid*, p.404.; Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.105.

⁴⁸⁶ Hamit Bozarlan, “Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898- 2000)”, *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Milliyetçilik*, Cilt 4, p.846.

⁴⁸⁷ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.44.

⁴⁸⁸ Şimşir, *Ibid*, p.258.

It is obvious that the activities that the CKSP performed with the target of the development of the Kurdish people in cultural terms, some administrative reforms in the region and formation of the Kurdish identity might be one of the triggers of the Kurdish nationalist demands which would arise later on.⁴⁸⁹ The CKSP, as being the first legal cultural Kurdish Committee, by the means of its aims and works, paved the way of its successors and inspired the following Kurdish communities. The CKSP founded an organization which was carrying the Kurdish identity apart from the Ottoman and it provided an initiative example to enable studies to be done for the sake of national right and demands of the Kurds in the future.⁴⁹⁰

2. Committee of Kurdish Publication and Education

Concurrently with the foundation of the CKSP, a cultural organization known as *Kürd Neşr-i Maarif Cemiyeti* (the Committee of Kurdish Publication and Education- CKPE) was founded in Istanbul. There were famous Kurdish notables and intellectuals such as Bedirhanzade Emin Ali Bey, Dr. Abdullah Cevdet, Bedirhanzade Mehmet Bey, Deputy of Erzurum Seyfullah Bey and deputies of Hakkari were among the founders of this Committee.⁴⁹¹

The Committee of Kurdish Publication and Education, as its correspondents did, was also aiming to engage in attempts to develop the Kurdish literature and culture. The Committee was targeting development of education, science and arts among the Kurds and in Kurdistan. As a subsidiary of it, the Organization of Kurdish Publication and Education was founded; and this organization pioneered to opening of a Kurdish primary school in Çemberlitaş for educating the children

⁴⁸⁹ Bozarslan, *Ibid*, p.845.

⁴⁹⁰ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.53.

⁴⁹¹ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler, p.214., c.f., “Naci Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.221.”

of the Kurdish population in Istanbul, named “Meşrutiyet” and directed by Abdurrahman Bedirhan.⁴⁹² It also opened its branches in Bitlis, Mosul, Bagdad, Muş and Erzurum.⁴⁹³ The publication organ of it, the journal of “*Kurd*” was started to be published. This weekly journal was directed by Süleymaniyeli Tevfik and Diyarbakırlı Ahmed Cemil, Said-i Kurdî, and İsmail Hakkı Babanzade were in the publication board of it.⁴⁹⁴ The Committee of Kurdish Publication and Education was step by step finding the ways of integrating with and opening to the people, it was dealing with the issue of the protection of the constitutional monarchy which enabled the development of Kurdish identity and the Kurdish intellectuals in the Committee were saying that “the constitutional monarchy is mostly in benefit of us”.⁴⁹⁵ The good relations with the CUP and advocacy of constitutional monarchy changed negatively because of centralization-Turkification policies of the CUP and this Committee was closed in 1909.⁴⁹⁶

3. Kurdish Students’ Hope Committee

Kurdish Students’ Hope Committee (KSHC) (*Kürt Talebe Hêvî Cemiyeti*) was founded in Istanbul by the university students in Istanbul Halkalı Agriculture School. There are different narratives about the date of its foundation, but it seems to be in between 1910 and 1911.⁴⁹⁷ Mutkili Halil Koyalı, Diyarbakırlı Cemilpaşazadelerden Ömer and Kadri, Vanlı Fuat Temo Bey and Diyarbakırlı Zeki Bey were among the founders of it.⁴⁹⁸ The Committee maintained its

⁴⁹² Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.210.; Çay, *Ibid*, p.301.

⁴⁹³ Çay, *Ibid*, p.301.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.301.

⁴⁹⁵ Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.69.

⁴⁹⁶ Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p.139; Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.210.

⁴⁹⁷ Malmısaniy, *Kürt Talebe-Hêvî Cemiyeti*, p.49.

⁴⁹⁸ Jwaideh, *Ibid*, p.210.

activities until the outbreak of World War I. It was re-founded after the First World War in 1919.

