

# The Reign of Sultan Abdulaziz in the American Press

## Amerikan Basınında Sultan Abdüzzaziz Dönemi

Ercan KARAKOÇ\*- Gökhan DURAK\*\*

### Abstract

*Sultan Abdulaziz ascended the Ottoman throne in a difficult period of political and economic crisis. During the 19th century, the empire was on the point of disintegration due to rebellions in the Balkans, especially in the region of Wallachia-Moldavia. The state's finances almost collapsed. Internally, an important opposition front formed with the influence of the Young Ottomans. This opposition grew stronger over time within the military and political bureaucracy and played a critical role in Abdulaziz's dethronement and Murad V becoming the sultan. In this study, the important events that took place in the Abdulaziz period and the developments following his dethronement are examined through some American newspapers and American State Department documents. The last period of the Empire was examined with different documents by giving a new perspective to the Ottoman history.*

**Key Words:** *Abdulaziz, Ottoman Empire, America, American Press, Young Ottomans.*

### Öz

*Sultan Abdülaziz, Osmanlı Devleti'nin siyasi ve ekonomik yönden zorlu bir döneminde tahtta geçti. 19uncu yüzyıl boyunca imparatorluk Balkan coğrafyasında ve özellikle Eflak-Boğdan bölgesinde yaşanan isyanlar nedeniyle dağılma noktasına gelmişti. Devletin maliyesi neredeyse çökmüştü. Dâhilde ise Genç Osmanlıların etkisiyle önemli bir muhalefet cephesi oluşmuştu. Bu muhalefet zamanla askeri ve siyasi bürokrasi içerisinde güçlendi ve Abdülaziz'in tahttan indirilip V. Murad'ın padişah olmasında kritik bir rol oynadı. Bu çalışmada Abdülaziz döneminde gerçekleşen önemli olaylar ile tahttan indirilmesi sonrasında yaşanan hadiselerin bazı Amerikan gazeteleri ile Amerikan Dışişleri kaynaklarında nasıl yer aldığı incelenmiştir. İmparatorluğun son dönemi farklı belgelerle Osmanlı tarihine yeni bir bakış açısı kazandırılarak değerlendirilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Abdulaziz, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Amerikalı, Amerikan Basını, Genç Osmanlılar.*

### Introduction

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire underwent major military, administrative, economic, political and social transformations due to the influence of both external and internal factors. The Ottoman officials launched reform movements to prevent foreign intervention, avoid diplomatic pressure, increase the loyalty of non-Muslim communities to the empire, and to modernize empire. The Tanzimat Edict (1839) and Islahat Edict (1856) were turning points in the reform efforts. As the transition to a constitutional state administration started with the Tanzimat Edict, the Sultan accepted the rule of law. The Islahat Edict was declared in order to increase the loyalty of non-Muslim

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\* Associate Professor, Yildiz Technical University, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Email: ekarakoc@yildiz.edu.tr, ORCID ID: /0000-0002-5859-8661.

\*\* Turkish National Defense University, Personnel Department/Phd Student, Yildiz Technical University, Email: gdurak@msu.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7656-2857.

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Ottoman communities to the state and to prevent the collapse of the empire under the influence of “*Pan-Ottomanism*”. However, these reform attempts failed to stop the the Empire’s dissolution. Most reforms did not reach beyond the legislative regulations deemed necessary by officials or imposed on them by representatives of the great states, and these reforms were not fully adopted by Ottoman society. In fact, the new practices created a dual legal system as the Ottoman state used traditional legal rules as well as legal rules borrowed from the Western tradition. This situation revealed the different groups that accepted Western norms or those that resisted these norms.<sup>1</sup> In these years when the Ottoman Empire faced collapse, in accordance with its economic interests the United States became interested in the Ottoman hinterlands. Relations between the two states developed through mutual agreements and during this period many Americans traveled in the Ottoman lands for religious purposes. This increasing contact between the two states due to economic and religious factors led the American press to dedicate increased coverage to the Ottomans and to affairs in the empire.

The first reports about Sultan Abdulaziz in the American press interested the “*Kuleli Incident*” (September 14, 1859), the first major reaction against the Sultan’s authority due to the reforms of the Tanzimat Period. The dissatisfaction created by the Tanzimat in some sectors of society combined with poor economic conditions following the Crimean War (1853-1856) enabled some bureaucrats, who had not attained their desired offices, to establish the “*Fedailer Cemiyeti*” (Fedai Organization).<sup>2</sup> Its aim was to utilize dissatisfaction with the administration to gain the support of the masses through the ulema and high-ranking military officials. The organization planned to replace Sultan Abdulmecit with Crown Prince Abdulaziz, and so keep the new Sultan under their control.<sup>3</sup> In comments in the American press it was emphasized that “*there was a great resentment and dissatisfaction with the administration in the country, and that the Sultan’s [Abdulmecid] expenses made the people increasingly poor.*”<sup>4</sup> In comments about the “*Kuleli Case*” in newspapers, reported stated: “*It is a conspiracy against Sultan Abdulmecid and it is prevented by being noticed, important arrests are made in the high bureaucrats, and the peace and security of the Sultan is provided.*”<sup>5</sup> It was also claimed that, “*After the arrests that took place, threats of retribution arose among the people and this could extend to the palace,*”<sup>6</sup> and that “*Abdulmecid maintained the traditional structure but could*

1 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey A Modern History*, I. B. Tauris & Co.Ltd., London, 2004, p. 66-67.

2 Sheik Ahmed, Cafer Dem Pasha, Huseyin Daim Pasha, Rasim Bey, Arif Bey, Sheik Feyzullah and Sheik Ismail were the leading members of the organization. Zekeriya Türkmen, “Kuleli Vakası”, *D/Â*, Vol:26, Ankara, 2002, p.356-357.

3 Burak Onaran, *Padişahı Devirmek, Osmanlı İslahat Çağında Muhalefet: Kuleli (1859) ve Meslek (1867)*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2018, p.123-142.

4 *New York Daily Tribune*, 20 September 1859.

5 *New York Herald*, 15 October 1859.

6 *The Intelligencer*, 11 November 1859.

not control the political and military administration, so he remained a tool in the hands of Europe's Great Powers and the country was gradually sinking in debt."<sup>7</sup> The American press indicated that the sultan ascended the throne in very difficult circumstances and that the stability of his reign was possible only by resisting these pressure groups. It is noteworthy that American newspapers foresaw the coming unrest in Ottoman society and anticipated the Coup of 1876.

When Abdulaziz ascended the throne on June 25, 1861, the first biographical informations in the American press about the new sultan reported that "Abdulaziz was well-known in English and French to communicate directly with foreigners through a qualified education."<sup>8</sup> The United States was closely following the change in sultan in the Ottoman administration as it wanted to gain economic, political and social power in Ottoman regional politics. Developments in Ottoman geography, which were attributed as having great importance for American politics, were transferred to Washington D.C. in periodic reports. The U.S. State Department instructed the American Ambassador Joy Morris as follows: "Congratulating the sultan by recommending good relations with the newly emerging Sultan Abdulaziz", "the delivery of good wishes of the United States" and "acting in accordance with American commercial interests and their relations as soon as possible a commercial treaty to develop."<sup>9</sup> During the establishment and development of relations with the Ottomans, America acted cautiously to avoid attracting the reaction of great powers such as the British Empire and Russia. Since the late 1860s, it had become an active state that intervened in regional problems like the European powers. The instructions given to Ambassador Morris were a manifestation of America's desire to increase its influence in the region.<sup>10</sup>

Sultan Abdulaziz wanted to continue the reform movements that had begun before his reign. The new Sultan first established a new Provincial Order and reorganized the provincial administration by working with Ali and Fuat Pashas, who were leaders of these reform movements.<sup>11</sup> Further, in 1863, he went to Egypt with the Princes Abdulhamid, Murad and Mehmet Reshad to closely examine the military, economic and social changes in Egypt. He visited industrial workshops established by Mehmet Ali Pasha in Bulak, weaving factories in Cairo, as well as museums and the pyramids.<sup>12</sup>

After his trip to Egypt, the Sultan also visited several European countries. The Ottoman administration welcomed the French emperor Napoleon

7 *Lewistown Gazette*, 17 July 1861.

8 *The Weekly Ottumwa Courier*, 7 August 1861.

9 *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, from William H. Seward to E. Joy Morris, 28.08.1861; p.392-393.

10 Çağrı Erhan, *Türk Amerikan İlişkilerinin Tarihsel Kökenleri*, İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, Ankara, 2015, p.396.

11 Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 2007, p.120.

