

THE 1736-39 WAR WITH RUSSIA AND AUSTRIA:
A STUDY IN DIPLOMACY AND CHANGING PERCEPTIONS
OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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Thesis Abstract

Selim Güngörürler, “The 1736-39 War with Russia and Austria: A Study in Diplomacy and Changing Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire”

This thesis focuses on the diplomatic relations and perceptions of power, taking the war of 1736 – 1739 between the Ottoman Empire and the Russo – Austrian alliance as the pivotal point. The war in question is generally passed over within general Ottoman histories or those that focus on particularly the eighteenth century. In the secondary literature, the most featured aspect of this conflict is the vision of an Ottoman Empire saved and its life prolonged by French mediation which led to the Peace of Belgrade. In order to examine the actuality of the criticisms that were directed against this approach, it was found useful to get a grasp of how the contemporaries of the war perceived the situation and the relative powers of the belligerents.

For this purpose, the Ottoman chronicles, contemporary histories and reports were used in order to draw the picture from the eyes of the contemporaries. The correspondences, policies and the motivations of the Ottoman and certain European governments are analyzed in order to reach conclusions on how the Ottomans perceived themselves and were perceived by their rivals between 1730 and 1750. This picture is supported by the western academic output on the subject. It was found that the Ottoman Empire, perceived as weak before 1737, regained its international prestige after 1739 and the European states approached the Porte with caution. This change is also true in terms of the Ottomans’ self-perceptions, such that controversy over war and peace gave way to two different political factions.

Tez Özeti

Selim Güngörürler, “Avusturya – Rusya’ya karşı Yapılan 1736-39 Savaşı:
Diplomasi ve
Osmanlı’yı Algılamadaki Değişimler Üzerine Bir Çalışma”

Bu tez, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Avusturya – Rusya ittifakı arasında olan 1736 – 1739 savaşı ekseninde, diplomatic ilişkiler ve güç algıları üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır. Mezkur savaş, hem genel Osmanlı tarihlerinde hem de onsekizinci yüzyıl odaklı eserlerde genellikle ihmal edilmiştir. İkincil kaynaklara göre bu savaşın en belirgin özelliği, Belgrad Antlaşması ile sonuçlanan Fransız tavassutunun Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nu kurtarması ve ömrünü uzatmasıdır. Bu yaklaşıma karşı öne sürülen eleştirilerin gerçekliğini sınamak için, sözkonusu savaş döneminde yaşayanların durumu ve taraflar arasındaki güç dengesini nasıl algıladıklarını kavramak önemli görüldü.

Bu amaçla, olayları onları yaşayanların gözünden görebilmek için Osmanlı kroniklerinden, dönem tarihlerinden ve çeşitli raporlardan faydalanılmıştır. Osmanlıların 1730 ile 1750 arasında içte ve dışta nasıl algılandıkları hakkında bir sonuca varmak için yazışmalar, izlenen politikalar ve amaçları incelenmiştir. Bu tablo, konu üzerine Batı’da yazılan eserler ile de desteklenmiştir. 1737 öncesi güçsüz olarak görülen Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun 1739 sonrası uluslararası prestijini yeniden kazandığı ve Bab-ı Ali’ye Avrupalı devletler tarafından daha ihtiyatlı bir şekilde yaklaşıldığı görülmüştür. Bu değişim, Osmanlıların kendileri hakkındaki görüşleri için de geçerlidir, öyle ki savaş ve barış seçenekleri üzerine olan ihtilaf iki farklı siyasi oluşumu ortaya çıkarmıştır.

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The comments and suggestions of Prof. Edhem Eldem and Assist. Prof. Selçuk Akşin Somel, my thesis committee members, also saved me from falling into numerous errors. Without their advice, this thesis would fail to point out many tendencies that were present in the eighteenth century and would be a more self-enclosed study. I owe a special thank to Akşin Somel, who rendered the study of history appealing and thus made me choose to pursue graduate study in this area.

To Lokum

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis takes as its pivotal point the war that took place between the Ottoman Empire and the Austrian-Russian coalition during the years 1736 and 1739, and examines how the Ottomans' self-perception as well as European perceptions of the Ottomans changed from the years immediately preceding the war to the 1750s. It is argued that at the beginning of this war the Ottomans were more than reluctant to engage militarily with Russia and Austria, while the reverse was true especially for Russia, and to a certain extent, Austria. At the end of the military engagements by contrast, the European visions of their military superiority were considerably shaken while the Ottomans began to debate among themselves the advantages and the disadvantages of the Peace of Belgrade, which re-established peace among the parties.

The war of 1736-1739 is generally taken as a rare moment of Ottoman success within a chain of wars that ended with Ottoman defeat throughout the eighteenth century. The reality, however, is not as plain as this explanation suggests. The military performance of the Porte still had its moments of victory despite the then-ascending setbacks.¹ The first half of the eighteenth-century Ottoman relations with its neighbours and rivals in Europe represent a new era that was born out of the recent disappearance of the Ottomans' upper hand in military terms. As a result of the war of 1683-1699 against the Holy League, the empire ceded most of Hungary and Transylvania to the Habsburgs, Dalmatia and Morea to Venice, Podolia to Poland and Azov to Russia; while greater territorial concessions to the Habsburgs were only prevented by some Ottoman recoveries in the later stages of the war.

¹ The Russian gains of 1700 were recovered in 1711 while Morea was quickly retaken in 1715 from Venice. Furthermore, the 1716-1718 acquisitions of Austria were reclaimed during the years 1737-1739.