The pioneering of the Committee was done by family of Cemil Paşa, a high level bureaucrat, and the president of it was Ömer Cemil Paşa and general secretary was Kadri Cemil Paşa.⁴⁹⁹ Besides that, Malmîsanij noted that, the founders of the Committee also included the youth of the notable Kurdish families, religious officers, sheikhs, deputies, officers and workers.⁵⁰⁰ Consequently, it is seen that most of the members of this Committee were composed of the children of notable Kurdish families but also the children of petty bourgeoisie and working class families took place in the skeleton crew of the Committee. This Committee achieved to bring different sections of the society together and therefore it is possible to argue that, in Istanbul it was more effective than other communities.⁵⁰¹

The founding objective of the KSHC was summarized in the second article of its statute as:

- a-To provide relation, fraternity and unity among the Kurdish students by introducing them to each other
- b-To work for development of the Kurdish language and literature by organizing and publishing books
- c-To guide the Kurdish students in their entrance to school when they come to Istanbul
- d-To get economically disadvantaged students educated in proper schools
- e-In sum, to labor in the way of scientific and social progress and development of the Kurds.⁵⁰²

In the third article of the statute the list of works that would be done to accomplish these objectives: “to open branches in provinces with this reason, to publish a

⁴⁹⁹ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.73.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.73.

⁵⁰¹ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.144.

⁵⁰² Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.61.

journal in Turkish and Kurdish, to publish books concerning ideas at various levels and covering beneficial information especially for pre-school and primary school students, to organize lessons, discussions and dramas and to open schools by new methods in various places”.⁵⁰³

Besides, the KSHC promised not to engage in activities except cultural ones in the fourth article of its statute: “the aim is just scientific and social and it is out of the political zone”.⁵⁰⁴ The KSHC, in the region of the Eastern Anatolia, organized faster than the Committee of Kurdish Solidarity and Progress and it opened many branches.⁵⁰⁵ The Kurds who had gone to Europe for education before the World War I, especially the family of Cemilpaşazade, opened branches of the Committee in Geneva, Lausanne and Munich.⁵⁰⁶ In the literature journals that they published in Kurdish and Turkish called *Rojî Kürd*, *Hetawî Kürd* and *Yekbûn*, literature, history and social issues took place. There was also Fuad Temo’s story titled “*Çirok*” –which considered being the first modern Kurdish story- among these articles.⁵⁰⁷ While the Kurdish identity and its founding components had been discussed in the platforms of students, hotly debated issues were taking place in their journals. In that direction, the issue of women’s rights also took place in them, even these articles were written by the Kurdish women.⁵⁰⁸ One of the leading intellectuals of the period, Abdullah Cevdet, also assigned effective duties in the publications of the Committee, through these publications; he guided the youth and gave them advices. For example he advised Kurdish youngsters, when they preferred to be a founder or teacher of a primary school in a Kurdish village to be a district governor or a manager, they would start doing something for the

⁵⁰³ Mehmet Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadeleleri*. p.84., c.f., “Malmîsanij, *Kürt Talebe-Hêvî Cemiyeti*, p.61

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.61.

⁵⁰⁵ Çay, *Ibid*, p.302.

⁵⁰⁶ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.225.

⁵⁰⁷ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.99.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.249.

Kurdish identity.⁵⁰⁹ Again in his article “*Hissî Hadiseler Aklî Hadiseler*” published in the third issue of *Hetawî Kurd*, A. Cevdet touched on the political alterations of the period and advised the youngsters to approach to issues by the means of reason.⁵¹⁰

Besides that, the importance of books, libraries and reading was frequently taking place in the publications of the Committee. The Committee had a library, maybe it was the first library in a Kurdish organization.⁵¹¹ As it is seen typical bourgeois demands were reflected to the activities of the Committee. In their studies which were clearly inspired from the Young Turks, they were hoping that development in region can be achieved with the generalization of education and art with labor and devotion.⁵¹²

In that way, these young Kurdish people, guided by “hope” and “patience”⁵¹³, took a considerable role in the Kurdish national awakening. They wholeheartedly labored to provide solidarity and assistance among the Kurdish people under the umbrella of Ottomanness and the development of the Kurdish identity by the means of cultural activities. They opened many branches in many cities of Kurdistan and achieved their voice heard by the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia. Therefore the effect of activities of the Committee was felt in the other Kurdish communities in various forms founded after 1908. Consequently, the Committee paved the way to a cultural revival for Kurds and became a milestone in the formation process of the Kurdish identity.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.249.