12 François Georjeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2016, p.39-40.

III's invitation to the Paris Exhibition of 1867, which gave the Sultan to improve relations with the European states, and Abdulaziz accepted the invitation. This trip was also notable for being the first and last trip made by a Sultan-Caliph, to the Christian countries. Abdulaziz and his delegation left Istanbul on June 21, 1867, for Toulon, and then continued onward to Paris by train. They arrived in Paris on June 30 and were hosted at the Élysée Palace, where the Sultan conducted numerous diplomatic meetings and visited the Universal Exhibition, where agricultural and industrial products of the period were exhibited.<sup>13</sup>

After 10 days in Paris the Sultan and his delegation left for England on July 11, 1867. The American press closely following the Ottoman delegation's meetings. In the newspapers, the Ottoman Delegation was reported to have been "hosted at Buckingham Palace, important security measures were taken around the palace, streets decorated with flags, people greeted the Ottoman delegation on both sides of the roads with excitement."<sup>14</sup> Sultan Abdulaziz's journey was described as, "not a journey to travel and learn Europe, but a journey to directly influence the European public (public diplomacy)." The Sultan made speeches, his own compositions were played at the balls he attended, and he was greeted with his own anthems.<sup>15</sup>

In England, Abdulaziz and his entourage took part in naval maneuvers, visited shipyards and participated in a parade in Portsmouth. After England, the Ottoman delegation crossed into the Austro-Hungarian Empire via Belgium and Prussia and arrived back in Istanbul on August 7, 1867. Everywhere he went the Sultan attended receptions, military parades, naval maneuvers, proms and concerts. Thus, he had the opportunity to compare the situation between his Empire and Europe and to examine closely Western ways of life, traditions and customs.<sup>16</sup> Following this trip, he tried to bring the innovations he had seen in European cities to Ottoman society. While the conditions for railway investments in Rumelia were worked through, the preparations for the Istanbul-Baghdad railway line were started. During the Sultan's reign, the first investments were made in metros and trams.<sup>17</sup> The sultan also introduced important reforms in education and in law. Galatasaray High School was opened in 1868. In the same year, the *Meclis-i Vala* (Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances) was reorganized and divided into two new organizations, the *Divan-ı Ahkâm-ı Adliye* (Court of Cassation) and the *Sura-yı Devlet* (Council of State). The

13 *New York Daily Tribune*, 1 July 1867.

14 *Memphis Daily Appeal*, 12 July 1867.

15 İlber Ortaylı-İsmail Küçükkaya, *Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yüzyılı*, Tımas Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012, p.24.

16 François Georgeon, *Ibid.*, p.42.

17 During the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz, French engineer Henry Gavand received his first metro concession. The "Tunnel" was built on June 10, 1869. Trams were first built in the form of horse-drawn trams on September 3, 1869, after the concession given to Konstantin Krepano. See detail information. Murat Bozkurt, "İstanbul Kentiçi Toplu Ulaşım Tarihi Literatürü", *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, Vol:8, Issue:16, 2010, p.355-366.

*Mecelle* (Ottoman Civil Code), which can be cited as one of the most important reforms from the period, was adopted in 1870.<sup>18</sup>

The United States followed the Sultan's moves to modernize the army and strengthen the navy, because US officials perceived this as the sign of a possible rival force in the Mediterranean. In his reports sent to the State Department, Ambassador Morris reported in detail on all the characteristics of the armoured ships that the Ottoman Empire ordered and even described the Turkish navy as a possible threat. He reported that the Ottoman navy would become a major force in the Mediterranean basin.<sup>19</sup>

Despite Abdulaziz's positive initiatives, expenses such as uneconomical expenditures, armament and naval purchases, and the construction of new palaces made the Ottoman financial structure unsustainable. Moreover, Tanzimat's pashas Mustafa Reşid, Ali and Fuad, who were very influential on the state administration, died and a new era begun. The new grand viziers were unable to solve existing problems and created their own issues. In the Empire, the Young Ottoman Society increased its influence and opposition to the state. The emergence of the idea of a "Constitutional Monarchy" resulted in criticism of the state administration. Furthermore, the Balkan revolts, the Crete revolt, the Bulgarian and Serbian Rebellions and the Wallachia-Moldavia events were among the other factors that led to criticism of the Ottoman administration. Shortly, the beginning of the 1870s was a period in which economic and political problems escalated in the Empire and such issues prepared developments that eventually would lead to Abdulaziz's dethronement and death.

### **Reasons for the Abdication of Sultan Abdulaziz in the American Press Events in the Balkans**

The idea of nationalism, which emerged from the French Revolution, had crucial implications in the Balkans. Supported by the European Powers, uprisings in the Ottoman Empire's Balkan provinces continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These revolts also paved the way for Britain, France, Austria and Russia to intervene politically and militarily in the Ottoman Empire. The United States, on the other hand, was trying to be effective over the long term. The Balkan revolt during the reign of Abdulaziz occurred in Montenegro and Herzegovina. The reasons for the rebellion in Herzegovina were Serbia's and Wallachia-Moldavia's expansion of their autonomy; Russia's incitement of the Slavs; Austria's protection of the rebels; and Montenegrin cooperation with the Herzegovina rebels.<sup>20</sup> Besides, behind the events taking place in the region are the

18 Bernard Lewis, *Ibid.*, p.122-123.

19 *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, from E. Joy Morris to William H. Seward, 5.01.1866; p.231-232.

20 Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi, Islahat Fermanı Devri (1861-1876)*, Volume: 3, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 2000, p.3, 4.

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activities carried out by the Babıali in the name of strengthening the central authority. Local leaders who opposed this situation resisted the Ottoman Empire. Because of the reforms, conservative Muslims objected to the growing influence of the Christian powers. They formed a very strong opposition to changes in the administrative and military system. Efforts to renew the tax system and help the peasantry also damaged the interests of the Muslims. For these reasons, it was inevitable for a rebellion to occur.<sup>21</sup> Montenegro, which was worked to arm anti-Ottoman forces, also supported the rebel movement in Herzegovina, thus delaying the cessation of the rebellion. In the American press, when the newspapers wrote about the rebellion they emphasized that, "Turkish troops wanted to suppress the rebellion with intense military efforts."<sup>22</sup>

The Ottoman government appointed Ömer Pasha to stop the revolt. He defeated the rebels on November 21, 1861 at the Battle of Piva.<sup>23</sup> With the success of the Ottoman forces, the ambassadors of the Great powers delivered a note to the Ottoman Empire asking for the war to cease. The rebellion was completely halted on August 31 1862, when he signed a treaty.<sup>24</sup> Although Ottoman-Montenegrin relations entered a peace process with the signing of the treaty, the underlying reasons for the rebellion were not completely eliminated and, because of superficial precautions, a permanent solution could not be reached in the region. The Ottoman officials tried to ensure peace and tranquility in the region by only sending troops to Montenegro. In fact, the problems in Montenegro were caused by political, social, economic and legal problems that had developed and compounded over the centuries. These military interventions made the problems more complicated. Therefore, a second rebellion broke out in 1875 in Herzegovina. In this period, the Russians' Pan-Slavism policy meant that they increased their financial and military aid to Christians in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Bulgaria in order to encourage them to revolt against the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Austria also made promises to the Christians of Bosnia and Herzegovina and helped to develop the rebel movement. In 1875, Herzegovina was under the administration of the Province of Bosnia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Christians were a majority and Muslims a minority, and most of the population consisted of rural farming families. Taxation-related abuses were the most important factor behind the rebellion in Herzegovina. As a matter of fact, American newspa-

21 Barbara Jelavich, (Translate: İhsan Durdu, Gülçin Tunalı, Haşim Koç), *Balkan Tarihi 18. ve 19. Yüzyıllar*, Küre Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009, p.380.

22 *Alexandria Gazette* and *The New York Herald*, 16 April 1861.

23 The American press reports that Omer Pasha has largely suppressed the rebellion, *The New York Herald*, 24 June 1861; *The Daily Exchange*, 25 June 1861; and he fought against 8,000 rebels and that 800 dead and wounded were given from Ottoman troops. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 December 1861. Uğur Özcan, *II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Osmanlı-Karadağ Siyasi İlişkileri*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 2012, p.30.