Following the peace treaties of 1699 and 1700, the parties had to deal with separate issues for a short time. The immediate measure taken by the Porte was the restoration and preservation of its border fortress system, which was re-defined from Belgrade/Temesvar to Azov, and a program of rebuilding and repairs of the fortresses along this line.² But the Ottoman Empire, as the losing party, was dissatisfied with the peace conditions. The insistence, agitation and to a certain extent *fait accompli* of the Swedish king Charles XII and his collaborator Devlet Giray,³ khan of Crimea and an Ottoman vassal, presented the Ottomans with the first chance of recovery in 1711 when the Ottoman army made use of its advantage to dictate the recovery of Azov. Probably encouraged by this success against Peter the Great's Russia, the empire sought to wrest Morea out of Venice's control and realized this with a swift campaign in 1715. However, Austria was then freed from the obligations that it had undertaken during the War of Spanish Succession, and intervened with the pretext of guaranteeing the 1699 gains of Venice, which was in the anti-Ottoman alliance formed and led by Austria. With the Peace of Passarowitz signed in 1718, Austria received portions of Bosnia, Serbia and Wallachia while Venice had to abandon Morea. Despite the reconquest of this province of utmost proximity, the blow dealt by the Habsburg victories in this war and the resulting territorial concessions, including Belgrade, were influential in the Ottoman Empire's western policy. The Empire, which was mainly preoccupied with the matter of recovering the territory that had been given away in 1699, was to abandon this semi-working policy after the

2 Virginia Aksan, "Locating the Ottomans Among Early Modern Empires," in Virginia Aksan, *Ottomans and Europeans: Contacts and Conflicts* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2004), p.99.

3 İlber Ortaylı, "Kırım Hanlığı'nın Ocak 1711 Tarihli bir Üniversalisi," in Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İktisadi ve Sosyal Değişim: Makaleler I* (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 2004), pp.365-368.

second wave of Austrian advance in Eastern Europe. The new western outlook was also strengthened by the long and indecisive wars with Persia that started in 1723 and with short interceptions continued up to the 1740s. This change became more and more observable especially between 1718 and 1736.

The intensive military activity in Eastern Europe and the military developments that altered the long-established nature of the Ottoman Empire's western policy were also almost simultaneously reflected in the diplomatic realm. During the negotiations preceding the Treaty of Karlowitz, the Porte did, and had to, resort to diplomacy in order to settle a military conflict, obviously motivated by the reversals. During 1716-18 and 1735-39, the Ottoman Empire also entered into intensive negotiations and using the mediation of Netherlands, England and France. Although diplomacy as a tool to settle international issues was not new at all for the Ottomans, its role was redefined and its scope enlarged. Thus, this era marks the increasing role of diplomacy in ending military conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and its western rivals, and also in defining the conditions of peace.

Some historians have suggested that the Ottomans received unearned benefit from this process.⁴ This notion of attributing the outcomes of military conflicts to the intervention of European mediators applies for both the better part of the eighteenth century and particularly for the war of 1736-1739 when French mediation was thought to have saved the Porte. However, even though the emphasis on diplomacy was increased by the disappearance of military supremacy, the Porte could still pursue its independent and sophisticated foreign policy, in other words it did not leave its fate to the mediators or owe its gains to the mediators' reservations for the

⁴ For example, see Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.38.

advantages to be gained by its rivals in Europe. Abou-El-Haj's research unraveled that as early as 1699, the Ottoman delegation at Karlowitz could apply the diplomatic precedents among the European diplomatic circles with relative success in saving minor but yet important territory.⁵ Thus, it may be confidently said that long history of Ottoman-European relations had made the Porte an experienced negotiator and it surfaced in the first time of urgent need. The existence of an independent foreign policy was true for most of the century to follow. For example, the Porte resisted and refused the offer of France on joining the War of Polish Succession in 1733. The same attitude is observable in the Ottoman-Swedish rapprochement in 1740, the Ottoman mediation offer to the parties of the War of Austrian Succession, the later Ottoman-Prussian negotiations and the Porte's stance during the Polish succession crisis in 1765.⁶ As an outcome of similar reasons, the exchange of extraordinary ambassadors among Constantinople and various European capitals became frequent,⁷ a development that preceded the instalment of the first Ottoman permanent embassies in Europe. During the same period, Ottoman envoys produced written reports in an unprecedented frequency. Looking at the list and the dates of these reports suffices to show the difference between the extraordinary embassies of earlier centuries.⁸ Ottomans' resorting to European diplomacy as a means of saving itself from dictated peace conditions, as shown above, cannot stand

5 Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, "Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz," *Journal of The American Oriental Society* 87, no.4 (October-December 1967), pp.500-520.

6 Virginia Aksan, "Ottoman-French Relations, 1739-1768" in *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History*, v.1, ed.by Sinan Kuneralp (İstanbul: Isis Press, 1987), p.42.

7 Virginia Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2007), p.84.

8 Faik Reşit Unat, *Osmanlı Sefirleri ve Sefaretnameleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992).

as a valid argument.

Furthermore, the Porte did not confine its diplomatic relations with Europe to the context of its military confrontations. Even during the long period of peace at the European front between 1740 and 1768, Constantinople was deeply concerned with what was going on among the European states and made use of an intensive diplomatic effort in order to remain updated about the latest developments.⁹ The new, but yet intensive, relations and interaction with Europe at the governmental level brought previously non-existing practices into the Ottoman realm, especially to those whom were at a position to interact with their European counterparts. Although this highlighted interpretation does not indicate that taking European systems as a model was seriously considered, influences of this interest made itself apparent in daily life.¹⁰ The story of changing Ottoman diplomacy appears more surprising when one considers that it developed in line with the rise of the sense of a common European identity among the European elites, a sense which definitely excluded the Ottoman Empire and Russia.¹¹

In line with and parallel to the redefinition of the Ottoman Empire's relations with and policies via a vis its western counterparts, the formation and sources of the top domestic administration were subject to a reassessment. *Kalemiye*, or

9 Virginia Aksan, "Ottoman Sources of Information on Europe in the Eighteenth Century," in *Ottomans and Europeans: Contacts and Conflicts*, ed. by Virginia H. Aksan (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2004), p.14.

10 İlber Ortaylı, "Osmanlı'da 18. Yüzyıl Düşünce Dünyasına Dair Notlar," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce I: Cumhuriyete Devreden Düşünce Mirası, Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, ed. by Mehmet Ö. Alkan (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), p.40.