⁵¹⁰ Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.75.

⁵¹¹ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.131.

⁵¹² Kutlay, *Ibid*, p.145.

⁵¹³ Malmîsanij, *Ibid*, p.89.

E. Contribution of the Kurdish cultural activities and the Kurdish communities to the formation of Kurdish identity

Regional dynamics and realities of the period, determined to what extent the Kurdish cultural activities which appeared on the scene of history for the first time in the period of the CUP administration contributed to the formation of a mature form of Kurdish identity. It was a subject of curiosity that, to what extent these activities contributed to formation of a modern Kurdish identity and to what extent this sentiment of Kurdishness contributed to a Kurdish nationalist awakening. It was seen that the answer of the question was hidden in the inner structure of Eastern Anatolia. This region had specific socio-economic and political dynamics since it was isolated from the center and its components were also isolated from each other. As we have mentioned before, the social structure was organized as tribes, the Kurdish notables were also big land owners and a typical pre-modern network of relations of production were prevailing in the region; and all of these dynamics were determining the character of social movements. Also in the region and its adjacent areas, the development of nationalist movements was heavily depended on external dynamics, and the political conjunctures among the politics of Great Powers. Though the nationalist awakenings of the people of the region, the Kurds, Armenians, and the Arabs were in their premature state, the power politics too heavily influenced these movements to form the social and political bases for the later developments.

Therefore in Eastern Anatolia, in which a so called “feudal” order was prevailing, flourishing of modern liberal ideas was very difficult in the relevant period. Other factors preventing individualization and development of intellectual activities were the widespread lack of education of the people and commitment of people of the region –many of who were religious- to the religious leaders. The Kurdish activities in that period might have lead to a nationalist awakening of the Kurds, like the other nations in the Ottoman state, however there was not social support for a widespread acceptance of nationalism in the social ground since the Kurds

were divided as urban-dwellers and countrymen and there was not a mobilized Kurdish community. Although the agenda of the regional notables –the sheikhs– were including issues such as autonomous administration, reduction of taxes, foundation of local Kurdish security forces, schools giving education in Kurdish, assignment of Kurdish officers and military officers in Kurdistan⁵¹⁴, they did not mean anything but precautions for maintenance of the feudal order in the region for the Kurdish people. They were not real Kurdist demands; the popular medium of the period –the national identity– was used for personal interests.

Kurdish cultural communities and publications emerged in that period were making sense for mostly the Kurds in cities. The Kurdish people in Istanbul; from student to porter, doctor to bureaucrat, were protecting these communities and they were working with all their might for development of their region especially in the area of education. However these activities of association and publication performed by the Kurds after 1908 could not save the Kurdish people from its fragmented structure. The urban Kurdish elites, regional Kurdish landlords, notables, religious leaders and the ordinary people were maintaining their lives with different reasons of existence and objectives of life.

The Kurdish nationalist sentiments, first signs of which were seen with the rebellions of Sheikh Ubeydullah in 1880 and which started to leave a written heritage by the means of the journal of *Kurdistan* had mostly a cultural character.⁵¹⁵ These publications and communities were effective in the Kurdish nationalist awakening to some extent. These communities, which were founded by influencing from the publications of the Young Turks and the Armenians, made Kurds to realize their Kurdishness and their objective of creation of a national literature and culture paved the way to awakening of the Kurdish nationalist sentiments. The formation of nationalist sentiments in that period was realized mostly in a cultural context. Although the Kurds were highlighting their identity

⁵¹⁴ Rıza Nur, *Yeni ve Yakın Çağda Kürt Hareketi*, s.96, c.f., “Naci Kutlay, *Kürt Kimliği Oluşum Süreci*, p.102.”