24 *Evening Star* and *The Daily Exchange*, 5 September 1861; Enver Ziya Karal, Vol:3, *Ibid.*, p.6.

pers reported that “excessive taxation by Turkish authorities in the region” played a key role in the development of the rebel movement, and “incidents on the Dalmatian coast, and especially at the Austrian border, were against Turkish authority and rebels were raising Austrian flags in areas close to the border.”<sup>25</sup>

The rebellion began when 160 Christians of “Nevesin” district in Herzegovina escaped to Montenegro to avoid paying the cattle tax and to get rid of the local forces.<sup>26</sup> The Prince of Montenegro asked the Russian ambassador Ignatyef to mediate between the Ottomans and allow the rebels to return to their towns. The Ottoman administration ordered Bosnian Governor Derviş Pasha to review the complaints. But, on July 24, 1875, the rebellion resumed.<sup>27</sup> The New York Times argued that the rebellion movement had turned into a struggle for independence, claiming that “the conflict between the Christian and Muslim communities is gradually developing against Turkish rule.”<sup>28</sup> In addition, the rebels sought to expand the rebellion towards Bosnia, Montenegro and Austria. Attacks on Muslim families, especially those living in these areas, led to its expansion. The New York Times reported that “many Muslim families were massacred and many villages were looted.”<sup>29</sup> The American press also used open source intelligence from local newspapers in the region and one-sidedly shared the developments with the public. *Glas Cernagoza*, which was published in Montenegro, described the aims of the uprising thus: “This uprising will eventually lead to a result. Not the rulers, but the nations will decide what to do. Montenegro will not stand by in the face of rebellion and the rebellion will be successful if it spreads throughout Serbia. Now or Never.”<sup>30</sup> As can be seen from this report, the rebellion was expected to spread throughout the Balkan region.

After a few months, Austria, Russia and Germany tried to create a basis for an agreement between the Ottomans and the rebels through their consuls in Ragusa. The rebels demanded an armistice and concessions to Bosnia-Herzegovina, saying they could not rely on the Turks during the talks. The rebellion soon moved from a local dispute to take on an international dimension. The Sublime Porte was informed that there were talks between Prince Bismark, Count Andrassy and Gorchakov in Berlin and that Count Andrassy was preparing a program to ask for concessions from the Ottoman administration for Herzegovina. On the advice of Britain, the Ottomans had planned to prevent

25 *The Daily Phoenix, New York Times and The New York Herald*, 12 July 1875.

26 The Nevesinje Rebellion was different from the numerous armed resistance actions in Herzegovina and Bosnia. Preparation for the rebellion took a year. The impact of the event was felt deeply on Russia, Austria and the specially Ottoman Empire. Misha Gleeny, *The Balkans Nationalism, War and The Great Powers 1804-2012*, Penguin Putnam Inc., Canada, 2000, p.104.

27 Enver Ziya Karal, Vol:3, *Ibid.*, p.74,75.

28 *New York Times*, 2 August 1875.

29 *New York Times*, 16 August 1875.

30 *Nashville Union and American and New York Times*, 31 August 1875.

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the intervention of Russia, Germany and Austria by issuing a reform program before it was imposed by the European Powers. Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Pasha prepared the “*Edict of Justice*”, which granted Christians new rights and privileges.<sup>31</sup>

### Wallachia -Moldavia Events

“*The Edict of Justice*” was based on the principles contained in the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts. Count Andrassy gave a note to the Ottoman Empire on November 30, 1875, after obtaining the approval of Russia, that claimed that the Ottoman Empire did not fulfill its promises in the 1875 Justice Edict.<sup>32</sup> When the note was delivered, Count Andrassy claimed that the note was prepared not to intervene in the affairs of the Ottoman State, but to conciliate between the rebels and the Ottoman Government. The ambassadors from the states party to the Paris Treaty of 1856 also verbally reported the contents of the note on December 30. The note included religious and sectarian freedom, the abolition of tax farming (*iltizam*), landownership right for the farmers, and the expenditure of taxes for local needs. The Sublime Porte accepted the note on February 11, 1876, thinking that peace would not be achieved if the note was rejected.<sup>33</sup> Despite the Sultan’s agreement, the rebels demanded more comprehensive reforms. Count Andrassy believed that with the rebellion of the Bulgarians and Cretans, the rebellion would soon expand. The Bosnia-Herzegovina rebels, meanwhile, continued their struggle, knowing that they would be supported by Russia, Serbia and Montenegro.

During the reign of Abdulaziz, another development that undermined state authority over the Balkans and provoked a reaction from the European powers took place in Wallachia-Bogdan.<sup>34</sup> The decree of December 6, 1861 stip-

31 The Ottoman administration issued three edicts in this context. In the first edict dated September 20, 1875, it was announced that a special Ministry of Justice would be established, some rights would be granted to the people and the tax collectors would be better supervised. By a second decree issued on October 2, 1875, the Edict of Justice granted Christians the right to tax relief, freedom of belief and equality before the law. The third decree is dated December 12, 1875 and is more comprehensive. It was declared that independent courts would be established, freedom of faith would be provided, the forced labour of Christians would be abolished, the compensation fee for the military service would not be charged on those who were outside the age range of 20-40, and the villagers could buy land. Tufan Turan, “İspanya Elcilik Raporlarında 1875 Hersek İsyanı”, *Bellekten*, Vol: 62, Issue: 294, (August, 2018), p.633.

32 *National Republican*, 4 December 1875.

33 *New York Times*, 16 February 1876.

34 Under the Ottoman rule, especially in the 18th century, voivodes could be appointed as Wallachia and Moldavia several times. This situation paved the way for the unification of both principalities on the common ground of a single people (Wallachia-Moldavia/Romanian), language and Orthodoxy. Customs were abolished between the two countries on January 1, 1848, thus creating a common economic infrastructure. When the defeat of Russia in the Crimean War (1853-1855), more favorable conditions emerged for the independence



ulated that Prince Couza would rule Wallachia together with the parliament. However, the legislators engaged in a political struggle among themselves, rendering the Prince's government powerless. In response, Couza dissolved parliament in 1864. The Ottoman Empire regarded this situation as illegal and did not recognize it. Prince Couza came to Istanbul on June 28, 1864, re-reconciled with the Ottoman Empire and signed the Istanbul Protocol, according to which Wallachia would be free in domestic affairs, and the region would be governed by the Prince, the national assembly and a senate. In return, Wallachia-Bogdan would remain under the rule of the Empire. However, all these initiatives remained temporary and provided only superficial solutions.<sup>35</sup>

In Wallachia-Moldavia, pro-independence politicians believed that Romania could become an independent state if they removed elected Couza from the administration, and they rebelled against Prince Couza, who was forced to resign on February 23, 1866. On the same day, Romania's parliament elected Count Leopold, the brother of the King of Belgium, as Prince to the throne of Romania. The Ottoman Government declared that it did not recognize the situation as it violated the treaties. However, on March 10, 1866, Prince Charlemagne of the Hohenzollern dynasty was elected to the Principality of Romania by the Paris Conference. On October 26, 1866, the Ottoman administration approved Prince Charlemagne's Principality of Romania with a decree. The states that supported Romania's autonomy soon recognised the new situation and Romania quickly loosened its ties to the Ottoman Empire and quickly became a semi-independent state.<sup>36</sup>

### Serbian Rebellion

One of the Balkan rebellions closely watched by the American public was the 1862 Serbian Revolt. In January 1862, the Serbian government began increasing the number of its military forces in Belgrade. In February and March, there were isolated attacks against the Turks. Belgrade residents, who rose up after two Serbs were killed in the riots on June 10, 1862, captured all the Ottoman outposts in the city. The Serbs attacked everywhere and the Turks were on the defensive. Through foreign consulates in Belgrade, the Serbian authorities reached an agreement with the Belgrade guard, Aşir Pasha. However, turmoil continued due to ongoing attacks by Serbian troops and citizens against the Belgrade fortress.<sup>37</sup>

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of the Romanians. The great powers, which wanted to create an obstacle to the expansion policy of Russia, which was advancing in the direction of the Balkans, Istanbul and the Straits, accepted the unification of Wallachia-Moldavia (1859-1862). In 1859, Wallachia and Moldavia united under the leadership of Alexandr Couza, forming the core of today's Romania. Sedat Avcı, "Romanya", *D/İA*, Vol:35, Ankara, 2002, p.166-167.

