

The Formation and Development of Ismail Gasprinski's Political Views

İsmail Gaspıralı'da Siyasi Görüşlerinin Oluşumu ve Gelişimi

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Öz

İsmail Gaspıralı'nın siyasi görüşleri, Rusya Müslümanları arasında Ceditçilik hareketi bağlamında şekillenmiş ve gelişmiştir. 19. yüzyılda sömürgecilik, Müslüman toplumlarda ekonomik yıkım yaratırken, sosyal ve siyasi alanlarda yeni bir elit sınıfın ortaya çıkmasını sağlamıştır. Gaspıralı, 1884'te Kırım'da ilk *usul-i cedit* okulunu kurarak Ceditçiliği başlatmış; eğitimi, kadın haklarını ve siyasi reformları hedefleyen bu hareket, Müslümanları modernleştirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Avrupa ve İstanbul'daki deneyimleri, onun Doğu ve Batı kültürlerini harmanlayarak reformist bir vizyon geliştirmesine imkân tanımıştır.

1881'de yayımlanan *Rusya'da Müslümanlar (Russkoe Musul'manstvo)*, Gaspıralı'nın siyasi görüşlerinin temelini oluşturur. Ruslaştırma politikalarını eleştiren bu eser, ana dilde eğitim, eşit yurttaşlık hakları ve basın özgürlüğü gibi reform önerileri sunar. Yusuf Akçura, bu eseri Türkçü düşüncenin manifestosu olarak nitelendirir. Gaspıralı, *Tercüman* Gazetesinde bu fikirleri yaygınlaştırmış, kadın hakları gibi sosyal meseleleri ütöpik romanlarla tartışmıştır. 1905 Manifestosu sonrası siyasi özgürlükler artarken, Gaspıralı, *Tercüman*'ı siyasi bir organa dönüştürmeye çalışmış, ancak Abdurrahîd İbrahim'in özerklik taleplerine karşı çıkarak ulusal-kültürel özerkliği savunmuştur.

1908'de siyasi rolünü güçlendiren Gaspıralı, sağlık sorunlarına rağmen Müslümanların haklarını savunmaya devam etmiştir. Liberal tutumu, radikal yeni nesil tarafından eleştirilse de 1908'deki Çarlık kısıtlamaları onun ihtiyatlı yaklaşımını haklı çıkarmıştır. *Tercüman* ve *usul-i cedit*, Gaspıralı'yı, Rusya Müslümanları arasında önde gelen bir figür yapmış; siyasi görüşleri, modernleşme ile kültürel kimliği koruma dengesiyle Ceditçilikte kalıcı bir miras bırakmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Rusya, Müslümanlar, siyaset, Gaspıralı, Ceditçilik.

Abstract

Ismail Gasprinski's political views developed within the Jadidism movement among Russian Muslims. In the 19th century, colonialism harmed Muslim economies, but it also led to the emergence of a new elite in social and political spheres. Gasprinski started Jadidism by establishing the first *usul-i jadid* school in Crimea in 1884. His goal was to modernize Muslims through education, women's rights, and political reform. His experiences in Europe and Istanbul helped him blend Eastern and Western cultures, creating a reformist vision.

Published in 1881, *Muslims in Russia* (Russkoe Musul'manstvo) formed the basis of Gasprinski's political ideas. It criticized Russification policies and suggested reforms, including

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native-language education, equal citizenship, and press freedom. Yusuf Akçura called it a manifesto for Turkish nationalism. Gasprinski shared these concepts in the *Tercüman* newspaper, addressing social issues like women's rights in utopian novels. After the 1905 Manifesto, as political freedoms grew, he tried to turn *Tercüman* into a political platform, opposing Abdurreşid İbrahimov's calls for regional autonomy and supporting national-cultural autonomy instead.

By 1908, Gasprinski fully took on a political role, pushing for Muslim rights despite his health issues. His liberal views faced backlash from a more radical younger generation. However, Tsarist restrictions in 1908, which banned Muslim publications and exiled individuals like Akçura and İbrahimov, confirmed his cautious approach. *Tercüman* and *usul-i jadid* solidified Gasprinski's importance among Russian Muslims. His political views, which balanced modernization with cultural preservation, left a lasting impact, steering Jadidism toward enlightenment and political involvement.

Key Words: Russia, Muslims, politics, Gasprinski, Jadidism.

Introduction: Gasprinski's Political Vision and the Context of Jadidism

Throughout the 19th century, many Muslim societies – stretching from the Maghreb to South and Southeast Asia – were experiencing increased pressure from expanding European colonial powers. For example, places like India, Indonesia, and parts of North Africa became direct colonies of Western empires. Politics such as the Ottoman Empire, the Qajar State in Iran, and the Emirate of Afghanistan retained considerable sovereignty albeit with external pressures. The Russian imperial conquest of Central Asia intensified, especially after the 1860s.

Although differences did exist in terms of religious, social, and cultural practices, Muslim societies across these vast spaces were nevertheless connected through trans regional networks of religious scholars and mystics; professional scholars, and political figures that constituted an intellectual and moral world across imperial borders. While colonialism had a largely destructive impact on economic development in the Muslim world, its effects on social, political, and cultural life were more complex. Among its more paradoxical outcomes was the emergence of a new indigenous elite – comprising educators, bureaucrats, and intellectuals – who not only engaged with modernity but also formulated strategies to resist colonial domination.

Within this broader context of intellectual and social transformation, the origins of Jadidism as a reformist movement are closely associated with the educational innovations initiated by Ismail Gasprinski.¹ Although some

1 Musa Carullah Bigiyev, *Halk Nazanna Bir Niçe Mesele*, Kazan 1912, p. 71; Edward Lazzerini, *Ismail Bey Gasprinski and Muslim Modernism in Russia, 1878–1914*, Unpublished Doctorate Thesis, University of Washington 1973; Begali Qosimov, "Jadidchilik (Ayrım Mulohazalar)", *Milliy Uyg'unish va O'zbek Filologiyasi Masalalari*, Univesitet, Toshkent 1993, p. 12-14; Kürşad Yılmaz, "Vizyoner Bir Lider Olarak Gaspıralı İsmail Bey", *Türkiye Eğitim Dergisi*, 7/2, 2022; Sabri Can Sannav, "Gaspıralı İsmail Bey'in (1851-1914) Yazılarında Eğitim ve Kültür Temelli Faaliyetlerin Yeri", *Trakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 12/24, 2022.

scholars have argued for an earlier genesis in the early 19th century², the movement is most commonly linked to the introduction of the *usul-i jadid* (new method) pedagogy in primary schools, beginning with the establishment of Gasprinski's first modern school in Crimea in 1884.³ While the intellectual currents that shaped Jadidism predate this institutional development, its full articulation as a coherent reform project is inextricably tied to Gasprinski's vision and activities.