11 İlber Ortaylı, "18. Yüzyıl Türk-Rus İlişkileri," in Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İktisadi ve Sosyal Değişim: Makaleler I* (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 2004), p.378 and Ortaylı, "Osmanlı-Habsburg İlişkileri (1740-1770) ve Osmanlı Dış İlişkilerinde Yapısal Değişmeler," in Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İktisadi ve Sosyal Değişim: Makaleler I* (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 2004), p.432.

bureaucracy, a career path within the Ottoman ruling class that had only supplied a limited number of high-post statesmen such as provincial governors or grand viziers in the better part of the seventeenth century, now began to increase its share and gradually rose to prominence in the path that led to the high positions within the Ottoman administration; a practice that had come to dominate the Ottomans' recruitment of grand viziers and governors.¹² In this process, the military class, the members of which had occupied the highest ranks of the government since the later fifteenth century, lost their former privileges. In the eighteenth-century, *seyfiye* was arguably the path that had the least share in the governmental posts and the most alienated among the *askeri* classes. The responsibilities of the members of the *kalemiye*, by contrast, increased in line with the opportunities to be promoted to the top posts. While this service branch began to supply grand viziers and provincial governors in an ever increasing manner, the chief-scribe/secretary of state, *reisülküttab*, representing the top rank within the chancery hierarchy and an ever-rising post within the bureaucracy, also undertook responsibilities and authority on matters that he did not enjoy previously. The role of this office in the foreign relations, communications and negotiations rose to primacy within the power distribution of the Porte.¹³ The transformation within the Ottoman central administration was not limited to the office of *reisülküttab*. The traces of a bureaucratic centralization, which is mistakenly considered to start with the Tanzimat

12 Norman Itzkowitz, "Eighteenth Century Ottoman Realities," *Studia Islamica*, no.16 (1962), pp.73-94, see especially the second half this article for the increasing frequency of bureaucratic origins of those who came to power in the eighteenth-century.

13 Virginia Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesmen in War and Peace: Ahmet Resmi Efendi 1700-1783* (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. xiv-xv. For the relationship between this transformation and the larger framework concerning the Ottoman administrative change, see Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), p.44.

period and its precursor the reign of Mahmud II, can be traced as far as the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where one can observe “a narrowing specialization of functions within the Ottoman central administration”.¹⁴ And despite the long accepted notion of a transfer of power from the sultan to first the grand viziers and later to the “statesmen” and high officials in general, the palace continued to make its presence felt either through the momentary actions of the sultans or, as the more regular practice, the office of chief black-eunuch.¹⁵

The relationship between some military conflicts, peace treaties and the major revolts in the capital is also noteworthy for the first half of the eighteenth-century. Following the Peace of Karlowitz, as a result of sudden unemployment, large numbers of ex-servicemen from the previous sixteen years of war rushed into the capital. In 1703, coupled with the discontent among some standing military troops, a rebellion broke out. However, the rebellious groups chose to voice their discontent in terms of a reaction to the late military defeats, negotiating with the Holy League and legitimizing its members’ gains with an official peace treaty.¹⁶ Just before the infamous Patrona Halil rebellion of 1730, the conditions were not very different. The years of war against Persia had caused extra taxation, rising prices and food shortage. The capital was receiving large numbers of immigrants from the lands devastated by the war in the east and to all this was added the insufficiency in

14 Abou-El-haj, *Modern State*, pp.65-66.

15 Norman Itzkowitz, “Man and Ideas in the Eighteenth Century Ottoman Empire” in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. by Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), p.20.

16 Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, 1984), p.22.

minting coins as a result of the silver shortage.¹⁷ The rebellion had started under such conditions but the rebels tried to legitimize their cause by referring to the Persian resurgence and the loss of all the gains that had been made since 1723, including the prized city of Tabriz, rather than the underlying economic factors.¹⁸ There was a tendency to voice the economic discontent that had befallen the empire as a result of wars in terms of the non-economic inputs within the conflict, namely the manner of conduct with the European belligerents and inability to defend the gains at the Persian front.

A Survey of the Secondary Literature

On Ottoman military and political history of the eighteenth century, Virginia Aksan has authored one of the standard readings. In her *Ottoman Wars*, she discusses the origins and outcomes of the wars, treaties and the political developments that go hand in hand with military conflicts. Even though the work mainly focuses on the Ottoman side, it also includes comparisons with Russia and Austria, the main rivals of the Porte during the eighteenth century. In this work, Aksan aims to distance herself from the declinist scholarship which is well entrenched in both the European Eastern Question literature and Ottoman chronicles. She, apart from these, also discusses the composition and means of recruitment into the Ottoman army. Apart from the *Ottoman Wars*, she authored many articles that focus on the eighteenth

17 Robert Olson, "The Esnaf and the Patrona Halil Rebellion of 1730: A Realignment in Ottoman Politics?" in Robert Olson, *Imperial Meanderings and Republican By-Ways: Essays on Eighteenth Century Ottoman and Twentieth Century History of Turkey* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1996), pp.4-6.

18 Robert Olson, "The Ottoman-French Treaty of 1740: A Year to be Remembered?" in Robert Olson, *Imperial Meanderings and Republican By-Ways: Essays on Eighteenth Century Ottoman and Twentieth Century History of Turkey* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1996), p.77.

century political and military history.¹⁹

Michael Hickok's study²⁰ is also informative on the provincial administrative and military structure during eighteenth century. His work, which focuses on Bosnia, shows the establishment and efficiency of a paramilitary class in the province of Bosnia, pointing to the relative autonomy enjoyed by these local troops as well as their ultimate loyalty to the imperial centre and unproblematic incorporation into the military strategies of the central army.

The volume edited by Naff and Owen, *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* is another must-read for those who want to get a deeper grasp of the eighteenth-century Ottoman history. Itzkowitz's "Men and Ideas in the Eighteenth Century Ottoman Empire" raises questions on possible periodizations in order to study the political history of the era and suggests various beginnings and ends for a consistent periodization. Naff, in his "Ottoman Diplomatic Relations with Europe in the Eighteenth Century," presents the readers a nested picture of Ottoman internal developments, policies resulting from them and their ultimate influence on the relations and diplomacy with Europe. İnalçık's "Centralization and Decentralization in the Ottoman Empire" in the same volume although not directly related with this thesis, is the principle study on the localization of the Ottoman provincial administration.

Robert Olson's *The Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persian Relations 1718-1743*²¹ is now itself a source for those who intend to study the period from any

19 For a collection of her articles, see Virginia Aksan, *Ottomans and Europeans: Contacts and Conflicts* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2004).

20 Michael Robert Hickok, *Ottoman Military Administration in Eighteenth-Century Bosnia* (Leiden, New York: Brill, 1997).