35 Enver Ziya Karal, Vol: 3, *İbid.*, p.8, 9.

36 Fahir Armaoğlu, *19. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1997, p.264, 265.

37 The American press regarded the Castle Commander, "Asheer" Ashir Pasha, as the perpetrator

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For this reason, a conference consisting of the ambassadors of England, France, Italy, Prussia and Russia gathered in Istanbul. At the end of the conference, a protocol was signed on September 8, 1862, according to which the Ottoman Empire left the fortresses of Socod and Oujtza to the Serbs and kept the fortress of Belgrade. The revolt underlined how Ottoman rule was gradually weakening in the region.<sup>38</sup> The Serbs, who received the support of the great powers, entered a long period of negotiations with the Porte, and in this process, it was aimed to withdraw all the troops of the Ottoman Empire and this was only realized in 1867.<sup>39</sup>

### Bulgarian Rebellion

Sultan Abdulaziz's reign also witnessed the Bulgarian Rebellion. Bulgarian attempts to gain independence set an example for struggles against the Ottoman Empire in Wallachia-Bogdan, Serbia and Crete. The insurgents fought regular Ottoman troops in Bulgaria. For the Ottomans, the most important uprising in the Balkans is the Bulgarian uprising, as Bulgaria's proximity to Istanbul and its central location in the Balkans made policing and security in the region vital for the Ottomans. The American press closely followed the Bulgarian Issue. According to the American press, the Bulgarians rebelled against the Ottoman administration in 1867 for different reasons, including "the creation of an autonomous state under the denomination of the Kingdom of Bulgaria where Bulgarians constitute the majority,<sup>40</sup> the formation of a national and constitutional government, the rule of the Kingdom by a Christian who will be elected by a national assembly that is composed by the votes of the people."<sup>41</sup> It was also reported that Bulgarian insurgents organized in small groups and used so-called irregular warfare hit-and-run tactics.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the press argued that the Bulgarians' demands were justified, emphasizing that the people were oppressed by Ottoman rule and lived under bad conditions.<sup>43</sup>

Bulgarian gangs used the term "Balkan Transitional Government" in their leaflets, saying their goal was to establish an independent Bulgaria. Danube (Tuna) Governor Mehmed Sabri Pasha was unable to stop the rebels, and

of the events. According to the newspaper 13 Serbs and 2 Turks were killed during the events. *The Memphis Union Appeal*, 20 July 1862.

38 Belgrade Castle was left to Serbia on 20 March 1867. Enver Ziya Karal, Vol: 3, *Ibid.*, p.15.

39 Barbara Jelavich, *Ibid.*, p.272.

40 On 11 March 1870, Abdulaziz declared the acceptance of the demands of the Bulgarian Patriarchate and the establishment of an independent Bulgarian Church, which the Bulgarians had been demanding for a long time in order to put an end to the conflicts between the Greek Patriarchate and the Bulgarian people. Thus, "Eksarhlık Edict" was published. Ramazan Erhan Güllü, "Bulgar Eksarhlığı'nın Kuruluşu ve Statüsü", *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol-17, 2018, p.350-361.

41 *The New York Herald* and *New York Daily Tribune*, 10 April 1867.

42 *The New York Herald*, 8 July 1867, *The New York Times*, 17 September 1868.

43 *Delaware Gazette*, 19 April 1867; *New York Daily Tribune*, 18 October 1867.

State Council Chief Midhat Pasha was sent to Bulgaria and soon suppressed the movement of the gangs. Midhat Pasha reported to the government after the end of the rebellion, emphasizing the emerging nationalism movement in Bulgaria. He outlined the measures to be taken in military and educational fields. However, the Bulgarian Issue remained a problem, and the measures proposed in his report were not taken into account. The impact of the Bulgarian uprising in 1876 was deeply felt in the Ottoman Empire.

Although planned for May 1876, the rebellion began in almost all vilages of the Plovdiv region in April. According to the American press, *"the rebels, which were about 10,000 people, had planned this rebellion long ago."* On the other hand, the Ottoman administration reinforced the region in a short time by making military shipments through Edirne and resisted the rebels.<sup>44</sup> The American press claimed that *"The Bashi-Bazouk forces [gangs] dispatched to the region by the Ottoman Government massacred old people, women and children and burned villages in the region."*<sup>45</sup> It is understood that this kind of news was published in the American press for propaganda purposes, as the inclusion of such claims in the newspapers opened the way for Western states to intervene in the region. Bulgarian rebels who realized that they could not be effective through the uprising tried to get the support of the Great powers and America. It was alleged in the American press, continuously for propaganda purposes in order to gain international support, that the Ottoman army carried out massacres aimed at the civilian population.

One of the important events that took place at this point was the *"Salonica Incident."* A Bulgarian girl living in Salonica converted to Islam. The U.S. Consul Lazarro kidnapped the girl from local forces with the men under his command and the locals reacted with great anger. The American press claimed that *"the Christian girl was forcibly brought to the mosque by Muslim gangs and rescued with the support of the German consul Paul Moulin and the French consul Abbot upon hearing the cries for help."*<sup>46</sup> The Muslim community, which claimed that a girl who accepted Islam could not be abducted by force, marched to the U.S. Consulate to get her back. In the meantime, the consuls of France and Germany wanted to prevent the crowd and they were killed by the aggrieved people. The American press considered the killing of the consuls to be *"a brutal massacre and a great disgrace."*<sup>47</sup> In the aftermath of the Salonica Incident, relations between

44 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 May 1876.

45 *The New York Times*, 25 June 1876.

46 *The New York Herald*, 10 May 1876; *Ashtabula Telegraph*, 12 May 1876. Lazarro's report to the Ambassador of Istanbul Horace Maynard states that the girl was 12 years old and met Turkish women while carrying water from a fountain in a village called Bogdantza; *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, from Lazarro to Horace Maynard, 25.05.1876; p.569,570.

47 *Memphis Daily Appeal*, *National Republican*, *The Dallas Daily Herald* and *The Wheeling Daily Register*, 10 May 1876.

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the states of France, Germany, Italy and the Ottoman Empire became increasingly tense. These states sent warships to Salonica, and demanded that the perpetrators be punished. Sultan Abdulaziz did not accept these requests and ordered several battalion soldiers to the Balkans and sent troops to Salonica by sea. The criminals were not handed over to the foreigners and were to be tried in Ottoman courts. By order of the Sultan, the governor of Salonica was replaced. The six men who killed the consuls in Salonica were tried and sentenced to death.<sup>48</sup>

The suppression of the Bulgarian rebellion and the Salonica incident enabled the European powers to act together against the Ottoman administration.<sup>49</sup> A note was given to the Ottomans by the authorities of Russia, Austria and Germany, who gathered in Berlin on May 12, 1876.<sup>50</sup> This note, referred to as the Berlin Memorandum, generated a strongly negative reaction, in particular because of European hostility to the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the Bulgarian Revolt and Salonica events. However, although it was decided to impose sanctions by notifying the Ottoman Empire of the memorandum, these sanctions could not be realized due to the change in the Sultanate.

### Crete Issue

One of the most serious problems of Abdulaziz period was the Cretan issue. This issue continued during Abdulhamid II's reign. The U. S. was interested in the island because of its military, economic and political interests in the Mediterranean basin. Events in Crete were among the most widely reported topics in the American press. Events on the island of Crete had been featured in the American press since 1866, delivered through letters from William James Stillman, the U. S. Consul. Stillman's information, which was influenced by his friendship with Greeks on the island for many years, was negative toward the Ottomans. Crete was portrayed as a second Greek uprising.<sup>51</sup> In the first

48 Enver Ziya Karal, Vol: 3, *Ibid.*, p.99.

49 The letters and reports published by journalists working in Bulgaria played an important role in the development of the opposition against the Ottoman Empire. One of them is Macgahan. Januarius Aloysius MacGahan, who was a reporter for the New York Herald newspaper, arrived in Plovdiv on 23 July. American Consul Eugene Schuyler accompanied him and tried to gather information about the events. In the report published later, there were incriminating points on the Turkish side. The descriptive letters Mac Gahan wrote to the "Daily News" newspaper and the reports dated August 10, 1876 submitted by Schuyler to Maynard evaluated the events that took place during the riot as "massacres". Januarius Aloysius Macgahan, *The Turkish Atrocities In Bulgaria*, Letters of the Special Commissioner of the "Daily News", With an Introduction & Mr. Schuyler's Preliminary Report, Bradbury, Agnew & Co., London 1876.

50 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 16 May 1876; *New York Daily Tribune*, 19 May 1876.