Ismail Gasprinski was a key individual in the outlining of modern Muslim reformism in the Russian Empire and asserted considerable influence on Muslim-Turkic thought across a larger Islamic world.⁴ His concern for the social and political circumstances of Muslims was heightened by the Tsarist regime's discriminatory policies toward non-Russian groups. His dual exposure to both Eastern and Western thinking – such as during his time in Europe and Istanbul – shaped Gasprinski's perspective. As Cafer Seydahmet Kırımer stated, drawing on Gustave Le Bon's argument, "to lead a nation to new reforms, you must first change its worldview, and thus, its forms of thinking and acting". Gasprinski understood the intellectual underpinnings of reform and took them on keenly and earnestly.⁵

At its core, Jadidism was a multidimensional intellectual, political, and cultural movement that sought to provoke a mental and social awakening to the Muslims. The goal was to lessen the gap that exists between the Islamic civilization and European modernity by reunderstanding Islamic values in the context of current needs.⁶ While the early interpretations of Jadidism focused on educational aspects exclusively concerning the diffusion of new-method schools, later scholarship has highlighted the movement's broader ambitions,

- 2 Alaeddin Yalçınkaya, *Sömürgecilik ve Pan-İslamizm Işığında Türkistan (1856-1922)*, Divan Kitap, İstanbul 2021.
- 3 Azade-Ayse Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: a Profile in National Resilience*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford 1986, p. 49; Ahmet Kanlıdere, *Reform with in Islam. The Tajdid and Jadid Movement Among the Kazan Tatars, 1809 – 1917: Conciliation or Conflict?*, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul 1997, p. 24-25; Aleksander Benningsen, *Musulmane v SSSR*, YMCA-Pres, Paris 1983, p. 16-17; Dzhamaliutdin Validov, *Ocherk İstorii Obrazovannosti i Literaturny Volzhskikh Tatar (do Revolyutsii 1917 g.)*, Moskva-Petrograd 1923, p. 56-58.
- 4 Cafer Seydahmet Kırımer, *Gaspıralı İsmail Bey (Dilde, Fikirde, İşte Birlik)* (yay. Haz. Cezmi Bayram), İstanbul Türk Ocağı Yayınları, İstanbul 2015; Nadir Devlet, *İsmail Bey (Gaspıralı)*, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara 1988; Edward Allworth, *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*, Duke University Press, Durham 1988; Alan W. Fisher, "A Model Leader for Asia, Ismail Gaspirali", Allworth Edward A., ed., *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*, Duke University Press, Durham 1988, p. 11-26; Edward Lazzerini, "Ismail Bey Gasprinskii (Gaspıralı): The Discourse of Modernism and the Russians", Edward Allworth ed., *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*, Duke University Press, Durham 1988, p. 149-169; Hakan Kırımlı, "Gaspıralı, İsmâil Bey", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* V. 13, İstanbul 1996, p. 392-395.
- 5 Cafer Seydahmet Kırımer, *Gaspıralı İsmail Bey ...*, p. 29.
- 6 Dzhamaliutdin Validov, *Ocherk İstorii Obrazovannosti ...*, p. 74-85; Galimzhan Ibrahimov, *Tatarlar Arasında Revolyutsiia Hereketlere*, Tatarystan Deulet Neshriyatı, Kazan 1925, p. 52, 75.

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including seeking reform of religious practice, promoting a relationship with scientific and literary practices, and finally mobilization for political action.⁷ Here, as a pedagogical component of a wider renewal program, *usul-i jadid* pedagogy was only one component.

Gasprinski's continual reformist tendencies helped, not only to evolve Jadidism often as an umbrella term for all kinds of modernizing agendas throughout the Muslim world, but also reveal the extent it was more than a secular or pedagogical movement and was clearly a comprehensive vision of a type of Islamic modernism that preserves tradition but adapts to innovations. It is this vitality that explains its broad movement and legacy.

Throughout the 19th century, several reform movements within the Islamic world, especially in India, the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Egypt, sought to balance Islamic values with the demands of modernity. As Adeeb Khalid has pointed out, such movements were widely welcomed by the Muslim intelligentsia negotiating colonialism by Europeans and internal stagnation in Muslim societies.⁸ The Jadid movement in the Russian Empire was a unique phenomenon within this landscape of reformism, sharing some characteristics with other reform movements while developing under its own sociopolitical conditions. Unlike the reform movements in other Islamic contexts, Russian Jadidism did not initially have institutional bases or state support. It was through the dedicated initiatives of Ismail Gasprinski that the movement began to gain a foothold among new segments of Muslim society in a consolidated way, eventually developing a reform vision that would come to shape some Muslim societies beyond the boundaries of the empire.⁹

This vision of reform was most clearly articulated in Gasprinski's pivotal text, *Muslims in Russia* (1881), which presented a programmatic agenda for the modernization and cultural renewal of the Muslim-Turkic population. The

Görüş

- 7 Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1988, p. 557-663; John Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, Syracuse University Press, Boulder 1982; Malise Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, Oxford University Press, New York 1984; Mazheruddin Siddiqi, *Modern Reformist Thought in the Muslim World*, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad 1982.
- 8 Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1998, p. 3-4.
- 9 Abdullah Gündoğdu, "Gaspıralı İsmail Bey ve Türk Aydınlanması", *Düşünce Dünyasında Türkiz*, 17, 2012, p. 11-24; Taybe Topsakal, "Rusya Türklerinin ve Müslümanlarının Milli ve Medeni Bilinçlenmelerinde Tercüman Gazetesinin Rolü", *Karabük Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 8 (2), 2018, p. 398-414; Şaban Ortak, "Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı Yönetiminin Gaspıralı İsmail Bey'e Karşı Tutumu", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 8/14, 2022, p. 109-131; Kürşad Yılmaz, "Vizyoner Bir Lider Olarak Gaspıralı İsmail Bey" ..., p. 365-379; Serdar Sağlam, "İsmail Gaspıralı'da Millet ve Milliyetçilik", *21. Yüzyılda Eğitim ve Toplum*, 8/24, 2019, p. 437-457; Cemil Doğanç İpek-Mehmet Çağatay Güler, "The Origins of the Unity Idea in the Turkic World", *Bilgi*, 105, 2023, p. 129-158.

text acted as much more than a programmatic manifesto; it also functioned as a foundational text that established the ideological framework of Russian Jadidism.

Given the relevance of Gasprinski's intellectual contributions, the study of his political thought has become a central concern in the historiography of Muslim reformism in the Russian Empire. This body of literature presents disparate methodological approaches and regional foci, yielding competing interpretations of Gasprinski's political disposition and reformism. Delving into this scholarship could illuminate how his thought has been conceptualized, formulated, and reinvoked over time, and establish the necessary context to situate the current study in an ongoing exchange with historical interpretations.

Comprising the early scholarship in this area, Edward Lazzerini characterizes Gasprinski as a moderate reformer, intending to seize the progressive potentials of notions of cultural change while limiting potentially controversial political engagement. Employing a scrupulous archival approach, he theorizes that *Tercüman* and *Muslims in Russia* advocate for national-cultural autonomy as far as can be achieved under the watchful eye of Tsarist censorship.¹⁰ Alan W. Fisher adds to this frame by emphasizing Gasprinski's transnational encounters, specifically the interaction he took in Cairo in 1908, and as well attempts to reconcile Eastern histories with Western historiographies.¹¹

In contrast, Adeeb Khalid provides a more integratively focused account of Gasprinski's political philosophy, asserting the political implications of his well-known slogan "Unity in Language, Thought, and Action" as a conscious political vision to unify a shared Muslim consciousness. Khalid discusses Gasprinski's role as a leader during the All-Russia Muslim Congresses (1905-1906), while showing the fact that Gasprinski's educational and cultural work was all a part of a bigger political goal of resisting imperial assimilation in Russian culture.¹² Thomas Kuttner, whose approach is narrower in scope, reflects on Gasprinski's time in Cairo and the Universal Islamic Congress proposal, concluding in part from inadequate exposure to public political discourse, that Gasprinski's Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkist political vision was unfulfilled and underdeveloped.¹³

Other scholars have worked to broaden the scope of analyses on Gasprinski. Nadir Devlet highlights a Turkish nationalist view, interpreting *Mus-*

10 Edward Lazzerini, *Ismail Bey Gasprinskii ...*; Edward Lazzerini, "Ismail Bey Gasprinskii (Gaspirali) ...", pp. 149-169.