21 Robert Olson, *The Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persian Relations 1718-1743* (Bloomington,

perspective. In most of the histories of the Ottoman Empire, the Persian front is either negated²² or given a minimum share and this is where Olson's study steps in to fill the gap. Any attempt to understand the Ottomans' response to European manoeuvres and European policies towards the Ottomans between 1718 and 1750 lacks a crucial component without a parallel consideration of the equally important eastern front.

The Ottoman-Austrian and Russian relations within period in question and the war that this thesis focuses on have been previously studied by several scholars. Karl Roeder has written an excellent account of this war from a mainly Viennese point of view.²³ His research in the Austrian state archives has been invaluable for my reconstruction of the Habsburg perceptions. Ivan Parvey, though working on a larger framework in terms of the period covered, makes use of a sizeable amount of Russian sources, which is unique among the western and Turkish works written on this war.²⁴ Lavender Cassels's work focuses on the diplomacy among European states relating to the Ottoman Empire in this period and contributes to the topic with his use of British archives, especially diplomatic correspondences.²⁵ Other than these points, the intensive use of a vast range of related German publications by these three authors is crucial for understanding this period at least in full capacity from the

Indiana University, 1975).

22 Most works even negate the revived Ottoman-Persian conflict during the 1740s and talk about the long peace of 1739-1768.

23 Karl A. Roeder, Jr., *The Reluctant Ally: Austria's Policy in the Austro-Turkish War, 1737-1739* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1972).

24 Ivan Parvey, *Habsburgs and Ottomans between Vienna and Belgrade* (New York: dist. By Columbia University Press, 1995).

25 Lavender Cassels, *The Struggle for the Ottoman Empire 1717-1740* (London: Murray, 1966).

Austrian, and to a certain extent, European perspective.

Another study that exclusively focuses on the war of 1736-1739, and gives an account of day-to-day developments that had taken place between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, is Hakan Karagöz's unpublished doctoral dissertation.²⁶ This study, however, has not been of much use for my thesis since its content does not allow to make inferences on perceptions. Two other works in Turkish also exist, though when one takes the current accumulation on the topic into consideration, they can easily be labelled as outdated.²⁷ Apart from these, Uzunçarşılı's discussion of this period within his comprehensive history of the Ottoman Empire²⁸ remains as the main narrative among the Turkish publications, which not only makes use of manuscript and published primary sources, but also of the *Mühimme* registers of the Ottoman Empire.

The Objective of this Study

Throughout the work, my primary concern will be to fit the 1736-1739 War, along with the years leading up to it and its aftermath, into the greater picture of eighteenth century Ottoman policies towards the west. I try to show, especially starting with the 1720s, how the Porte managed its relations with the west in order not to create a pretext for war and how this policy was essentially different from the Ottoman policies aimed at territorial recovery between 1701 and 1718. The years preceding

26 Hakan Karagöz, *1737-1739 Osmanlı-Avusturya Harbi ve Belgrad'ın Geri Alınması*, (Ph.D Diss., Süleyman Demirel University, 2008).

27 *1736-1739 Türk-Rus Savaşı*, (np. ,192-?), Cevat Erbakan, *1736 - 1739 Osmanlı - Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları*, (İstanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1938).

28 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 5th ed, vol.4 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995, reprinted by Hürriyet Newspaper as v.5).

the outbreak of the war, plus the first year of fighting, enable us to view this change in its most extreme and visible form, documented by the speeches of top Ottoman officials. From another point of view, this war may be tested against the previously existing manner of defining a past golden age by the Ottoman authors. The war, contrary to initial expectations from both the allies and the Ottomans, and also coupled with the pacific and pessimist policies of the Porte, ended in a manner favourable to the Ottoman Empire; the 1718 acquisitions of Austria were recovered and at the same time a Russian advance into Eastern Europe could be blocked. Under these circumstances, how did the contemporaries and near-contemporaries perceive the Ottoman Empire vis à vis Europe? While this study heavily draws on the previous studies on the diplomatic relations, it also seeks to go beyond them in examining not only what was actually happening but also what was in the minds of the decision makers. Whether the authors, and maybe the statesmen, created a myth around the conduct of this war also deserves special focus. Especially, the reaction of the eighteenth century Ottoman literature, which was among the main sources of the decline paradigm, to these events would contribute to the discussion on Ottoman political thought in this century both in terms of the stance of the literary circles and on the other hand the way of presenting policies and certain statesmen.

The Ottoman – Austrian&Russian War, right from its beginning, is a case that shall be placed within the Ottoman diplomatic history of the period or be allowed to affect the writing of such a history considerably. The mediation of France has long been accepted as the main reason behind the Ottoman success at the Treaty of Belgrade (1739) and has been interpreted in such a way that in this case France, and other mediators in other cases, intervened in the negotiations to prevent too much gain on the side of Ottoman Empire's belligerents. Especially for this war, the result

is attributed to the “French mediation and Habsburg fears of Russian success.”²⁹ However, we already know this claim to be invalid. Until the later stages of this century, including the mentioned war and negotiations, “the tenacity of the Turkish plenipotentiaries” was a decisive factor during the negotiations. Then, it is an important task to place the two different negotiation processes that took place in the early stages of the war and throughout the conflict within the greater picture of the eighteenth century. The stance of the Ottoman delegation, the instructions they received from the government and the direct responses of the Porte to the negotiations are worthy to be looked at within the perspective of Ottoman diplomatic history. Trying to draw a picture of the Porte’s policies and actions throughout this war would be instrumental in arriving deciding whether the resulting treaty was mostly a French construction or the Porte had used France only as a mediator rather than a saviour. This is especially important when one considers that mediation was the driving force for most the most works authored on the eighteenth century Ottoman diplomacy with Europe. For this, the nature of French mediation during 1737-1739 deserves every effort.