51 Çağrı Erhan, *Ibid.*, p.272,273; William J. Stillman wrote a work in 1874 in which he reflected his events and impressions on the island of Crete in a biased way. William J. Stillman, *The Cretan Insurrection of 1866-7-8*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1874.

news reflected in the American press, it was emphasized that the Greeks started a struggle for independence on the island of Crete and this struggle was gradually spreading.<sup>52</sup> In order to get support from the President of the United States, Greek requests for help were published in the American press. In these publications, it was stated that “Crete is the country of Minos and Jupiter and that they are experiencing the most painful days in history because of the Turks and that the Christian world is under the Muslim yoke.” They claimed that, “The Turkish rulers imposed heavy taxes on the island’s Christians, put heavy pressure on Christians and were under difficult conditions to live on the island. The inhabitants of the island of Crete are of the same race as the Greeks and Crete is part of the Greek kingdom.” It was also emphasized, “the President of the United States could help liberate the people of Crete.”<sup>53</sup>

Aid campaigns were also organized in relation to the events in Crete through the initiatives of Greeks living in Amerika. In these campaigns, the American people’s interest in the region steadily increased. Comments mentioned in the newspapers included: “the Turks intervened unjustly, the Turkish army was tormented by its operations, the Cretans would be saved from hunger and misery with the help of the Cretans, and the Turks acted barbarically”.<sup>54</sup> Not long after, Dr. Samuel G. Howe established the “Crete Lovers Committee” in Boston. This committee was intended to organize American aid to the island of Crete and take it to Athens.<sup>55</sup> Dr. Howe delivered American aid through contacts in Athens. In his letters, he claimed that “The Turks systematically brutally massacred Christians living on the island, imprisoning even little girls and women, and mistreating the refugees on the island.”<sup>56</sup>

By the end of 1867, the Crete issue in the American public reached a turning point. In the Congress on July 19, 1867, decisions concerning Crete were taken. It was stated in the decisions, “The American people have great sympathy for the People of Crete belonging to the Hellenic family, which civilization owes a lot. The suffering of the people of Crete also hurts the American people. They hope that this statement will be taken into account by the Turkish government when determining the politics of Crete.”<sup>57</sup> In response to this approach of the American government, changes occurred in the attitude of the Ottoman State. The New York Consul Cristopher Hachik Oscanyan protested, stating that, “Seeing the people of Crete as a member of the Helen family was due to not knowing history.” Oscanyan also stressed that “the reason for the Cretan uprising was the attempt by the European states to divide the Ottoman State and that the exaggerated newspaper reports could not be used as evidence in the evaluation of the Cretan issue.”<sup>58</sup>

52 Chicago Tribune and The Evening Telegraph, 31 August 1866.

53 New Orleans Daily Crescent, 5 October 1866.

54 Memphis Daily Appeal, 9 January 1867.

55 The National Republican and The Charleston Daily News, 12 June 1867.

56 New York Daily Tribune, 10 August 1867.

57 Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), from William H. Seward to E. Joy Morris, 22.07.1867; p.14-15.

58 Çağrı Erhan, *İbid.*, p.280.

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During the events on Crete, the Ottoman administration appointed Ömer Pasha to the region. He was an important commander who had achieved significant success in suppressing the Montenegrin rebellion and was well versed in irregular warfare. He defeated the rebels in Lasithi in a short time. The scattered rebel groups tried to hold out in mountainous areas. Some of the rebels began to immigrate to Greece.<sup>59</sup> An assessment in the New York Daily Tribune stated: “*The struggle between Greece and Turkey [the Ottoman Empire] is likely to lead to crises in the Eastern Question. In this way, the whole of Eastern Europe will be brutally excited. This will soon put an end to the rule of Muslims in Europe and pave the way for new states.*”<sup>60</sup> As can be seen from the evaluation, the ongoing crisis between Greece and the Ottoman Empire was seen as the most important part of the Eastern Question for the American press.

Despite negative views of Turks in European and American public opinion, the Grand Vizier Ali Pasha and the Foreign Minister Fuat Pasha believed that the Ottoman Empire could carry out reform in Crete on its own. For this purpose, Ali Pasha was sent to Crete and arrived in Heraklion on October 6 and declared amnesties the same day. The American press reviews called the amnesty, “*A superficial amnesty that is not very sincere.*” However, public order was largely ensured after the amnesty.<sup>61</sup> On February 14, 1868, a reform decree was announced by Ali Pasha in the “*Crete General Assembly*” that described the island’s new administrative order. Although the edict granted autonomy to the island, the rebels insisted on controlling the island and holding a plebiscite on its annexation to Greece. However, the Grand Vizier Ali Pasha did not agree with this idea because he believed the plebiscite would vote for annexation to Greece. Sultan Abdulaziz agreed with Ali Pasha and these ideas were thus rejected.<sup>62</sup> On February 24, 1868, Ali Pasha returned to İstanbul, replacing Huseyin Avni Pasha.<sup>63</sup>

In July 1868, the American Congress presented a bill that envisioned Crete as an independent state. However, it was rejected by the majority of parliament members. Although this was considered an important attempt to keep the Cretan issue alive, Congress reported that the repression of the Ottomans saddened the United States.<sup>64</sup> America’s attitude towards Crete began to change in late 1868. Faced with the danger of becoming part of an Ottoman-

59 *American Citizen*, 31 July 1867.

60 *New York Daily Tribune*, 7 August 1867.

61 *Memphis Daily Appeal*, 25 October 1867.

62 Enver Ziya Karal, Vol:3, *Ibid.*, p.34,35.

63 According to the American press, Ali Pasha did not succeed in his attempts and moves in Crete. *New York Daily Tribune*, 21 March 1868; In his report to the State Department, American ambassador E. Joy Morris commented that Ali Pasha’s attempts were quite sincere and that he could provide peace on the island. *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, from E. Joy Morris to William H. Seward, 11.03.1868; p.111,112.

64 *Alexandria Gazette*, 29 July 1868, *Staunton Spectator*, 4 August 1868.

Greek war, Congress decided that it was appropriate to remain neutral in the framework of American interests and began to act accordingly.

The Ottoman Empire withdrew its ambassador to Athens on December 2, 1868 due to the Cretan issue and ceased to have political relations with Greece. On December 11, 1868, Greece was given an ultimatum due to its provocative role in the Cretan rebellion.<sup>65</sup> The Greek government, on the advice of Russia, wanted to negotiate ultimatum clauses. The Ottoman State rejected this situation and blockaded the Greek coast. Some of the rebels, who could not get help on the island of Crete, were forced to leave the island and the Cretan rebellion ended.<sup>66</sup>

The European states did not see a possible war between the Ottomans and Greeks as appropriate to their interests. They proposed to the Ottoman leadership a conference in Paris, providing that the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and its administration in Crete were not under discussion and focusing only on the Ottoman-Greek conflict. The Ottoman Empire, France, England, Prussia, Italy and Russia participated in the Paris Conference, which opened January 9, 1869, and the demands of the Ottoman Empire were justified. The Declaration included a call on the Greek government to end all intervention in the Crete Rebellion. Thus, the Cretan rebellion and Ottoman-Greek conflict abated for a time.<sup>67</sup>

## External Debts

External borrowing since the Crimean War caused a severe economic crisis in the Empire during Abdulaziz's reign. The Ottoman administration was no longer able to pay its debts and in 1875 the Empire had to declare a moratorium and stopped its payment of overdue external debts for a period. For this purpose, measures known as the "Ramadan decrees" were announced during Ramadan month of 1875. In these decrees, it was stated that a portion of the debt interest would be paid, and the rest would be paid as state bonds. The devaluation carried out by the Ottoman Empire found wide coverage in the American press. According to the American press, "The Ottoman Empire faced this problem because of the high level of foreign debt which was invested in the wrong projects and the economic mismanagement."<sup>68</sup> In addition, the evaluations stated that "the new situation for the Ottoman Empire is an important lesson to be learned". It was also claimed that "if the Ottoman Empire can withstand the dishonor and have to borrow again, it will suffer greatly." It was also foreseen that "the Ottoman Empire would be quite an easy prey to any major state that chose to attack if it could not use the new loans".<sup>69</sup> As a matter of fact,

65 *The Portland Daily Press*, 16 December 1868.

66 *New York Daily Tribune*, 18 December 1868.

67 *The National Republican*, 11 January 1869; *The Daily Phoenix*, 14 January 1869.

68 *The Sun*, 13 November 1875.

69 *The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, 30 October 1875.

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the establishment of the “Duyunu Umumiyye” administration in the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid would prove this in the future.

The Ottoman Empire brought Mahmud Nedim Pasha, known to be pro-Russian, in to serve as Grand Vizier due to the Serbian and Bulgarian uprisings. The Ottoman administration thought that a pro-Russian Grand Vizier would solve the Balkan problem. He was close friends with the the Russian Ambassador Count Nikola Ignatief and was accustomed to consulting with Ignatief on many issues. For this reason, Ignatief had an influence on the moratorium decision. The Grand Vizier Mahmut Nedim Pasha’s decision in the moratorium on the recommendation of the Russian ambassador to Istanbul devastated the economic credibility of the Empire in Europe and European states heavily criticized Abdulaziz and Mahmut Nedim Pasha. In addition to undermining the financial reputation of the Empire, this decision led to increased pressure from Britain and France on the Ottoman administration. It also gave rise to a gradual rise in political, social and economic instability. The moratorium was an important cause for the eventual deposition of Sultan Abdulaziz. Crown Prince Murad Efendi came to be seen as an alternative to the Sultan with the support of the Young Ottomans.