11 Alan W. Fisher, "A Model Leader for Asia ...", pp. 11-26.

12 Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform ...*

13 Thomas Kuttner, "Russian Jadidism and the Islamic World: Ismail Gasprinsky in Cairo, 1908", *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, Vol. 16, No. 3/4, 1975, pp. 383-424.

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lims in Russia as a manifesto for Turkic unity.¹⁴ In contrast, Şengül and Necip Hablemitoğlu's focus is on reforming gender relations. They frame Gasprinski's support of women's emancipation as a rationale located within the intention of a modernization vision.¹⁵

This study builds on these foundational studies by taking a distinctly chronological, thematically integrated approach. Rather than focusing on Gasprinski's political thought as a static abstraction or in discreet incidents in time and place, the current analysis traces the development and maturation of his political worldview from his earliest intellectual formation to the period of his engagement after 1905. In contrast to Khalid's treatment of Central Asian Jadidism as a collective movement, this article focuses on Gasprinski's individual trajectory, showing how his early lived experience in Bakhchisaray interweaves with his hybrid lived experiences in Europe and Istanbul to shape his political thought. While Kuttner limits his scope to an important moment in Cairo, the current study describes Gasprinski's political project within its engaged domestic and international dimensions, creating a fuller picture of Gasprinski's political project. Finally, where Lazzerini represents Gasprinski as moderate, the article highlights his move to a more explicit engagement in politics in the wake of 1905 as a dramatic recalibration in his reformist agenda.

Formation of Gasprinski's Political Views in *Muslims in Russia*

The innovative reformism of Ismail Gasprinski, along with his critical place in the Jadid movement, was fundamentally rooted in his grand intellectual conception. An educational transformation of the worldview of Russia's Muslims was the centerpiece of this vision, with attention to building a modern, enlightened Turkic-Islamic civilization.

Gasprinski's early education planted the seeds of his political thought. By the mid-19th century, when Gasprinski studied at a military high school in Moscow, Russian nationalism was on the rise, particularly, within military institutions. Being in a military context and claiming to be "Turks" only reinforced the prejudicial attitudes of Gasprinski's Russian classmates and impacted his own conception of nationhood. According to Yavuz Akpınar, his attempt to flee the school in order to assist Muslims in Crete marked a critical turning point in his life – both a symbol and an outcome of his burgeoning political awareness.¹⁶

14 Nadir Devlet, *İsmail Bey (Gaspıralı) ...; Nadir Devlet, Rusya Türklerinin Millî Mücadele ...*

15 Şengül Hablemitoğlu - Necip Hablemitoğlu, *Şefika Gaspıralı ve Rusya'da Türk Kadın Hareketi (1893-1920)*, 2. Baskı, Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları, İstanbul 2004.

16 İsmail Gaspıralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: IV. Eğitim Yazıları (Usûl-i Cedit Eğitim Hakkındaki Yazıları, Eserleri)* (Neşre haz. Yavuz Akpınar), Ötügen, İstanbul 2022, p. 12.

Young Gasprinski's educational experience at the Zincirli Madrasa in Bakhchisaray between 1868 and 1871 enabled him to better understand the differences between Russian and Muslim educational systems and the intellectual disparities between East and West. It also led him to question himself more deeply and reflect seriously on national identity. According to Akpınar, the Bakhchisaray experience drew Gasprinski's attention to "the overall weakness and ignorance of the Muslim-Turkic world, in contrast to the knowledge and strength of the Western, Christian-Russian world in many respects".¹⁷

Gasprinski's 1871 trip to Europe, where he sought to understand the Western world firsthand, and the insights he gained from his observations were reflected in his intellectual and literary works published starting in 1881, such as *Muslims in Russia* (Russkoe Musul'manstvo), *A Balanced View of European Civilization* (Avrupa Medeniyetine Bir Nazar-ı Muvazene), *French Letters* (Frengistan Mektupları), and *Muslims of the Abode of Felicity* (Darürrahat Müslümanları). In these works, he argued that the West's global dominance was due to its embrace of knowledge and technology, along with economic progress and ideas of justice and equality, played significant roles in making Western civilization dominant globally.

Building upon the ideas he initially articulated in his *Bakhchisaray Letters* (Bahçesaray Mektupları) (1881), serialized in the *Tavrida* newspaper, İsmail Gasprinski later published them in revised form as a standalone book titled *Muslims in Russia*. This work marks a pivotal moment in the consolidation of his political thought. In particular, his opposition to the Russian Empire's assimilationist policies toward Muslim-Turkic populations, along with his strong advocacy for mother-tongue instruction at the primary level, reflects a mature articulation of nationalist ideas that had begun to take shape in the late 1860s.

Highlighting that Western societies and states were stronger due to the integration of state and society, the state's efforts to treat its citizens with justice and equality within the framework of laws, and the resulting sense of citizenship and nationalism, Gasprinski explained this idea in *Muslims in Russia* as follows:

"When we turn to a political system that respects the idea of nationality and the equality of all peoples living within a state, we see that this system serves best to ensure the unity of the state while also facilitating education, development, and the better organization of labor and life. This system is highly appealing because it embodies truth and justice and is practiced among most of the world's civilized nations."¹⁸

17 İsmail Gaspiralı, ag.e., p. 13.

18 İsmail Gaspiralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: II. Fikri Ederleri* (Neşre haz. Yavuz Akpınar), Ötüken, İstanbul 2019, p. 96-97.

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In this work, Gasprinski criticized the policies of the dominant nation and government, particularly the Russian administration's approach to the language, religion, and education of Muslim populations. After outlining his ideas, he expressed his views on the problems facing Russian Muslims. Building on the above ideas, Gasprinski detailed the positive and negative aspects of Tsarist Russia's policies toward Muslims, explained with examples that the Russification policy had failed and would continue to fail, noted that the Russian-Tatar schools opened for Muslims did not yield the expected results, emphasized the necessity of education in Muslims' native languages, and argued that the Russian administration should grant Muslims equal rights with Russians. He asserted that only when Muslims genuinely enjoyed citizenship rights could they integrate with Russians and accept Russia as their state. With this work, Gasprinski outlined the path he would follow throughout his life and introduced the foundational ideas he sought to realize. Thus, he presented a well-thought-out and comprehensive reform project for Russia's Muslim-Turks.

The impact of the work was noted by contemporaries as well. Commenting on the impact and significance of *Muslims in Russia*, which carried the characteristics of a manifesto, Gasprinski's close associate Yusuf Akçura wrote in *Türk Yurdu*:

"Although Ismail Bey Gasprinski's first work, *Muslims in Russia*, is a small booklet of 30-40 pages, it clearly expresses his ideas at the time and serves as a kind of program and guideline for the endeavors he envisioned for the future, making it highly noteworthy. From the perspective of Turkish nationalism, *Muslims in Russia* observes a highly significant fact and raises a major issue before Turkish thinkers. The observed fact is this: A large population, the Turkic-Tatars, resides in parts of Asia and Europe. Compared to other nations, the Turkic-Tatar nation lags far behind in knowledge, wealth, civilization, power, and strength; if this continues, it will perish and be devoured by other nations as dictated by the natural law of survival. The question arising from this observation is: What is the reason for the Turkic-Tatars' weakness and backwardness? What must be done to save the Turkic-Tatar nation from destruction and extinction?"¹⁹

Gasprinski's entire intellectual life was devoted to seeking, finding, proposing to the government and society, and implementing solutions to critical issues facing the Muslim-Turkic nation. Indeed, as Akçura noted, the history of the emergence, shaping, and development of Jadid thought in Ismail Gasprinski, from its inception until the end of his life, "is the history of the various

19 Yusuf Akçura, "Türklerin Büyük Muallim ve Müverrihi İsmail Bey Gasprinski", *Türk Yurdu*, C.2, Sayı:22, p. 691-692.

answers he found to this great question. The history of his actions is the history of his endeavors based on those answers".²⁰ In other words, Gasprinski's life is the history of Jadidism.