⁵¹⁵ Bozarlan, *Ibid*, p.841.

of Ottomanness above all and they were proponents of the integrity of the Ottoman state, a consciousness of Kurdishness can be sensed in the works of the Kurds which were apparently separating the Kurds from the Ottoman and other Muslims. However they did not constitute a nationalist literature since the very first determinant of the modern nationalist paradigm, the thesis of nation-state, was not taking place in that literature.⁵¹⁶ Besides, all of these communities did not try to create a mass movement among Kurds in the period till the foundation of the Turkish Republic and also their cultural and martial actions were not nationalist.⁵¹⁷ On the other hand, all of these data show that the Kurdish cultural communities and publications did not cause to a widespread transformation in Eastern Anatolia and the objectives of them did not go beyond than a series of naive cultural programs. However, irrespective of what is said, the contribution of these cultural organizations to the formation of Kurdish nationalism was considerable. The Kurdish intellectuals, who realized their Kurdishness, would be the main group who transmitted these ideas to the people. The orientation of the Kurds towards a separatist political nationalism coincides to a much later period. The Kurdish intellectuals took place in these communities, started aspiring to the independence of Kurds in the years of World War I. Because of these realities the early Kurdish nationalist awakening in the period till World War I can be considered as the research and development period of the prospective Kurdish nationalism.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ Özoğlu, *Ibid*, p.50.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.91.

⁵¹⁸ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Ibid*, p.89.

CONCLUSION

As is well known, the phenomenon of nationalism is a product of industrial society. Nationalism is “inventing” its traditions itself in the international capitalist production relations by the help of a set of some socio-economic changes and political developments. Consequently, some potential qualifications are required in a community for creating its respective nation. It can not be expected that every cultural or political community would transform itself into a “nation” if and when the structural bases of the establishment of a nation did not emerge.

Here at that point, after elaborating broadly the theoretical discussions on nationalism, I comfortably argue that many interpretations of nationalism theories were not applicable to the Kurdish issue which came on the scene during the periods of Abdulhamid II and the CUP. Why there was any nationalist interpretation applicable to the Kurdish society in these periods was due to, first of all, the lack of a modern nation-state formation thinking in the Ottoman Empire among the Muslim *teb'a*. In the light of this argument, it was apparent that an imagined Kurdish community was out of question in the relevant periods since there was not any widespread national awareness and no self-consciousness in societal level among the Kurdish community yet. We may base Hans Kohn's interpretation to some extent, an organic kind of nationalism, in analyzing the Kurdish awakening. Since there was not an actual middle class among the Kurdish community, a small group of Kurdish intellectuals has begun to form an immature kind of national identity and tried to transmit these nationalist ideas to their society. Although I have found some analyses of the ethno-symbolist account more beneficial than the others, some definitions of primordialist conception might be also considered as partly valid for the early Kurdish awakening case. As primordialist assumption asserts, Kurdish intelligentsia started to search for their common past by using their publications and cultural

organizations since they saw that Kurdishness had a perennial character. Particularly during the CUP governance they really started to invent their sense of Kurdishness with these efforts in the cultural area. Kurdish intelligentsia has begun to invite their people into Kurdish cultural heritage and history with publications and associations after 1908. Little more respect to modernist perspective, nationalism has constructed from “above” by the intellectuals and social entrepreneurs in the Kurdish domains. However, there was not a feeling of nationhood among the peripheral and underdeveloped Kurdish society in the Kurdish lands. So these efforts do not refrain from being early nationalist attempts. In one hand Kurds look back to the past and Kurdish heritage, on the other they construct their own national identity with using modern tools such as the flowing of nationalist ideas in the Ottoman Empire that arrived from the Balkans, creating national heroic myths, going back to the Kurdish roots, discovering early Kurdish literature and re-writing Kurdish history. Internal dynamics of the Kurds have directly determined the character of their cultural and political formations. So, national identification, focusing on glorious Kurdish past and cultural heritages and even being a political community did not help creation of a modern nationalist Kurdish discourse at these eras. Furthermore, no matter how these different nationalism assumptions slightly interpret the Kurdish case, the Kurdish sample did not follow the classical Western style nationalism processes in forming their own nationalism literature. They rather largely affected and followed the Turkish and the Armenian nationalist discourses in forming theirs’. So, I remained at a point in the conclusion that there was not an actual best fit nationalism perspective in analyzing the early Kurdish national awakening period at all. Since there was not a mature nationalist claim have formed and vocalized among the Kurdish community during the Abdulhamid II and the CUP eras yet. But the very proximity belongs to the ethno-symbolist aspect of nationalism in any way.