The continued bureaucratization of the Ottoman State and differentiation of the Ottoman ruling class from its former structure are points that shall be kept in mind for any examination of the policies of the Ottoman central state during the eighteenth century. As have been mentioned above, the *kalemiye* gradually gained the upper hand within the Ottoman high officials and this coincided with the previously-started process of the emergence of a collective leadership in the Ottoman

²⁹ Quataert, p.41.

administration rather than the decreasing instances of charismatic leadership.³⁰ Then, one may wonder if there are traces of this collective decision making practice throughout the period that this thesis is concerned with. In a polity that had a collective content, it is considered that the voices of various political factions are better reflected in the contemporary works. Thus, the years between 1735 and 1743, when the effect of the war was felt the most, are of interest to search for the traces of a collective administration rather than monotony in policy making. One is further attracted to look for such traces when one considers the existence of rival political factions at the Ottoman court even during the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror, a period when charismatic leadership is assumed to have been at its pinnacle³¹ and again by Aksan's suggestion that the eighteenth century was a playground for the Ottoman decision makers.³²

One last dimension that my thesis explores within the context of eighteenth century Ottoman history is the connection between warfare and military revolts. One year after the reestablishment of peace, in 1740 the Ottoman capital experienced attempts for a rebellion, and it would probably have evolved into one if the authorities had not intervened on time. Interestingly enough, this was the third successive unrest at the capital following the major military transformations, succeeding those of 1703 and 1730. The reasons behind the discontent were not different than the previous cases; in 1740, Constantinople was again crowded by thousands of ex-servicemen and immigrants from the lands that had been devastated.

30 See above.

31 Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri Üzerine Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara : Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007) and Halil İnalçık, "Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time," *Speculum* 35, no.3 (1960), pp.408-427.

32 Aksan, *Ahmed Resmi Efendi*, p. xii.

The sudden increase in the unemployed population had brought about food shortage.³³ The severe winter conditions in 1739 also contributed to the shortage and soaring prices.³⁴ But the real motives behind the curtain were not restricted to the economic realm. Those who were in disagreement with the current government policy and the conditions of the peace that had been signed by it, manipulated the economic hardships within the capital. Then how can we fit this unrest within the framework drawn by the previous rebellions? Can we observe a similar relationship between the economic problems and the use of war-related discourse during the formative stage of the rebellion attempt? And in the final analysis, can we connect the political discontent with the subject discussed above, that is a probable existence of conflicting political camps that were influential over the politics of Constantinople? A close study of these points would shed light on the validity of these connections.

The Sources Used

Among the Ottoman primary sources, Mehmed Subhi Efendi's *Tarih* is the most intensively utilized source in this study. Subhi Efendi was the Ottoman official chronicler between 1739 and 1745. His work covers the period from 1731 to 1744. As may be expected, his point of view is usually state-centric, and owing to the fact that he completed his work in the mid 1740s, he must have had the chance to modify his narrative of the pre-1739 events after witnessing the outcome of the war and each

33 Erhan Afyoncu, Ahmet Önal, Uğur Demir, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Askeri İsyanlar ve Darbeler* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2010), p.222.

34 Robert Olson, "Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in Istanbul: Social Upheaval and Political Realignment in the Ottoman Empire," in Robert Olson, *Imperial Meanderings and Republican By-Ways: Essays on Eighteenth Century Ottoman and Twentieth Century History of Turkey* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 1996), p.19.

particular case. That is why this interaction should always be kept in mind while reading Subhi. I am aware of the fact that Subhi's account could not be immune from the responsibilities of his post and his personal connections, specifically with İsmail and Mustafa Efendis who served in the top offices of Ottoman *kalemiye* and whose roles in policy making process will be central to my narrative at some points.³⁵ But still, his evaluations distorted by the knowledge of post-1739 developments are valuable in understanding the points of view and perceptions of those particular times. In this manner, Subhi's account is important for my study as both a source of information and a critical commentary on what happened. Further Ottoman narrative sources are used as long as they touch upon a subject that would make sense within this study; however none is used as intensively as Subhi's *Tarih*. This group includes a negotiation report,³⁶ another chronicle as well as small-scale works³⁷ and reports from the members of the border-demarcation delegations.³⁸

A principal European primary source that I have often referred to is Marc-Antoine Laugier's *The History of Negotiations*, published originally in 1763 and

35 Subhi Mehmed Efendi, *Subhi Tarihi, Sami ve Şakir Tarihleri ile Birlikte*, ed. by Mesut Aydınar (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2007). For Subhi Efendi's biography, refer to LVII-LXVIII in the editor's introduction.

36 Mehmed Emni Bey, *Sefaretname-i Rus*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Hazine Kitaplığı 1436.

37 Nahifi Süleyman b. Abdurrahman b. Salih el-İstanbuli, *Nasihatu'l-Vüzerâ*, Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Hamidiye 252, Adil Şen (ed.) *İbrahim Müteferrika ve Usulü'l-Hikem fi Nizami'l-Ümem* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1995), *Şem'dani-zade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi Tarihi: Mür'i't-Tevarih*, ed. Münir Aktepe, 3 vols. (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1976-1981), Melek Çoruhlu, *Musaffâ Mehmed Efendi, Kıt'a-min-Tarih-i Sultan Mahmud-ı Evvel* (M.A Thesis, Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, 2005), Hatice Söylemez, *Mukaddimetü's-Sefer (1736-1739 Seferi Hakkında Bir Eser)* (M.A. Thesis, Marmara University, 2007), Ahmed Resmî, *Halifetü'r-Rüesa*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Laleli 2092-M.

38 Ebu Sehl Nu'man Efendi, *Tedbirat-ı Pesendide*, prep. by Ali İbrahim Savaş (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), Ali İbrahim Savaş, "Takrir-i Ahmed Merami Efendi," *Belgeler* 16, no.20 (1994-1995) Also, other types of Ottoman manuscripts or published sources are employed throughout the work.

1768. Laugier's main source, as he indicates in his introduction, is the memoirs of Marquis de Villeneuve, who was the French ambassador at Constantinople throughout the war and the peace mediator.³⁹ A study based on the personal records of such a central figure in my study is of utmost importance, the absence of which would certainly increase my and the reader's doubts about the accuracy of my findings. Laugier seems to make rather good use of his source(s); I have observed at many points that the information he gives corresponds with every detail present in the Ottoman histories and this is true for many events that require an eye witness of and an active participator in the narrated event. This precision gave me the opportunity to validate the Ottoman chronicles at many points and when they seem to be silent, I used the grounded freedom of depending on, or interpreting, Laugier's judgements. Also, this work seems to have received wide circulation and recognition in the post-war European capitals, as it is put forward in the translator's note. The points and moments of uneasiness that had surfaced in the relationship of the allies, also shown by some Ottoman histories, would be difficult to verify without a work written mainly from the ambassador's accounts. It is also surprising to learn that the French ambassador had such detailed and accurate information about the inner workings of the Ottoman government. Other than this work, I have made use of several other contemporary European publications in English that are either directly or partially related with my topic.⁴⁰ Despite the relatively lesser scale of presence of

39 Marc-Antonie Laugier, *The History of the Negotiations for the Peace Concluded at Belgrade September 18, 1739, Between the Emperor, Russia, and the Ottoman Porte*, trans. from French (London: J. Murray, 1770, reproduced by Milton Keynes, 2010). See the author's introduction for his reference to Villeneuve's memoirs.