In *Muslims in Russia*, Gasprinski outlined the urgent tasks to be addressed without delay to enable Muslims to open their eyes to life anew:

"The cause of our current weakness is our ignorance, our lack of access to European sciences and knowledge, and our unawareness of natural laws. To be saved, we must study and introduce European sciences and ideas among us. However, it is only possible to introduce European sciences and knowledge among Turkic-Tatars through their own schools and madrasas, in their own languages. Therefore, Turks living in Russia must have a Turkish literature."²¹

Together, these measures reflected a comprehensive civil program rooted in civic equality.

Criticizing the Russification policy pursued by the Russian Empire against its Turkic populations, Gasprinski wrote:

"What has been the result of years of effort and expenditure? The intellectual isolation of Muslims, profound ignorance, deadly stagnation encompassing all fields of activity, the increasing impoverishment of themselves and their homeland, and destructive migration at the borders! I believe our Russian compatriots neither desired, expected, nor foresaw such dire outcomes and sincerely thought the civilizing mission for Asians was progressing well. Yet, the bitter truth remains unchanged."²²

Gasprinski was justified in his thoughts when describing the failure of the Empire's policies toward its Muslim subjects. Many Jadid intellectuals, besides Gasprinski, believed that the policies pursued by the administration negatively affected Muslims and distanced them from full integration into the Empire. Similarly, the renowned Orientalist Arminius Vambery, observing Muslims living under Tsarist rule from a somewhat external perspective, noted that the Russification and Christianization policies implemented by the Tsarist administration were ineffective and even increased hostility toward Russians. In an article published in *Vakit* newspaper in 1907, the distinguished scholar wrote:

"No results have come from the Russian government's long-standing efforts to Russify the approximately 25 million Turks under its rule and eradicate their nationality. Perhaps it has only increased their hatred toward Russians and caused them to lag behind in the path of civilization. This was predict-

20 Yusuf Akçura, ag.m., p. 694.

21 Yusuf Akçura, ag.m., p. 694.

22 İsmail Gasprinski, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: II. Fikri Ederleri ...*, p. 80-81.

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able. No benefit has been seen from the Russification policies of Il'minski and Budilovich, which consisted of teaching the Turks' native language with Russian letters..."²³

Gasprinski summarized the Russian administration's policies toward Muslim-Turks under its rule as: "I am the ruler, pay your taxes, and live as you wish!" (Gaspıralı 2019: 79). Continuing his thoughts on Russian sovereignty, he noted that "this sovereignty has not led Muslims to civilization and progress," that it was "incapable of infusing new life, new ideas, and new enthusiasm into the lifeless body of Russia's Tatars," and that it had become a truly regrettable situation. He further recorded that "during Russian rule, the intellectual development that Tatars had achieved through their own schools and books had even declined to a lower level".²⁴

Opposing the assimilation policies generally pursued by Russia in its eastern regions, Gasprinski openly stated that this political system, "no matter how controlled or refined, inherently carries coercion".²⁵ Condemning the Russification policy, he asserted that it would never work on Muslims and, therefore, could not achieve unity between the Russian state, Russians, and Muslims. Vasili Barthold, one of the foremost Orientalist scholars of the Tsarist era, wrote:

"When Christianity was just beginning to take root in Russia, Islam had already become ingrained in the blood of the Turks, making it very difficult for missionaries to achieve anything in this regard."²⁶

Barthold's words further illustrate the fallacy of the Russification policy.

To address this issue, Gasprinski proposed "unity and moral rapprochement based on equality, freedom, science, and education" and wrote that

"achieving this is not as difficult as it may seem at first glance. Such unity could be highly beneficial and would not adversely affect the state and economic life of our homeland; on the contrary, it would lead to the rapid intellectual and economic success of regions inhabited by Russians and Muslims."²⁷

In *Muslims in Russia*, Gasprinski summarized his ideas, notes, and observations on the Russian state's relationship and policies toward its Muslim subjects with the following proposals for implementation:

23 Anonim, "Profesör Vambery ve Rusya Müslümanları", *Vakit*, 119, 1907, p. 2.

24 İsmail Gaspıralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: II. Fikri Ederleri ...*, p. 83-84.

25 İsmail Gaspıralı, ag.e., p. 91.

26 Zaynabidin Abdırashidov, *İsmail Gaspıralı ve XX. Yüzyılın Başlarında Türkistan (Temaslar - İlişkiler - Tesir)* (çev. Hatice Kerimov) Selenge Yayınları, 1. Baskı, İstanbul 2022, p. 90.

27 İsmail Gaspıralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: II. Fikri Ederleri ...*, p. 104-105.

Ignorance, and thus distrust, hinders the heartfelt rapprochement of Russian Muslims with Russia;

The spread of citizenship consciousness and knowledge among Muslims through the Russian language is unthinkable; Russian educational institutions fail to attract even one percent of high-class Muslims, let alone the common people;

Teaching basic sciences in Tatar in Muslim madrasas would facilitate the entry of knowledge among Muslim masses without harming the state, rapidly elevate the intellectual level of clergy and the middle class, and dispel many harmful superstitions;

Given the significant literacy among Tatars, easing conditions for the press in the Tatar language would rapidly disseminate useful and practical knowledge among them; therefore, protecting and encouraging all kinds of press in Muslim dialects is essential;

Having salaried interpreters in courts in provinces with Tatar populations would be highly beneficial to prevent Muslims' alienation from the homeland and protect them from significant losses and troubles often encountered in government offices; publishing essential instructions and news in local publications, translated into the native language alongside the Russian text, would also be useful;

These measures would in no way harm the interests of the Russian language or the Russian state.²⁸

Naturally, Gasprinski's ideas and proposals attracted the attention of the Russian administration and officials. The first reaction to the work came from Tashkent, the center of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship. Mikhail Miropiyev (1852-1919), a supporter of the Christianization and Russification policies for Muslims, presented a report at a meeting of the Tashkent Teachers' School on August 30, 1882. Two years later, Miropiyev published this report, with a slightly modified title, in a Russian journal.²⁹ Although the Teachers' School's annual meeting was organized to plan and discuss the upcoming academic year, Ismail Gasprinski's *Muslims in Russia* was the main topic of discussion. In his speech, Miropiyev stated that the time had come to address the issue of "establishing European civilization in the Asian world, which holds great historical significance." In his view, the primary goal of the Russian government's policy toward non-Russian elements should be "to create a unity imbued with the ideas of Christianity, such as truth, love, and compas-

28 İsmail Gaspralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: II. Fikri Ederleri ...*, p. 116-117.