In that context, as I have repeatedly mentioned in all the parts of my thesis work, the creation of the phenomenon of a modern Kurdish nationalism was theoretically impossible in Eastern Anatolia in which the network of pre-industrial

relations were prevailing, because the social ground on which nationalism would be founded did not exist in the Kurdish regions at the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore in the Kurdish regions, in which “feudal” order, tribal structure and religious affiliation were dominant, flourishing of modern nationalist ideas was very difficult in the relevant period. Moreover, Kurdish community lacked basic components of nationhood such as territorial sovereignty, legitimacy, consciousness of their common history and of Kurdishness so we can not talk about an emergence of a Kurdish nationalism in theory. Rather, we may mention an “early awakening of the Kurdish nationalist sentiments” in these ages. Penetration and functioning of the Kurdish nationalist ideology was not in question since, above all, the Kurds were locating themselves within the Muslim subjects of the Ottoman state and stressing their commitment to the Caliphate. In that period when other communities of the Empire were voicing their nationalist demands, the Kurds were far away from being Kurdish nationalists. While regional Kurdish notables were trying to have good relations with the Sultan and to keep their region away from the liberal waves for protecting their regional interests, the Kurds in cities, by stating that they were Ottoman citizens, were aiming the development of a modern Kurdish identity. The Kurdish activities particularly after the 1908 Revolution might have lead to a nationalist awakening of the Kurds, like other nations in the Ottoman State, however there was not social support for a widespread acceptance of nationalism in the Kurdish social ground since the Kurds were divided as urban-dwellers and countrymen and urban people was largely uneducated and tribally fragmented. Especially the people of the region were unaware of nationalist currents developing in the Empire and of the idea of a nation-state. They were interested in just coping with life conditions and surviving; the main realities that they interested in were the removal of animal tax, land tax and exploitation by landlords even in the flowing of nationalisms era within the Empire. Although the “Turkishness” emphasis of the CUP administration started to change social reflexes, nationalist demands had not developed in the Kurdish social ground in this period yet.

By departing the nationalisms debate, whether slightly or not, periods of Abdulhamid II and the CUP has surely affected the Kurdish intellectuals and contributed to the early Kurdish nationalist awakening. If the effects of administrative policies of the state (1880-1914) are taken into consideration, it is seen that both of the governments, of Sultan Abdulhamid II and the CUP, had somehow exactly the same ideas concerning the Eastern Anatolia and the Kurds, that is keeping the subjects and the remaining territories of the Empire together, although they had totally different mentalities of administration. One of the main motives of the early Kurdish nationalist awakening appeared in this period was the emergence of reaction to governments' mis-administration. Although Kurdish people in Kurdistan did not have such a concern of political identity, knowledge of the modern thought has gradually increased in these eras among the Kurdish notables. Kurdish intellectuals, in the beginning, tried to fix the defections of the Empire instead of emphasizing Kurdish nationalism. But then Kurdish nationalist sentiments started its way with reflex of reaction and engaged in building itself. The foundation of this construction process was laid primarily in the form of opposition to the policies of the CUP governance with little affection from trendy nationalist aspirations inside and outside the Empire. Only in intellectual basis they vocalized their Kurdishness via the publications and social projects. Finally, they embarked upon re-writing their common glorious past with the cultural activities burgeoned after 1908 Revolution. Prominent Kurdish elites did not try to bring about a movement which has made separatist nationalist aspirations to the Kurds with formation of the cultural activities and publications founded after the Revolution of 1908. This period can be named as a sort of research and development period for the claims of Kurdish nationalism. It goes without saying that these culture-based claims would bring forth to a mature Kurdish nationalism later on, but Kurdish cultural associations and press tools have an undeniable role in the arousal of Kurdish nationalist feelings.