40 Charles Perry, *A View of the Levant, Particularly of Constantinople, Syria, Egypt, and Greece* (London: Printers to the Royal Society, J. Shuckburgh, 1743), Vincent Mignot, *The History of the Turkish, or Ottoman Empire, from its Foundation in 1300, to the Peace of Belgrade in 1740*. trans. A. Hawkins (Exeter, n.p., 1787) This group includes several more works of minor use.

these works within my study, the information they give on the European perceptions on the Ottomans before and after the war is crucial.

Summary of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three four chapters. In the first chapter, I draw a general picture of the political situation that came into being in the early decades of the eighteenth-century. First, I present a general picture of the Russian, Austrian, Ottoman and other European perspectives of each other. Then I try to underline the areas where these perceptions comply or diverge with the policies pursued during the 1720s and 1730s. I continue with the stances of the Ottoman and Russian-Austrian camps before the war, with a focus on the determination, reluctance and the negligence of the parties. The last part of the chapter is devoted to the effort to understand the state of mind of the Ottoman government in the early stage of the war through its policies, correspondences with the border commanders, expectations and response to the ultimate situation.

In the next chapter, I lay out the Russian and Austrian campaign plans in order to get a grasp of their motives and the developments that they anticipated in the course of the war. Then, I narrate the war up to the Peace of Belgrade and trace the changing perceptions and alteration of expectations for all parties as the battlefield developments were in line with the envisagements of neither belligerents. At the end of this part, I briefly discuss the Russian withdrawal from the occupied Ottoman territory. This topic is both ignored and generally attributed to a simple explanation. I, while not refuting it, suggest alternative approaches by compiling information from previous works, though unfortunately the biggest gap is presented by the lack of Russian sources.

The third chapter is about the influence of this war and the peace that followed it on the policies and relations of the former belligerents through the 1740s and 1750s. Here, the events that I associated as the reflections of the unexpected developments between 1736 and 1739 are the focus of concern. In this framework, besides the allies, I also include the perceptions of Sweden and Prussia, the post-1739 military rivals of Austria and Russia, as they confirm and contribute to the main story at certain points. Then, I make a general evaluation on the negative impact of the late territorial acquisitions and military successes to the internal developments and the self-visioning of the Porte and finish this part with a selection from the Ottoman and European historiography concerning the war of 1736-1739 and point out the similarities between these works and the perceptions that I presented earlier in terms of the surprise resulting from the difference between the initial expectations and the outcome in 1739.

The last part of my study is devoted to an examination of the politics of war at the Ottoman capital and army during the campaign years and their aftermath. I claim that this war was not an initiative of united, homogeneous and determined Ottoman statesmen; instead two rival political factions struggled over the control of the decision-making institutions from 1737 up to the mid 1740s. In this context, I try to follow the origins of the formation of two separate camps, the related change of governments, high-post appointments, interstate relations and bring the study to an end with the some samples from the Ottoman historiography on the representation of the war and the peace parties during the years in question.

CHAPTER 2: FROM THE PRE-WAR PERIOD UP TO 1736-1737

For Russia, the war of 1736 – 1739 was not an undesired conflict; on the contrary it was longed for. For more than two decades, the war was planned and the right moment to act was awaited by Russia since it had never really come to terms with the settlement reached after the Prut campaign.⁴¹ Having lost Azov after a brief occupation and being forced not to interfere with Polish affairs, Russia was unsatisfied with the status quo and sought to reshape it, if necessary by force, the same way it was previously forced to oblige by.

The Ottomans and their Western Rivals in Early Eighteenth-Century
But Russia's agenda was not agreed upon by the Ottomans' western rivals. Especially after the Treaty of Passarowitz, the Ottoman Empire's foes, Habsburgs and Venice, had no intention either to raise or fight a new war with their eastern neighbour. Well-founded or not, "the myth of the Ottoman Empire as a *super state* ... continue(d) to exist for a long time even after the Sultan state was turned into a great power, i.e when it became one of the several powerful formations in European diplomacy".⁴² Indeed, in thinking so, Venice was not unjustified. The memory of Morea's swift loss was so fresh, but still, another war with the Ottomans was not even considered; the Venetians' views reflected their reservations. In the early 1720s, the Venetian bailo at Constantinople reported on the Ottomans' reluctant campaigns against the Persians and came out with the assessment that "the Empire lacks the head, not the arm".⁴³ It seems that no matter how seriously the Empire had recently

41 Christopher Hermann v. Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs of Russia, from the Year 1727 to 1744*, ed. David Hume (London: n.p, 1856), p.90.

42 Parvev, p.199. In later stages, the contrast of this concept with the Ottoman point of view will be made clear.

43 Mary Lucille Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734 as Revealed in Despatches of the*

been wounded by Austria, Venetians were still looking through their own glasses for which indeed they were not mistaken since, contrary to what had happened in the Great Turkish War (1683 – 1699), Habsburg victory in the previous conflict had not prevented Venice, an Habsburg ally, from ceding the Morean Peninsula. Consequently, in case another war broke out, Venice knew that it would have to deal with its oversized rival alone.

For the Habsburgs, the Ottoman question was even more complex. On one hand they had their decisive victory won in 1716 and its treaty signed in 1718, making them the masters of northern Bosnia, northern Serbia and Lesser Wallachia. But they had to deal first with the War of Spanish Succession and then with the international recognition for the Pragmatic Sanction, which regulated the inheritance of the Austrian throne. Also preoccupied with economic reforms, Habsburgs had neither the energy nor the will to fight against the Ottomans after the Treaty of Passarowitz.⁴⁴

The Austrian reservations about their eastern neighbour should not be attributed solely to their preoccupations in the west. Apart from Western European issues, the Ottoman Empire alone still stood as a major power to be dealt with with the utmost care even after the shift in the balance of military from the Ottomans to the Habsburgs as a result of the last two wars. The Habsburg policies seem to confirm the Ottoman myth as a lasting power. During the 1720s, Vienna sought a firm alliance against the Ottoman threat and found a friend in Russia, who also welcomed it, though with different objectives. The search of an alliance is an

Venetian Baili (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1944), p.23.