29 Mikhail Miropiyev, "Kakiie Nachala Dolzhny Byt Polozheny v Osnovu Obrazovaniia Inorodtsev: Po Povodu Broshiury Ismail Beia Gasprinskogo 'Russkoe Musul'manstvo'", *Rus*, XVII, 1884, p. 24-41.

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sion." After outlining his thoughts on the education of non-Russian elements, Miropiyev expressed the main goal shared by like-minded individuals: "The first and most important principle of our Muslim subjects' education should be their Russification."³⁰ As evident, this reflected the irreconcilable nature of Gasprinski's pluralist vision and the state's assimilationist imperative. Miropiyev's findings and proposals did not support the Russian policy in Turkestan, which advocated for the establishment of secular schools without religious education. Subsequently, those shaping educational policy proposed to the government that uniting native populations under Russian rule with Christian ideas – that is, Christianizing them to intensify Russification – was necessary.

Criticizing articles in the Russian press about the reasons and mission of Russia's eastward expansion, Gasprinski wrote:

"In recent years, we often read and hear about Russia's great civilizing mission in the East. Fine, but what should this mission entail? Does it merely consist of replacing qadis with district governors, deputies with constables, *beyliks* with oblasts and *guberniyas*, *desyatinas* with per capita taxes and other levies, silk robes and beshmets with noble collars, and is nothing else required?"³¹

He posed significant questions. With his criticisms of the Russian government's "great civilizing mission" in Asian territories and his assertions that this mission did not truly bring Russian Muslims closer to progress and civilization, Gasprinski offended the pride of some Russian politicians. At the end of his speech, Miropiyev called on his colleagues to "begin the great historically significant work of spreading European civilization in the Asian world." He argued that the dominant nation must not jeopardize internal and external security, secured through the blood of citizens in conquered territories. Above all, Miropiyev represented a civilizing mission that ensured state unity through the baptism of native populations.³² Miropiyev's speech confirmed the validity of Gasprinski's views while simultaneously revealing that the Russian state pursued an assimilation policy toward Turkestan Muslims.

Addressing Gasprinski's goals for reforming Muslim schools, Miropiyev wrote that "the educational system proposed by Muslim intellectuals based on Islamic values is in no way compatible with Russia's state policy." Instead of such a school, he suggested actively using missionary educators in Muslim primary schools and implementing a method approved by state institutions.

30 Mikhail Miropiyev, "Kakiye Glavnyie Printsipy Dolzhny Byt Polozheny v Osnovu Obrazovaniya Russkikh Inorodts-musulman?" Rech, Proiznesennaia na Godichnom Akte Turkestanskoi Uchitelskoi Seminarii 30.08.1882 g. Prepodavatelem Seminarii g. Miropiyevym, *Turkestanskiy Sbornik*, V.361, S. Petersburg 1883, p. 134-145.

31 İsmail Gaspıralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: II. Fikri Ederleri ...*, p. 80.

32 Mikhail Miropiyev, "Kakiye Glavnyie Printsipy Dolzhny ...", p. 136-137.

According to Miropiyev, such an educational approach in Muslim schools "should be the second fundamental principle of the educational policy for non-Russian Muslim elements and completely reject Islam, that is, all religious activities of Muslims".³³

The ideas articulated by Ismail Bey Gasprinski in *Muslims in Russia* also reveal his covert political activities. The proposals outlined in the work can be regarded as an approach that rejected the Tsarist administration's policies aimed at hindering or assimilating the development of Muslim society and pursued its own strategic plan in this direction.

Gasprinski endeavored to implement the project he outlined in *Muslims in Russia* step by step in subsequent years. Before launching the *Tercüman* newspaper, he printed and distributed various booklets to inform Russian Muslims about the Russian state and Russians, marking the initial stages of implementing this project.

In this regard, *Tercüman* functioned as both a practical tool and an ideological extension of the vision first articulated in *Muslims in Russia*.

Development of Gasprinski's Political Role: From Education to Advocacy

From the outset, Ismail Gasprinski stood out not only as an educator but also as a significant political figure of his time. To fully grasp his political views, one must read his works and articles chronologically in their entirety.

Under the pseudonym Küçük Molla, Gasprinski restructured and expanded his *Bakhchisaray Letters* (1881), published in the *Tavrida* newspaper, into the aforementioned booklet *Muslims in Russia* (1881), first serialized in the same newspaper and later published as a book. In this work, he calmly critiques the policies applied by the Russian government to the peoples under its rule. This early work not only reveals the contours of Gasprinski's emerging political thought, but also laid the groundwork for more developed formulations in his later writings. Following these writings, he further developed his ideas about Russian Muslims in *A Balanced View of European Civilization* (1885), published in Istanbul, and *Russian-Eastern Agreement* (Rus-Doğu Anlaşması) (1896), published in Bakhchisaray. In these works, Gasprinski urges the Russian government to adopt a clear stance on Muslims, to cease oppressing and assimilating them, as such oppressive attitudes caused Muslims to harbor resentment toward Russians and the administration, hindering their acceptance of it.

Moreover, in numerous articles in *Tercüman*, Gasprinski offers enlightening, guiding, and solution-oriented proposals regarding the human and civil

33 Mikhail Miropiyev, ag.m., p. 141-145.

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rights of Muslims, as well as the responsibilities and obligations of the Russian administration.³⁴ *Tercüman* addressed not only the political, economic, and cultural issues of Russian Muslims but also those of Muslims in neighboring states. In these articles, Gasprinski analyzes Russia's policies toward Muslims, particularly their educational system, and introduces readers to various events in the country and the world.

Referring to Russian policies toward Muslim populations, Gasprinski frequently criticized the aggressive policies of British imperialists. In his works *French Letters* and *African Letters* (Sudan Mektuplari), published in *Tercüman* starting in 1887, he speaks through the voice of Molla Abbas, an educated traveler from Tashkent.³⁵ While in Paris, the traveler states, "The British have neither religious nor kinship rights in Egypt. Their presence in this country is based solely on occupation, which is utterly incomprehensible." Through these words, Gasprinski expresses his stance against Russian occupation policies and articulates his political views.

The publication of this politically charged literary work coincided with the formation of the Franco-Russian alliance and the intensifying Anglo-French rivalry in Africa's colonial context. While Tsarist censorship constrained overt political commentary, Gasprinski employed allegorical fiction as a strategic medium for conveying anti-colonial and reformist sentiments. In these literary writings, he extensively discusses historical figures such as Mehdi Muhammed Ahmed (1848-1885), the leader of the liberation movement of the Eastern Sudanese people, and Abdülkadir (1808-1883), whom Gasprinski called a "glorious leader and sheikh," who initiated a popular uprising against the French for Algerian independence. Lutsian Klimovich notes that Gasprinski's literary works reflect his covert political activities, writing: "By narrating actions through other countries, he vividly depicted the national liberation struggle. Ultimately, in speaking of the heroes of this struggle, he expressed his own readiness for such a fight."³⁶

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, as the Muslim East experienced a revival, women's emancipation became one of the most pressing issues. This focus on women's emancipation indicates how deeply Gasprinski's reformist agenda intersected with broader questions of social justice and national progress. From the outset, the women's issue was one of the most significant topics addressed by *Tercüman*. Between 1887

34 Saime S. Gökgöz, "19. Yüzyılda Türk ve Müslüman Dünyanın 'Ahval'i Üzerine: İsmail Bey Gaspralı'nın Siyasî Yazılarında Çağ Yorumu", *Modern Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 11/4(2014), p. 382-444.