With creation of cultural arguments, history construction and self- perception newly created modern Kurdish identity continued to flourish and the aims of social projects were embraced by the Kurdish people. The attempts of creating a

common Kurdish memory, the first seeds of which were planted in this period, would contribute a lot to the development of Kurdishness and Kurdish nationalist identity in the intellectual level in the axes of starting to form a distinctive Kurdish identity and to define themselves as coming from the same ethnic origin, without referring to linguistic differences and various religious affiliations. In other words, main argument of this thesis is that the “early awakening of Kurdish nationalist sentiments” started to appear in the context of the perception of a cultural unity in the period after 1908. The discourse of that cultural unity was provided by the notables and the intellectuals for the formation of a widespread sentiment of “us, the Kurds” among the Kurdish masses. Hence, urban Kurdish intellectuals were considerably effective in the development of the modern Kurdish identity and national awakening. Kurdish associations founded by them and the publications done by them after the 1908 Revolution were aiming the awakening of the people’s minds and the development of the Kurdish-populated regions. However the functionality of the intellectual work tried to be formed was almost ineffective. Most of these associations were founded in Istanbul and except Istanbul –the single city in which the Kurds happened to become relatively better organized- the level of organization of the Kurds was highly insufficient. Therefore Kurdish elites living in Istanbul did not have the power of mobilizing the people in Eastern Anatolia, since they were living disconnected from the region and they were strangers to it. The organization of a nationalist movement in that period was almost impossible because of these conditions.

To sum up, these organizations and publications which emerged in the liberal atmosphere after 1909 had started their way for supporting the constitutional monarchy and making social development projects for the Kurdish people. It is also open to different comments that whether they had a transforming effect for the Kurds and the Kurdish identity or not. However it is obvious that any activity made for the sake of and also out of a people or a class may have problems of convenience with society despite all good intentions and even it is an unavoidable result. Although Kurdish intellectuals, who tried to develop Kurdishness in a way which was disconnected from the people, made invaluable contributions to the

identity transformation in the long run; but they remained limited in accomplishing their goals in the time period of this thesis, since they could not meet their ideas with their people and create a social ground. Besides, by departing from the effects of the Ottoman administrative policies in the Kurdish regions irrespective of their positives and negatives, it is argued that, the relation between the Kurds and the state was very dynamic and painful in the period from the involvement of the Imperial lands to the World War I.

In short, I have reached to the conclusion point that I was curious about in the beginning. Here, it was smoothly analyzed that starting from the 1880s, there are some critical turning points in the formation of a separate -but an early form- Kurdish identity. The times between 1880s and 1908, Kurdish cultural and political activities has remained relatively weak and depended on the pragmatic relationship between the local notables and the state. Then, only after 1908 a so-called Kurdish awakening has started to appear among the Kurdish society in a limited sense. According to my data set on the issue, it is a very reality that, nationalisms have triggered each other in the Empire. Kurdish urban intellectuals have affected from the national movements which have accelerated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the Empire. Moreover, in that timeline, before anything else, the inner conditions of the Kurdish region were not ready to host a flourishing nationalist movement. As I have mentioned in all the parts of my thesis work, tribal structure, religious affiliation, common cultural traits, and a common social identity have prevailed over any other social formation. Moreover, in my opinion, the marks of the existence of Kurdish nationalism should be sought in much later than the end of the 19th century; the orientation of Kurds towards a separatist political nationalism coincides to a much later period, because of, above all, the inner dynamics of the Kurdish region. As this study elaborated, regional rebellions at the end of the 19th century, compulsory settlement and immigration policies of the CUP, socio-economic underdevelopment of the Kurdish regions, the Hamidian forces, the CUP's ideal of Turkism, other centralist measures of the government, and that sort of historical events and factors would be the milestones in the creation of a unique Kurdish identity and nationalism. Especially, the

CUP's policy of administrative centralization in the region which was implemented until the First World War and resulted in an early Kurdish nationalist awakening was underlined in this thesis study. In the last instance, this naive nationalist awakening process which was triggered after the establishment of Kurdish associations and cultural publications can be called as the period of preparation for the development of a Kurdish nationalist ideology which would emerge in the period after the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

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