### Young Ottomans

A secret society called *İttifak-ı Hamiyyet* (Alliance of Patriotism) was founded in Istanbul on June 7, 1865 by a group of young people who were against the administration’s policies and were worried about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The name of the society was soon changed to “*Young Ottomans Society*.” Their aim was to ensure that the Ottoman Empire, which was governed by absolutism, was transformed into a legitimate administration. According to the Young Ottomans, in the Ottoman Empire a parliament needed to be established in order to limit the authority of the sultan and to supervise the executive power. Moreover, the Ottoman State would only be able to avoid disintegration by the introduction of a constitutional regime that liberalized the political system and granted freedoms to the people.<sup>70</sup>

Namık Kemal, Ayetullah Bey, Reşat Bey, Mehmed Bey, Menapirzâde Nuri Bey, Ali Suavi were among the Young Ottomans, who blamed Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha for the Empire’s bad situation. In 1867, Mustafa Fazıl Pasha, brother and heir to the Egyptian Khedive İsmail, began to support the opposition movement. He became Minister of Finance in 1862 and in 1865 he was appointed as the head of the *Meclis-i Hazâin* (an advisory council on financial issues). In 1866 Mustafa Fazıl Pasha presented a report to Sultan Abdulaziz critical of Fuad Pasha’s fiscal policy, after which he was dismissed and exiled.<sup>71</sup>

70 Tefik Çavdar, *Türkiye’nin Demokrasi Tarihi 1839-1850*, İmge Kitabevi, Ankara, 1999, p.26.

71 Şerif Mardin, *Yeni Osmanlı Düşüncesinin Doğuşu*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1996, p.37,40.



The Sultan and Fuad Pasha recognized the descendants of Khediv İsmail as successors by an edict issued on the question of succession of Egypt. Mustafa Fazıl Pasha wrote a letter to the Sultan, in which he offered solutions to the general situation of the Ottoman Empire during these events. In his letter, he mentioned the problems of the Ottoman Empire as a financial crisis and the corruption of civil servants and suggested the necessity of creating a free society. In order to get rid of the current problems of the Empire, he proposed transition to constitutional rule.<sup>72</sup> The American press saw Mustafa Fazıl Pasha as the leader of the Young Ottomans movement. It was emphasized that the society “wants a constitutional government to be formed, adopts the principle of equality of nations and aims at the principle of people’s sovereignty.” According to the New York Herald: “Sultan Abdulaziz could welcome the reform demands of this movement, and if the Sultan accepts all the proposed reforms, there could be a radical change in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish society.”<sup>73</sup> Mustafa Fazıl Pasha settled in Paris upon the decision of exile given by Abdulaziz.

These developments led the Ali Pasha administration to take precautions and as a result Namık Kemal was appointed to Erzurum and Ziya Bey to Cyprus. Additionally, Ali Suavi was deported to Kastamonu without a duty. Being aware of this, Mustafa Fazıl invited these intellectuals to Paris to work with him. He promised to provide financial support to continue their opposition to the Ottoman administration and to win the support of the European public via the press. On August 10, 1867, Mustafa Fazıl, Ziya Pasha, Namık Kemal, Ali Suavi, Nuri, Mehmed Bey, Reşad Bey and Rifat Bey met in the mansion of Mustafa Fazıl Pasha. They decided to establish an organization that adopted the principles stated in Pasha’s letter to the Sultan. Ziya was appointed as the leader of the society, called Young Ottomans. In order to promote the views of the Society, it was decided to publish a newspaper called *Muhbir* [Informer]. Ali Suavi took over this task. However, Mustafa Fazıl Pasha was surprised by the fact that the *Muhbir* took a very hard Islamist attitude as soon as it was launched and in its publication policy. It had a divisive impact in the community. Ali Suavi published the newspaper on his behalf with a religious perspective, rather than on behalf of the Young Ottomans. With Ali Suavi’s departure from the community and Mustafa Fazıl Pasha’s reconciliation with Ali Pasha and his return to Istanbul, the ties of the Young Ottomans gradually weakened. After Mustafa Fazıl Pasha returned to Istanbul, financial aid continued for a short time, but eventually ceased.<sup>74</sup>

Although the Young Ottomans were cut off from their funding resources, they continued their push for constitutionalism. On June 29, 1868, Namık

72 Tevfik Çavdar, *İbid.*, p.27,28.

73 *The New York Herald*, 1 May 1867.

74 Tevfik Çavdar, *İbid.*, p. 29-31.

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Kemal started to publish the *Hürriyet* [Liberty] newspaper, but he fell into conflict with Ziya Bey and left the newspaper. With this event, the dissolution of the Young Ottomans began. Upon the death of Ali Pasha in September 1871, Mahmud Nedim Pasha became a grand vizier and then a general amnesty was proclaimed.<sup>75</sup> After this stage Namık Kemal emerged as the leader of the movement. He was forbidden to own a newspaper, so with the help of Mustafa Fazıl Pasha he published a newspaper called *İbret* [Lesson] with Ebuzziya Tevfik, Reşat and Nuri Bey. However, the newspaper was closed four months later and its authors were exiled to different regions. Namık Kemal served in Gallipoli for a while and then took charge of the re-opened *İbret* newspaper. Namık Kemal's play "*Vatan Yahut Silistre*" in the Güllü Agop Theatre, with a theme of patriotism, caused the Young Ottomans to be exiled for the third time. On April 5, 1873, *İbret* was closed and Namık Kemal, Ebuzziya Tevfik, Ahmed Midhat, Nuri and Ismail Hakkı were imprisoned and then exiled. Thus, the Young Ottomans movement gradually began to lose its influence. However, the Young Ottomans inspired the Young Turks who would emerge later.

The American press claimed that journalists such as Namık Kemal and Ebuzziya Tevfik Bey were arrested for "supporting the principles of freedom."<sup>76</sup> In an article in the *Opelousas Journal*, the Young Ottomans were cited as the future reformers of the Ottoman Empire and as the guarantee of the next generation. According to the newspaper, it was stated that the Young Ottomans consisted of people who knew European languages and had ideas about the outside world that they mainly obtained through newspapers. In addition, it was emphasized that the Young Ottomans were able to speak French, to be quite civilized and polite in their approach, attitudes and speeches.<sup>77</sup> According to the American press, the Young Ottomans had been effective in the abdication of Abdulaziz and the enthronement of Murad V.<sup>78</sup> The Young Ottomans movement enabled the discussion and dissemination of concepts such as parliament, freedom, equality, homeland and nation. In addition, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Monarchy was formed thanks to the Young Ottomans. The American press closely followed the leaders of the movement and the ideological infrastructure of the society and recognized its importance for the Ottoman state.

### **Dethronement of Sultan Abdulaziz**

The opposition movements against Sultan Abdulaziz increased their influence day by day owing to social, economic and political disenchantment. The first attempt to dethrone the Sultan was the *Meslek* movement, which was estab-

75 Şerif Mardin, *Ibid.*, p.68

76 *The New York Herald*, 3 May 1873.

77 *The Opelousas Journal*, 13 October 1876.

78 *The New Orleans Democrat*, 2 July 1876.

lished by Mehmet Bey, Nuri and Resat Bey in Istanbul to overthrow the government.

### **Meslek (Mudarris) Movement**

According to the plan, on June 5, 1867, all members of the organization would meet at the Hagia Sophia Mosque. Members of the organization would march to the Sublime Porte in the name of Islam and would address the Islamic community after prayers to explain their objectives. The madrasah teachers and students would try to spread the rebellion to the public. The organization was aimed primarily at removing the most prominent statesmen from the administration such as Ali Pasha and Fuat Pasha. Afterwards, the clergy of the organization planned to impose reform projects on Abdulaziz. However, all of these plans failed since the rebellion had already been exposed, and members of the organization were tried and punished.<sup>79</sup> The American press published a letter written by Ziya Pasha about the incident that had previously been published in the French newspapers. In his letter, he stated that, “*The people arrested in Istanbul were not the leading figures of the Young Ottomans. However, these may have been some patriotic people who joined the Young Ottoman Society by acting in opposition to the government pressure.*” He emphasized the impossibility of an assassination attempt. He completely denied existence of the events and stated that, “*Who did we prepare for the assassination of the Sultan against Fuad and Ali Pasha? There is no serious side to them.*”<sup>80</sup>

### **Assassination Attempt to Sultan Abdulaziz**

Another dissident movement that emerged during the reign of Abdulaziz was an assassination attempt against the Sultan in September 1868. Ziya Pasha published information about the assassination attempt in the October 7, 1868 issue of the newspaper *La Liberte*. It was claimed that the attempt was carried out by Konduri, a merchant from Odessa, and Kostaki Altuncu, a former *sarrafiyer* (moneychanger) in the Ottoman Palace. Ziya Pasha wrote in this letter that the Young Ottomans had no connection to the incident. In 1908, Ebuzziya Tevfik described the details of the assassination incident in the *Tasvir-i Efkâr* newspaper. According to Ebuzziya Tevfik, the assassination attempt was carried out by Huseyin Vasfi Pasha, the son-in-law of Mütercim Rüştü Pasha. Ebuzziya Tevfik also claimed that Huseyin Vasfi had been arrested but fled to Europe afterwards. He only came back to Istanbul after Sultan Abdulaziz was deposed and Murad took the throne.<sup>81</sup> The fact that the American press published news of the assassination attempt with little delay shows the power

79 Burak Onaran, *Ibid.*, p.271-275.

80 *New York Tribune*, 3 July 1867.