⁴⁴ Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, p.35. Again, the Ottoman fear from Austrian threat will show how different the two empires perceived the situation.

indicator for the validity of this myth; otherwise the Austrian preoccupation alone cannot explain the need for a serious measure against the Ottomans. After all, no state would like to share the spoils of war when the victory seemed certain. But, they felt the need to find an ally, which they could depend on if danger arose in their eastern borders. The Ottomans were wounded but the victors did not underestimate the military potential of their "traditional enemy".⁴⁵

As seen, Austria's eastern policy was not completely dominated by their recent victories and acquisitions.⁴⁶ As early as 1710, the possible positive and negative consequences of a- Ottoman advance in Poland undisturbed by Austria and b- Russian advance in Eastern Europe in alliance with Austria were assessed in Vienna. The second option was decided upon⁴⁷ and this choice was first put into action when Austria decided to declare war on the Ottomans as a response to the reconquest of Morea. The second major step taken with the same motive was the realization of an alliance with Russia within a decade, the pact being signed on 6 August 1726. The clauses foresaw that in case of an attack suffered by one of the allies, the other would provide substantial aid with a force of 20.000 infantry and 10.000 cavalry.⁴⁸ Although being a defensive pact by nature, its content regarding the Ottoman Empire was disputed in the very years following its signing. Initially it seemed that the treaty had nothing to do with the Ottoman Empire; that it was signed

45 Parvev, p.196.

46 Had it been so, one would expect a more aggressive and decisive move against the Ottoman Empire.

47 Karl A. Roeder, Jr., *Austria's Eastern Question 1700-1790* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p.33.

48 Karagöz, p.21.

against a possible English threat.⁴⁹ But on the eve of the 1736 – 1739 war, this document served as the basis for transforming the Austrian and Russian cooperation in Eastern Europe from designing coherent policies to action on the battlefield. Russia expected its ally to honour the treaty while Austria insisted that it was a defensive agreement by definition. The dispute between the allies was overcome when the two actively cooperated in the War of Polish Succession.⁵⁰

The rest of Europe, however, does not seem to have shared the reservations and sensitivity that Austria had for the Ottoman Empire. The general perception seemed to be more inclined towards the concept of a decaying power as the wars in the last two decades had suggested. The *Scheme for Reducing the Turkish Empire* is one extreme case of the inclination in question. The work is attributed to Giulio Alberoni, then the former cardinal of Spain and who was enjoying an active retirement when this publication appeared.⁵¹ According to a widespread story, the cardinal sent his agent, called Bernier, to examine the Ottoman cities and defence systems in the disguise of an Ottoman subject; and the resulting publication is claimed to have been authored by the Cardinal. The translator says that he used the original Italian manuscript from the personal library of Prince de la Torella, the Sicilian ambassador at the French court.⁵² Whether this publication is authentic or not, there is no difference concerning the motives embedded in its essence: that is,

49 Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, p.32

50 For more details, see below.

51 George Moore, *Lives of Cardinal Alberoni, and the Duke of Ripperda, Ministers of Philip V. King of Spain* (London: R.Faulder,1806), see vol.I.

52 Ibid., 180 and see the translator's preface to "Cardinal Alberoni's Scheme for Reducing the Turkish Empire to the Obedience of Christian Princes: And for a Pertition of the Conquest Together with a Scheme of Perpetual Dyet for Establishing the Publick Tranquility," *The American Journal of International Law* 7, no. 1 (January 1913).

reminding the readers of the Crusades during the Ottoman consolidation in the Balkans and the war of 1683 – 1699. A coalition war at which the alliance of Christian – European states against the Ottoman Empire was expected. It surely has something to do with the turn of fortunes of the Ottoman arms in Europe and the consequent loss of Hungary, northern parts of Bosnia, Serbia and Lesser Wallachia within two decades. It should be noted that the proposed alliance was not only to stop the “infidel,” but to drive them out completely. Since the publication appeared just before the outbreak of the 1736 – 1739 war, it is a valuable document that shows what ideas were circulating in Europe, even though at extreme ends.

The work starts with an introduction, which is a religious speech with direct references to earlier Crusades. Then the author begins to count the reasons which made him believe that this scheme is applicable in that particular time. "Never was the opportunity more favourable...Turks are so vigorously pushed by the Persians, that the Turbant trembles upon the head of the Arch-Infidel. The conquest of the Turkish Empire is at this time so practicable."⁵³ The long years of war with Persia, spanning from 1720s to 1736, seems to have left an impression that the Ottoman Empire in no way possessed the ability to withstand an all-out attack from the European frontier. Although a fictitious idea, it was not ill-founded; the Empire had fought for long years with Persia and by the mid 1730s, it had lost all its initial conquests to a revitalized enemy and the army was still preoccupied at the front.⁵⁴ The second motive for the author on the scheme's applicability is "the perfect calm and Tranquillity in Christiendom", the expected cooperation of Christian subjects of

53 "Cardinal Alberoni's Scheme", p.85.

54 For a detailed discussion of Ottoman-Persian relations in the first half of the eighteenth century, see. Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*.

the Sultan and mutiny in Constantinople.⁵⁵ The cooperation of Orthodox Slavs, Rumenians and Greeks was expected. Also, the echoes of the Patrona rebellion in Constantinople, which resulted in the abdication of Ahmed III and the death of Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha, seem to have found its reflection in Europe. In the later stages, the influence of recent wars also rise to the surface, as the author reminds the readers of the last war in Hungary (1716 – 1718), which “taught” the Turks that their army was no longer better than its European counterparts and in general the Ottoman army never really recovered from their defeat at the gates of Vienna (1683).⁵⁶ Following this, the work ends with a proposed invasion and division of Ottoman domains among the Christian states.⁵⁷ Looking from the author's perspective, one sees that the Ottomans, who had been recently defeated twice in the west, had gone through a paralysing rebellion and devoted the already stretched out resources to an indecisive Persian adventure for more or less one and a half decades, had never been nearer to collapse under a coordinated and united attack from Christian Europe. This scheme does not appear to have received serious consideration, in most of Europe, the Ottoman legacy as a great power was falling apart.