35 İsmail Gaspralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: I Roman ve Hikâyeleri* (Neşre haz. Yavuz Akpınar, Bayram Orak, Nazım Muradov), Ötüken, İstanbul 2020, p. 93-180, 289-313.

36 Lutsian Klimovich, "Na Slujbe Prosveşeniya", *Zvezda Vostoka*, 9, 1987, p. 178.

and 1891, Gasprinski attempted to establish a periodical aimed at women, but this initiative failed due to rejection by authorities in St. Petersburg.³⁷ Through numerous articles, Gasprinski provided compelling examples to demonstrate that Muslim women lacked rights and that appealing to sharia laws protecting their fundamental rights in family life was impossible, while also noting an increase in women's self-awareness.

One of the most critical social issues of the Jadid era was the existing social and political status of women. Although political reforms were deferred to later years, the necessity of change in women's social status was evident. Above all, Jadids struggled to convince minds shaped by traditional patterns to accept women as individuals equal to men. Liberating half of society – women – from the shackles of a conservative mindset was, of course, not easy. Even today, women's rights remain a debated issue, considered not only by Gasprinski but also by other intellectuals of the era as a problem that needed resolution for the nation to achieve a prosperous future.³⁸

The women's issue is explicitly addressed in Gasprinski's utopian novels *Muslims of the Abode of Felicity* and *The Land of Women* (Kadınlar Ülkesi).³⁹ In the first work, he depicts a woman equal to a man in every respect, creating the image of a female qadi whose consent is required for any family dispute or women's issue to be resolved in court with legal binding. In the second work, Gasprinski reverses the roles, placing a man in the woman's position, thus swapping their social statuses. In this country, men wear veils, care for children, cook, and do laundry, while women hold authority over everything. Through this, the author aimed to highlight the true position of Muslim women in society and open the issue for public discussion.

The political events of early 1905, which eased Russian oppression and created an atmosphere of relative freedom compared to previous periods, inspired and mobilized Russian Muslims. In an article in *Tercüman* in 1905, Gasprinski wrote, "The first phase of *Tercüman* has ended; now its second phase begins," signaling that, while remaining cautious, he would write more openly about Turkish issues.⁴⁰

The 1905 Constitutional Movement marked a turning point in Gasprinski's public engagement. Whereas previously he had remained cautious in political matters, the ensuing relaxation in censorship emboldened him to articulate his vision for Muslim civic participation more explicitly. Following the February 1905 Constitutional Movement, the Tsarist government allowed

37 Mirkasim Gosmanov, *İsmail Gasprinskiy, İstoriiko-Dokumentalnyi Sbornik*, İiyen, Kazan 2006, p. 377-378, 380-385.

38 Şengül Hablemitoğlu - Hablemitoğlu Necip, *Şefika Gaspralı ve*

39 İsmail Gaspralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: I Roman ve Hikâyeleri*, p. 181-288, 314-351.

40 İsmail Gaspralı, *Seçilmiş Eserleri: II. Fikri Ederleri*, p. 43.

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opposition groups and nations under Russian rule to conduct their covert political activities openly. As a result, on October 17, 1905, Tsar Nicholas II issued a Manifesto, seen as a blow to his autocratic rule. Russia's defeat in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War, the revolutionary movements that had been growing since the 1880s, and the poor living conditions of the populace played significant roles in the Manifesto's issuance. With the Manifesto, non-Russians, including Russian Muslims, began channeling their efforts into the political sphere. Through the press and meetings, they voiced their demands and requested equal citizenship status with Russians from the administration. The educators who, until the day before, had focused on resolving school and madrasa issues as the core of their lives, now emerged as representatives of their nations on the political stage, leading to divergences in addressing certain political issues.⁴¹

The speech by Abdurreşid İbrahimov (Reşid Kadı, 1857-1944) at the Second All-Russian Muslims Congress held in St. Petersburg from January 13-23, 1906⁴², marked the beginning of this divergence. İbrahimov advocated for granting autonomy to regions densely populated by Muslims. The youth of Kazan, actively supporting the idea of autonomy through their newspaper, backed this proposal. Gasprinski opposed the developments moving in this direction. Tensions arose between İbrahimov and Gasprinski, with each publishing numerous critical articles defending their views.⁴³ The Muslim socialists led by İbrahimov began calling themselves socialist-autonomists. Their main political goal was "personal autonomy," and they accused those opposing this goal (e.g., Fatih Kerimi, Gasprinski) of foolishness.⁴⁴

İsmail Bey frequently corresponded with Alimerdan Topçubaşov (1865-1934), the leader of the Muslim group in the Russian State Duma, regarding Muslim affairs. In these letters, Gasprinski shared many interesting ideas about Muslim congresses, Duma activities, and himself.⁴⁵ In a letter dated September 11, 1906, he wrote about Abdurreşid İbrahimov:

"I don't know what's happening in Kazan... Reşid is behaving disgracefully in *Ülfet*, and I had to give him a good lesson. The scoundrel baselessly accuses our entire enlightened class of dishonesty and profiteering. Now he lives off the Central Committee's funds and fears the future. He senses that

41 Mirkasim Gosmanov, *İsmail Gasprinskiy* ..., p. 116-117.

42 Nadir Devlet, *Rusya Türklerinin Millî ...*; İsmail Türkoğlu, "Müslüman Kongreleri", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, V.32, İstanbul 2006, p. 96-98.

43 Zaynabidin Abdırashidov, "Tatar Hayatından Bin İkinci Gece Yahut Kadı'nın İftirası", *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Sayı:14, 2008, p. 190-202.

44 Gayaz Iskhakiy, *Publitsistika Hem Edebi Tenkit Makaleleri (1902-1914)* V.6, Tataristan Kitap Neshriyatı, Kazan 2005, p. 27-30, 55-58.

45 Rıdvan Çitil, "İsmail Bey Gaspralı'nın Ali Merdan Topçubaşı'na Yazdığı Mektuplar", *Uluslararası Türkçe Edebiyat Kültür Eğitim Dergisi*, 4/3, 2015, p. 1022-1054.

not everything is over. *Tan Yıldızı* [a newspaper published in Kazan from May to November 1906] criticizes and reports, as if it were true, that it showed the first signs of Reşid's covert discord! I'm waiting for news about when you plan to convene the Committee. It would be good if it's in October, as I'll be very busy afterward. Still, perhaps, as Reşid mocks, everything could proceed without me through co-optation without elections."⁴⁶

This letter serves as evidence of the disagreement between Ismail Gasprinski and Abdurreşid İbrahimov, as mentioned above, and highlights the tensions reflected in their newspapers.

Unlike İbrahimov, Gasprinski advocated for religious autonomy for Muslims, proposing that they manage their religious and educational affairs themselves and establish "sharia administrations" where necessary. Gasprinski and his associates introduced the concept of national-cultural autonomy, referring to the right of each nation to independently manage its cultural, educational, and religious institutions within the broader imperial framework where each nation is a legal entity with its own economic institutions (banks, cooperatives, etc.), autonomous educational system, educational and charitable organizations, and a political structure.⁴⁷

Despite being in Bakhchisaray, Gasprinski sent his ideas and proposals on current political issues and the program of the Muslim group in the Duma to Muslim politicians working in St. Petersburg. In a letter to Topçubaşov dated July 11, 2006, he noted that he had read the program of the Muslim faction in the Duma and "sincerely approved of everything I read except for the following points," outlining his suggestions:

"a) I see no reason to allocate 'gifted' lands based on the current law on nationalizing privately owned lands. Also, I don't know which 'gifted' lands are being referred to? b) Protecting waqfs and curbing mujik migration is necessary, but logically, in my opinion, Muslims should not touch 'monastery' lands. Others more concerned with them can speak on that."