81 Enver Koray, “Sultan Abdülaziz’e Karşı girilen Bir Suikast Olayı ve Hüseyin Vasfi Paşa”, *Belleten*, Vol:51, Issue:199, Ankara, 1987, p.193-196.

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of its intelligence network. The Alexandria Gazette and the New York Herald newspapers claimed that “the conspiracy to remove Sultan Abdulaziz from the throne in Istanbul has been uncovered.” It also stated that many political arrests took place following the botched assassination.<sup>82</sup> The rebellion in Herzegovina, the Bulgarian rebellion, and the events in Salonica during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz caused the European public to turn against the Turks, and intervention in the Ottoman Empire increased. Further, Mahmut Nedim Pasha’s pro-Russian policies were instrumental in provoking anti-government events in Istanbul. The opposition to Sultan Abdulaziz and the Porte grew stronger. Grand Vizier Mahmut Nedim Pasha was responsible for the deterioration of conditions in the Empire.

### Rebellion of Softa

On May 10, 1876, students in the madrasah of Fatih, Beyazit and Suleymaniye marched to the Sublime Porte and started a revolt. Sultan Abdulaziz could not resist the situation and dismissed Grand Vizier Mahmut Nedim Pasha on Friday, May 12, 1876. In his place, Abdulaziz appointed the Grand Vizier Rustu Pasha as the Grand Vizier, Hayrullah Efendi as the *Şaykh al-Islam*, Hüseyin Avni Pasha as the *Seraskery* (Minister of War) and Midhat Pasha as the State Council Head. Although the uprising was put down, the new administration formed a strong opposition front to Sultan Abdulaziz. Shortly after the formation of this alliance, they brought in the Minister of Navy Ahmet Pasha. The Press stated that “Muslim softas of about 10,000 people protested against Sheikhulislam and especially Mahmut Nedim Pasha because of his pro-Russian politics.” The newspapers also stated that Abdulaziz resisted the protesters for about an hour, but then fulfilled their demands. The American press regarded the events as “Almost a Revolution.”<sup>83</sup>

This group was aware that Sultan Abdulaziz did not want them and they had only attained office due to the revolt of the madrasah students. When they were accepted before Sultan Abdulaziz, he addressed them by saying, “I’ve made you a civil servant because the people want you, let’s see what you do now,” and announced that he would have dismissed them all at the earliest opportunity.<sup>84</sup> Under these circumstances, Hüseyin Avni Pasha, who was an officer and had the support of the army, wanted to stop the rebel movements in the Balkans and end the Russian influence that had been created by Mahmut Nedim Pasha. For this reason, he prepared a coup against Sultan Abdulaziz. The date for the deposing Sultan Abdulaziz’s was scheduled for May 31, 1876. However, the date of the coup was moved a day earlier because of concerns that Hüseyin Avni would be summoned to the palace and dismissed.<sup>85</sup> Midhat Pasha, on the

82 *The New York Herald and Alexandria Gazette*, 5 October 1868.

83 *New York Daily Tribune and The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, 19 May 1876.

84 Zuhuri Danişman, *Ibid.*, p.227-229.

85 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Midhat Paşa ve Yıldız Mahkemesi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara,

other hand, thought that he could force Sultan Abdulaziz to resign the throne through popular pressure and thus Murad V would be able to take the throne. The third name in the coup was Suleyman Pasha, the commander of the Military Academy. On May 30, 1876, two battalions placed under the command of Suleyman Pasha were positioned around the Dolmabahçe Palace. Warships cut off the entrances to the Bosphorus and Prince Murad was taken to the General Staff Office. Shaykh al-Islam Hasan Hayrullah Efendi read a *fatwa* that approved the Sultan's dethronement. Thus, Sultan Abdulaziz was deposed.

The American press reported in full on Sultan Abdulaziz's fall from power and the accession of the new sultan to the throne. The American press included the Ottoman Grand Vizier's Midhat Pasha Statement and also stated that the change was supported unanimously. In particular, it was emphasized that "Sultan Abdulaziz was dethroned according to an ancient tradition with the agreement of all the administrators and the fatwa of the sheikh-ul-Islam." According to the press, the reason for the sultan's dethronement was his extravagant lifestyle. It was also claimed that "the privileges given by the sultan to non-Muslims caused the people to be provoked." In comments made in the American press, they added that, "The change in political and financial circles can facilitate the solution of the Eastern Question." The Americans considered Midhat Pasha to be the leader of the movement for change. The American press welcomed the new sultan's transition to the throne and stated that the change created great satisfaction among the Muslim and Christian communities. According to the newspapers, it was claimed that "the enthronement of Sultan Murad V caused no resistance and he was adopted as sultan by everyone."<sup>86</sup> The U.S. Ambassador Horace Maynard sent similar information to the U.S. State Department. Maynard reported that "in the early hours of the morning, Sultan Abdulaziz had been deposed and Murad had taken the throne quietly, by complete surprise, the change had taken place." He also stated that "no one has shown any reaction or resentment, and many people welcome this situation."<sup>87</sup> When the American documents are examined, it seems that the deposition of Sultan was a long-awaited development. The American press argued that the political, social and economic conditions of the Ottoman Empire at that time had a direct effect on the deposition of the sultan. Americans seemed to be following this process closely due to their political and economic interests in the region.

### Developments following the death of Sultan Abdulaziz

After Murad's accession to the throne, Abdulaziz was taken first from Dolmabahçe Palace to Topkapi Palace, and then was transferred to Feriye Palace,

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1967, p.30-31.

86 *The New York Herald, New York Daily Tribune, The New York Times and Memphis Daily Appeal*, 31 May 1876.

87 *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, from Horace Maynard to Hamilton Fish, 30.05.1876; p.568, 569.

where he died on June 4, 1876. The death of the Sultan was widely covered in the American press. The first news reports, based on Ottoman sources, stated that *"the Sultan committed suicide by cutting his veins with scissors as a result of the spiritual crisis"*.<sup>88</sup> According to newspapers; *"Dr. Marco Pasha, Dr. Nouri, Attache of Austria and Hungary Sotto, Italian Dr. Spagnalo, Dr. Marc Markel, Dr. I. De Casho, Dr. Morroni, Dr. Milligen Jules, Dr. G. D. Dickson, Dr. Vitalis, Dr. Edouard Spadaro, Armenian Dr. Nouridjian, Dr. Jatrappoulo, Dr. Abdinour, Miltiadi Bey, Servet Bey, Mustafa Bey and Mehmet Bey reported that Sultan Abdulaziz had committed suicide."*<sup>89</sup>

Huseyin Avni Pasha reached the Feriye Palace and had the Sultan's body examined by a medical committee consisting of 19 people. Marko Pasha, the chief physician of the sultan, was also part of the delegation. However, Huseyin Avni Pasha did not allow a thorough examination of the sultan's body. The doctors' committee then prepared a autopsy report after a shortly examination, after which the body of the former sultan was transferred to Topkapı Palace and buried in the tomb of Mahmud II. The news of his death was officially announced in the Ottoman press. According to these reports, *"the Sultan died in a short time after he completely cut the vein of his left arm with scissors, then injured the vein of his right arm with pain, and the blood did not stop so this caused his death."*<sup>90</sup> However, the American press considered the death of Sultan to be a *"suspicious death,"* contrary to the official statements.<sup>91</sup> In addition, it was reported that the Sultan may have been assassinated shortly after his abdication.<sup>92</sup> According to the New York Times, it was stated that *"there were many similar events in Turkish history and that a caliph would not commit suicide according to Islamic principles"*. It was also claimed that *"the death of Sultan Abdulaziz was not a surprise and that he was more likely to have been assassinated."*<sup>93</sup> In another assessment, it was emphasized that Sultan Abdulaziz was killed and the claim of suicide was put forward by the Turkish Government to hide the crime. According to the newspaper:

*"There were several reasons for the incident to be assessed as murder. First, the government announced that the Sultan had been daggered in his heart, but then informed that the veins in his arms had been cut with scissors. Secondly, Abdulaziz's body was examined*

88 *Chicago Daily Tribune and The New York Herald*, 5 June 1876; *The Daily Dispatch*, 6 June 1876.