In this letter, Gasprinski openly expressed his belief that the Muslim group would, in the future, be respected as an "Islamic" or "Nationalist" group by both the right and the left.

Besides his ideas on Muslim issues, Gasprinski also provided information about his health and *Tercüman*:

"My nerves are quite frayed; these days, I'm going with the children to the seaside, to a village. I'll live in felt tents and yurts by the water. It's close

46 Rıdvan Çitil, ag.m., p. 1032.

47 Aydar Khabutdinov, *Tatarskoye Obşestvennoye Dviżeniye v Rossiyskom Soobşestve (Konets XVIII-Naçalo XX veka)*, Unpublished Doctorate Thesis, Kazan 2002, p. 87.

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to Bakhchisaray. I hope to finish this primitive life by mid-August and rest properly. Despite the abundance of new publications, *Tercüman* has lost almost nothing. In the Volga region, *Vakit* is ahead of *Muhbir*. Other newspapers remain weak.”⁴⁸

In early 1908, Gasprinski began an effort to organize a stronger political cause following the turbulent period of the Russian crisis of 1905-1907. That year, he announced the end of the first long phase of his work as a pedagogue. From 2008 onward, he entered, as he himself wrote, a second, more turbulent political phase. Gasprinski aimed to transform *Tercüman* into a fully political organ, launching a cold, calculated, and determined campaign against internal and external enemies and obstacles facing the Turkish world.⁴⁹

In a letter to Alimerdan Topçubaşov dated April 24, 1908, Gasprinski reflected on the events of 1905-1908, stating that these years “provided enough experience to educate the people. The ideas of the people and intellectuals have become more serious,” and that a “psychological turning point and a period of regular and enthusiastic renewal of public work” would follow.⁵⁰

The emerging new Muslim elite, the complexity of ideas, and the divisions among Muslim intellectuals led Gasprinski to write that he remained “silent for a long time” on these issues and, “thinking it would benefit both myself and the cause, temporarily withdrew completely” from political affairs. Most importantly, in this letter, he noted that “the first long phase of my and my *Perevodçik*’s [*Tercüman*’s] work has ended, and a second, shorter, but likely more turbulent phase has begun, requiring the transformation from an elderly educator and enlightener into a politician.”

Believing it necessary to “turn *Tercüman* into a fully political organ and launch a calculated, resolute campaign against internal and external enemies and obstacles to our Turkish people,” Gasprinski planned a two-month trip in May 1908 to Crimea, Batum, Baku, Bukhara, Tashkent, Orenburg, Ufa, Troitsk, Petropavlovsk, and, on the return, Kazan, Moscow, and St. Petersburg. Likely hoping to garner support from Muslims during this trip to major Russian cities with significant Muslim populations, Gasprinski sought to implement his planned initiatives.

The 25th anniversary celebrations of *Tercüman* revealed significant support for Gasprinski among Muslims.⁵¹ In response, Gasprinski published an open letter through *Tercüman*, addressing the public. Evaluating recent events in the lives of Russian Muslims, he noted their lack of sufficient expertise

48 Rıdvan Çitil, “İsmail Bey Gaspıralı’nın ...”, p. 1028-1029.

49 Mirkasim Gosmanov, *İsmail Gasprinskiy* ..., p. 119-120.

50 Rıdvan Çitil, *ag.m.*, p. 1043.

51 Fatih Kerimi, *Kırma Seyahat*, Orenburg 1904.

in political matters, writing, "For this reason, the party established by Muslims cannot conduct active operations, and political leaders are in a state of disorientation."⁵² In this open letter, Gasprinski announced his intention, as mentioned above, to transform *Tercüman*, a "people's" newspaper, into a fully political organ. To realize this idea, *Tercüman* needed financial support. He called on local leaders and supporters to find more subscribers, providing a list of cities where new subscribers could be found.

Shortly after his initial public intervention, İsmail Gasprinski published a second open letter, this time with a markedly more explicit political orientation. In this statement, he declared his intention to enter the political arena directly, proposing to relocate his newspaper *Tercüman* to St. Petersburg and transform it into the principal political organ representing the Muslim deputies in the Russian State Duma.⁵³ This tactical change was part of a larger plan he had shared with Alimerdan Topçubaşov in a letter some time earlier. Yet for whatever reasons, the plan became inoperative despite an initialement attempt at implementation.

It is unknown why the plans did not become operative but a leading reason may have been the disinclination of the deputies to support a publication that would be intended for a broader political audience which, it could be assumed, would have encompassed a Russian-language publication. In the context of this preceding event within the Second Duma (1907), a Temporary Committee emerged which consisted of several leading intellectuals (Yusuf Akcura, Fatih Kerimi, Abdurreşid İbrahim, etc.) who attempted to create a Muslim publication in the Russian language. While the basic organization and funding model were somewhat complete, this too was subsequently abandoned.⁵⁴

Confronted with the limitations imposed by the Russian political environment and its strict censorship regime, Gasprinski turned his attention beyond the empire's borders. In early 1908, he began publishing *al-Nahdah* (The Renaissance), an Arabic-language periodical issued in Cairo. Unlike *Tercüman*, *al-Nahdah* operated outside Russian censorship and thus provided a freer platform for political expression. As Kuttner observes, the newspaper became an instrument through which Gasprinski articulated his views on the socio-political stagnation of the Islamic world.⁵⁵ He attributed Muslim decline to both internal structural deficiencies and the exploitative mechanisms of European colonialism, and he positioned modernization – grounded in education and cultural reform – as the essential pathway to collective empowerment.⁵⁶

52 İsmail, "Umumi Açık Hat", *Tercüman*, 24, 1908.

53 İsmail, "İkinci Açık Hat", *Tercüman*, 49, 1908.

54 Zaynabidin Abdıraşidov, *İsmail Gasprinski ve XX. Yüzyılın Başlarında Türkistan ...*, p. 218-219.

55 Thomas Kuttner, "Russian Jadidism and the Islamic World ...", p. 383.

56 Thomas Kuttner, ag.m., p. 405.

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Beyond its role in publishing, *al-Nahdah* also served as a vehicle for furthering Gasprinski's concept for a Universal Islamic Congress. This idea derived from previous models of organization, such as the All-Russia Muslim Congresses (1905-1906) or the All-India Muslim League Congresses, and represented a transnational opportunity to discuss issues facing Muslim peoples around the world, not to revive a caliphate. Gasprinski had suggested Cairo as the main location, and Istanbul as the second possible option. The recommendation faced significant opposition from both the British and Ottoman authorities, who worried that it could lead to anti-imperial or Pan-Islamic support.⁵⁷ Ultimately, although a preparatory committee was formed in Cairo consisting of a diverse array of thinkers and intellectuals, the congress was disbanded under political pressure.⁵⁸

Kuttner underlines that the political ideas, expressed in *al-Nahdah*, are not a fully articulated or consistent political theory in Gasprinski.⁵⁹ Instead, his political ideas are tied up in his larger program of social and educational reform, while often reflecting the challenges of articulating political thought under repression. At the same time, *al-Nahdah* is still productive for understanding Gasprinski's ideas of Islamic modernity: a modernity that sought to integrate cultural unity, educational advancement, and political awakening as the mechanism for resisting Western domination. Thus, despite the inadequacy of his political projects, they were still a significant moment in the intellectual history of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism.

Despite the setbacks faced by his transnational initiatives and the eventual discontinuation of *al-Nahdah*, Gasprinski remained committed to the intellectual and political struggle for Muslim reform. Entering the final phase of his life, his engagement did not diminish, even as his health began to deteriorate. The more turbulent phase, in which Gasprinski emerged as a politician transformed from an elderly educator and enlightener, greatly affected his health. In 1910, describing his condition, Gasprinski wrote, "I want to write a lot, and there is much to write, but my illness forces me to write briefly," acknowledging his difficulties.⁶⁰ Yet, Ismail Bey could not stop fighting. In the same year, in his article "Let Us Not Forget" in *Tercüman*, he noted that vital and political issues had appeared very little in Muslim publications in recent years and that this hopelessness had become a regrettable state reflected in the press. Recognizing that "it is the duty tied to the honor and dignity of writers and activists in the forefront of this vital struggle to show the utmost endurance, resistance, and effort," Gasprinski continued to fight in the front lines.

57 Thomas Kuttner, ag.m., p. 414.

58 Thomas Kuttner, ag.m., p. 415-416.

59 Thomas Kuttner, ag.m., p. 418.

60 Rıdvan Çitil, "İsmail Bey Gaspralı'nın", p. 1047.

Gasprinski saw awakening public opinion as the duty of the press and literature. He listed the urgent tasks to be addressed in the short term: 1) Increasing the Muslim Union Party and the number of Muslim deputies in the State Duma proportional to the population; 2) Enhancing and reforming the legal rights of sharia administrations; 3) Granting contemporary rights to Muslim schools and our language and opening paths for progress; 4) Establishing a Russian-Turkish and partially French newspaper in St. Petersburg.⁶¹

Until his final moments, Ismail Gasprinski relentlessly fought to fulfill the tasks outlined above, defend Muslims' rights, and legalize the Turkish language as an official language in schools.

These political efforts, deeply rooted in Gasprinski's early reformist vision, not only shaped the trajectory of Jadidism but also established him as one of the foremost architects of modern Muslim political consciousness in the late Russian Empire.

Conclusion: Legacy of Gasprinski's Political Views in Jadidism

By the end of the 19th century, Jadidism had moved beyond reforming education to become an important socio-political movement. One of its central figures, Ismail Gasprinski, was not just a forerunner of cultural modernization but also a political thinker. His seminal 1881 work *Muslims in Russia* does an effective job critiquing the intellectual stagnation of some segments of Muslim society, lamenting that it had "weakened in the narrow and suffocating realm of its old ideas and prejudices." This diagnosis formed the ideological foundation of his reformist vision.

With the political liberalization preceding the reforms of the 1905 Manifesto, Jadidism underwent a significant shift. Originally a pedagogical reform movement, it now engaged directly with the political realities of the Muslim-Turkic population living under the Russian Empire, resulting in new leadership structures, ideological splits, and new organizational forms.

From the beginning of his activities as a reformer, Gasprinski paid particular attention to the social circumstances, history, and culture of the Muslim community. After the year 1905, his engagement with political issues became more pronounced. A range of options began to arise for Russian Muslims, and new leaders, movements, and ideas began to emerge. The Congresses of Russian Muslims galvanized feelings of solidarity, but also resulted in a fracturing of a community. The federalists, led by Abdurreşid İbrahimov, proposed a policy of autonomy. Gasprinski, because of his apprehension that it might provoke a reaction from Russian authorities, rejected such radical policies. A

61 Rıdvan Çitil, ag.m., p. 1052-1053.

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split between the two grew, and as Gasprinski noted later, as a consequence he temporarily distanced himself from Muslim political matters.

A great many of the ideological ideas which Gasprinski argued for – such as social reform and a cultural-political unification of the Turkic peoples through a common language and historical consciousness – had a substantial impact on the worldviews of local intellectuals. His influence was mainly circulated through the pages of *Tercüman*, in which notions such as educational reform, cultural and religious autonomy, and linguistic unity resonated with a younger cohort of Jadids and helped develop their political strategies in those years.

The principles of Cultural Autonomy, the *usul-i jadid* method of education, and the establishment of a common literary language for the Turkic world became cornerstones of Gasprinski's intellectual legacy. Consequently, many Jadid intellectuals began to engage in political and lobbying efforts to defend Muslim interests in the early 20th century.

The October 1905 Manifesto radically restructured the socio-political framework of the Russian Empire. The Muslim community took advantage of the political concessions offered by the Tsarist regime, resulting in new political movements, the emergence of a social elite, and new growth in the Muslim press. Over time, these developments diminished Gasprinski's influence, as his moderate and liberal perspective seemed increasingly out-of-place with the new political atmosphere. In early 1908, he articulated the start of a new phase of his career in which he devoted himself entirely to politics.

From the very beginning of his public life, Gasprinski had maintained a liberal stance molded by Russia's actions toward its Muslim subjects. His newspaper *Tercüman* had been monitored all along, and it was only after 1905 that Gasprinski was able to fully reveal who was behind this system of complicity: Nikolay Il'minski. Russian missionaries regarded Gasprinski, a great religious intellectual, as a major threat and branded him a Pan-Islamist and *Tercüman* as the voice of Pan-Islamism.

Gasprinski's work now expanded beyond the Russian Empire's borders. In early 1908, through the Arabic-language periodical *al-Nahdah*, published in Cairo, he put forth a more transnational vision of Islamic reform. Even though his proposal for a Universal Islamic Congress was never adopted, it spoke to his belief in cultural togetherness, educational revitalization, and political awakening as methods of resistance against empire. Unlike *Tercüman*, *al-Nahdah* did not express a coherent political theory; nevertheless, it bears much relevance for understanding his broader intellectual legacy and the grassroots foundation for the beliefs associated with Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism.

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As revolutionary ideas and models of European politics gained popularity amongst the youth of Jadid intellectuals, Gasprinski's moderate position began to look outdated. He had advocated for change from within the empire; the younger generation sought immediate political independence, mass mobilization, and, in some cases, the organization of a new socialist direction. Their criticisms of Gasprinski signified the change in political climate. Despite his background and raising in a traditional educational system, Gasprinski had played a pivotal role in opening avenues for modernist reform. He had served as a guide to the new generation of reformers to come later. However, yet by the early 20th century, partially because of new political developments, and because of more in-depth exposure to European thought, the younger Jadids began to take increasingly radical positions, portraying Gasprinski as a conservative thinker. This development represented a shift not only in the relations between generations, but also for the Jadid movement itself.

Gasprinski's cautious and liberal attitude, however, was prescient. The repressive backlash of 1908 – shown through a restriction of political freedoms, and the closing of Muslim publications – supported earlier fears of radical political agitation. The Tsarist regime's censorship policies and crackdown on certain Muslim political movements, in addition to expulsions of key figures, like Yusuf Akçura and Abdurresid İbrahim, revived repressive policies.

As "teacher of his nation," Gasprinski was an important figure in bringing Muslim enlightenment into a new age. Through teaching pedagogical practices, leveraging modern media, and political assessment, he created the intellectual basis for a reformist movement that would have consequences for many generations of Muslims, both in and beyond the Russian Empire. *Tercüman* appeared when Muslims in Central Russia and the Caucasus had just awoken from long periods of ignorance and needed a vehicle to update and communicate modern knowledge. The newspaper, along with *usul-i jadid*, would keep Gasprinski a lasting presence in the works of the most important figures in Russian Islam until the end of his days.

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