89 *The New York Herald*, 11 July 1876. There is a difference in the number of doctors in the American press. According to the Sacramento Daily Record Union, Doctors from 9 different countries reported that Sultan Abdulaziz committed suicide by severing the arteries in his right and left arms. *Sacramento Daily Record Union*, 6 June 1876. Danişman claims that there are 19 doctors being Dr. Marko, Dr. Nuri, Dr. Sato, Dr. Espagnol, Dr. Marcel, Dr. Yatropulo, Dr. Abdünnur, Dr. Servet, Dr. De Castro, Dr. Maroen, Dr. Julues Melicen, Dr. Konstantin Karatodori, Dr. Dickson, Dr. Vitalis, Dr. Edward Spadaro, Dr. Nurican, Dr. Melyan, Dr. Mustafa, Dr. Mehmed. Zuhuri Danişman, *Ibid.*, p.266.

90 *Vakit*, 6 June 1876 (13 Cemaziyelevvel 1293).

91 *The New York Times*, 4 June 1876.

92 *Alexandria Gazette*, 1 June 1876.

93 *The New York Times*, 19 June 1876.

quite quickly by doctors and the immediate burial of the body was suspicious. Thirdly, it was emphasized that suicide was banned according to the Islamic faith and that the killing of sultans who were finally removed from the throne was an Ottoman tradition. Finally, they claimed that Abdulaziz did not commit suicide and was assassinated. In addition, the American press evaluated the statements by the Ottoman rulers as ridiculous and Abdulaziz's murder was claimed to be a completely coup.<sup>94</sup>

The sudden death of Abdulaziz and the lack of a detailed autopsy on his body started to raise questions in both Turkish and foreign public opinion. Although it was a report that 19 doctors considered the incident to be suicide, the way the report was prepared and its deficiencies revealed rumors about Sultan Abdulaziz's death pattern. Five years after Sultan Abdulaziz's death, the Yıldız Courts ruled that death was a murder, not a suicide. A total of eleven people, including Midhat Pasha, were sentenced to death. However, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment by Abdulhamid II. The American press covered the Yıldız courts carefully. It was claimed in the newspapers that Abdulhamid II would sentence the murderers of Sultan Abdulaziz to death or exile them to remote parts of the Empire.<sup>95</sup> Some of American newspapers emphasized that Mithat Pasha was guilty and claimed that he would be deported to Taif or Mecca<sup>96</sup> for the rest of his life.<sup>97</sup>

94 *Lincoln County Advocate*, 12 July 1876.

95 *Alexandria Gazette*, 12 July 1881.

96 *The Evening Star*, 25 July 1881.

97 In addition, details of the case were published: *"The disappointed conspirators determined to murder Abdulaziz without waiting for an opportunity for the full execution of their plans. They laid their plans with great forethought. The doubts of the people and the queries of the inquest of surgeons were all anticipated. Professional athletes were hired to aid in the work, and to overpower the ex-Sultan. All weapons were carefully removed from the apartments of the victim. Then Hussein Avni Pasha, with two of his aides, took the hired butchers to the palace where Abdul Aziz was confined. Under pretense of amusing him with exhibitions of strength, the athletes drew near to the ex-Sultan, and then suddenly threw themselves upon the poor old man. A palace servant stopped the Sultan's mouth; one powerful man seized his arms; another was specially detailed to make him faint with pain by wrenching part of the body where a comparatively slight compression would unnerve the strongest man. The devilish ingenuity of this device prevented any struggle on the part of the victim. A fourth man then cut open the veins of the arm with the little embroidery scissors borrowed from the women for that purpose, and the whole party waited with the helpless lump of clay that was so lately Sultan until he had bled to death in his place on the sofa. They accomplished their object without noise, without inflicting contusions on the limbs or on the body of their victim, and without any bespattering of blood about the room. When Abdulaziz was dead, with a great pool of blood saturating the sofa, and streaming off upon the floor, the place was fully ready for the inquest to declare the murder a suicide. Of course, such a party could not enter the place without attracting attention. Some of the women of the palace knew that the death of the ex-Sultan must have been brought about by this visit. The Pashas, therefore, proceeded closely to confine the wives and the mother of Abdulaziz. As to the younger women, they were divided out among the conspirators, and a paragraph was inserted in the papers which praised the simple tastes of the new Sultan in his disposal of the harem of his predecessor. The tell-tale lips were thus thought to be sealed. The hired murderers were enormously rewarded, and the whole crime was covered up by the unanimous verdict of the nineteen surgeons".* *The River Press*, 29 June 1881.

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Abdulaziz's dethronement and subsequent death caused hostility and hatred against Serasker Hussein Avni Pasha, who had been involved in these events and was accused of killing the sultan, among Abdulaziz's relatives. One was an officer named Çerkez Hasan (Hasan the Circassian). Hasan Bey killed Hussein Avni and Rashid Pasha on June 15, 1876 at Midhat Pasha's mansion in Beyazit. He also injured the Minister of the Navy, Ahmet Pasha, and killed one of the soldiers who responded to the gunfire coming from the Serasker Gate.<sup>98</sup> After Hasan was captured, he also killed Sukru Bey, a Naval Captain who insulted him. Hasan was captured shortly afterwards and executed after a trial.<sup>99</sup>

The American Press closely followed the dethronement of Sultan Abdulaziz and the events that followed. The U. S. had been seeking new raw materials and markets and focused on the Ottoman Empire, which was seen as a bridge between Asia-Europe and Africa has closely followed the Ottoman politics and shaped its future politics. In this context, it can be observed that almost all the developments taking place in the Empire were followed by the Americans closely. Even the biographies of some Ottoman statesmen are covered in detail. This shows that The United States of America, a relatively young state, was involved already in the Ottoman Empire and laid the foundation for its political and economic interests in the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Conclusion

The United States acted with long-term purpose to gain power in the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning, the unofficial consulates that were established in major port cities in the Empire worked to expand trade and economic interests. Then, it also strengthened its ties with the Ottomans by supporting the activities of the Protestant missionary groups. Moreover, it started to penetrate into the Balkans, Anatolia and the Middle East by establishing a large economic, political, military and biographical intelligence network. In a short period of time, the U.S. obtained significant gains from the Ottoman Empire through its diplomatic maneuvering.

The European powers struggled with each other to take advantage of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The United States also participated in

98 *New York Daily Tribune* and *New York Herald*, 17 June 1876; *The Morning Herald* and *The True Northerner*, 21 June 1876; *Mower County Transcript*, 27 June 1876; *The Superior Times*, 28 June 1876.

99 "The Hasan Incident" found wide coverage in the American press. The U.S. Ambassador Horace Maynard also sent a report to the State Department that stated: "[Circassian] Çerkez Hasan was one of sultan Abdulaziz's most popular officers, and he was one of the adjutants of Prince Yusuf Izzettin, the sultan's eldest son. Hasan's sister is one of the sultan's wives and the mother of one of his sons. In addition, Hasan was just transferred to Baghdad with the rank of major and in a rage he went to Midhat Pasha's mansion and carried out the assassination there." Horace Maynard also reported that "the New Sultan's sword-wearing ceremony has been postponed continuously for different reasons" *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, from Horace Maynard to Hamilton Fish, 17.06.1876; p.572, 573.



this competition and tried to protect its interests with the Ottomans, in particular by avoiding direct encounter with Europeans. This policy, founded in the Monroe Doctrine, included not being part of the European questions, protecting commercial interests and missionary institutions. This meant that the U.S. initially pursued a careful policy on the region, avoiding conflict with Britain and France, which were strong players. However, it began to follow policies similar to the Great Powers in the following years. Striking examples of this change in policy were mirrored in the American press during the Cretan and Balkan revolts. As a result of the attitude reflected in the American newspapers, uprisings in the Ottoman Empire gained an international dimension. Missionary organizations, which were often the sources for newspapers, were effective in this situation.

When the American press and U.S. State Department documents are examined, as there was no political or military competition between the Ottoman Empire and United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the American documents were more detail in evaluating these events. In addition, there are important details about the Abdülaziz period that could not be found in Turkish sources, especially material pertaining to the assassination of the Sultan. In the news and commentary in the American press regarding the Ottoman Empire, comments that Abdülaziz could be removed from the throne had been analyzed in advance. The assassination was evaluated as a natural event that emerged within the Ottoman understanding of reign. While the American press did not affect events in the Ottoman Empire, it is clear that the Ottoman affairs were of growing importance in the U.S. as American interests in the region were growing. Studying the U.S. press and State Department's involvement in the regional politics of the Ottoman Empire contributes to understanding the foundations of American foreign policy today. The United States tried to protect its regional interests by following developments in Europe, the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East in the short term. However, thanks to its long-term experience, it proved that "being a world state" was possible by following military, economic, political, social and cultural developments in different geographies and using this knowledge effectively.

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