France was among the pessimist camp in terms of its perception of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the long tradition of Ottoman – French partnership, still

55 "Cardinal Alberoni's Scheme," p.85.

56 Ibid., pp.90, 106.

57 Initially a congress is foreseen where the alliance is formally to be founded and followingly an allied army and navy (in this section the author counts all the states in Europe and assigns each of them specific numbers of troops to contribute for the effort) is to be put into battlefield. Then the zones of invasion for the Habsburgs, Russia, France, Britain and other powers are mentioned, noting that the remaining lands of the former Ottoman Empire is to be ruled by the Emperor of Constantinople, to be appointed and then succeeded in an hereditary fashion. After the administrative division, the campaign plans are explained, where Russians are to march into Crimea, Poles and Swedes into Hotin and Moldavia, Habsburgs into Serbia and others into Greece. The initial goal is securing the European domains, which is to be immediately followed by the conquests of Asian and African realms. Ibid.

existed on a functional level. However, France no more trusted its partner in handling alone its share of workload in the east.

In the late 1720s, French – Ottoman relations entered a different phase with the introduction of another variable. Later in the decade, a French – British rapprochement was materialized, which had direct consequences for contemporary Ottoman politics. England would benefit from a possible Russian – Ottoman dispute, and even from the risk of one. In that case, Russia would concentrate its energy, and naturally its troops, on its southern borders that would make it less active and interventionist in the Baltic region. In this way, England would eliminate a big rival from its perceived sphere of influence. With this motivation England was an active supporter of the Austrian – Russian alliance of 6 August 1726.⁵⁸ The treaty combined the Russian aims with the Austrian need for security and gave a speedy boost to the Russian interventionist actions in Eastern Europe. This was, without any doubt, what England had already planned and wished for. But France was not that easy on this issue. In principle, the continuation of Ottoman – Habsburg rivalry without Russia involved would benefit France in two ways. First, France would keep her traditional rival⁵⁹ busy, either in fighting or dealing diplomatically with the Ottomans, and still, during a French-Austrian peace, France could always play the card of a two front war threat against Vienna as a second alternative. France continued to pursue this policy but was at the same time strongly convinced of a serious Ottoman decay and did not consider that its partner could play a central role in the European scene.

58 Arthur McCandless Wilson, *French Foreign Policy During the Administration of Cardinal Fleury 1726-1743: A Study in Diplomacy and Commercial Development* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1936), p.148.

59 Matthew Smith Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748* (New York: Longman, 1995), p.5. Franco – Habsburg rivalry goes back to early 16th century, both contesting for the leadership of continental Europe.

Thus, the conservation of the status quo, that is the presence of French primacy in Levantine trade, became a main cornerstone of France's Ottoman policy.⁶⁰

The worst scenario in this case for France was an Ottoman Empire fighting a multi-front war. Although, as mentioned above, France lost its confidence in the Ottoman Empire as a central figure in East European politics, it still wanted to preserve and use effectively what was thought that remained of the former Ottoman power. In this respect, France spared no diplomatic effort to dissuade its eastern partner from engaging in the Persian front. If this could be realized, France considered channelling the Ottoman energy against the Habsburgs in an undivided manner. However, this did not materialize and the Ottoman – Persian conflict continued up to 1736. But France was still determined to work against every step that further distracted the Ottomans' focus from Eastern Europe. To this end, it played a key role in the formation of the Russian – Ottoman coordinated offensive, according to which the two parties carried out an invasion of Persia and shared the spoils of war. Without this coordination, thought France, an Ottoman - Russian conflict over the Persian territory was probable.⁶¹ This was probably not so wrong.

France kept on trying to persuade the Ottomans to adopt pro-French policies, all of which in short can be reduced to concentrating their power solely on Habsburgs and avoiding any other preoccupation at the international level that would require financial and military commitments. But at some point around 1728, at least for that moment France nearly gave up. On the eve of Marquis de Villeneuve's leave for Constantinople in order to fill the ambassadorial post, he had received his

⁶⁰ Wilson, p.148.

⁶¹ Vincent Mignet, *The History of the Turkish, or Ottoman Empire, from its Foundation in 1300, to the Peace of Belgrade in 1740.* trans. A. Hawkins, vol. 4 (Exeter, n.p, 1787), p.268.

mission directives. In the document it was underlined that “in the view of weakness of Turkey and the determination of Sultan Ahmed III and his Grand Vizier, Ibrahim, to do nothing to offend the Emperor, it was, for the time being, useless to attempt to persuade the Porte to adopt a more active policy in favour of France.” Villeneuve was to confine himself to securing close personal relations with the key statesmen and wait for the right moment to pursue a more active lobbying.⁶² This point was probably the lowest level to which France's confidence in the Ottomans could drop without further physical and visible existence of a disaster experienced by its partner. And it is noteworthy that this attitude came right after the signing of Austrian-Russian alliance. This agreement should have rushed the Parisian court to react but they seem to have believed that for the moment nothing can be done in this case, so reaction was postponed until the next opportunity, which was just about to surface.

The outbreak of the War of Polish Succession (1733 – 1735) revived the French interest in an Ottoman intervention in East European affairs, which were now heating up to the boiling level. The war broke out after the death of the king of Poland, Augustus II, and France had its own candidate while the Russian – Austrian coalition had its separate plans and candidate for the Polish throne. After a period of election crises which resulted in the election two different kings (each of whom was supported by one of the parties above) hopes for a peaceful settlement failed and the war broke out, France leading one party and Russia – Austria forming the other.

The involvement of the Ottoman Empire in the conflict could have helped France and its allies considerably. So, from 1734 on, France did not spare any effort in persuading the Ottomans to come to terms with Persia and intervene in the Polish

62 Cassels, p.52.

question, that is against the projects of Austria and Russia.⁶³ But the Ottomans could neither give up their conflict with Persia, nor felt obliged to intervene in this war. One may even say that what France did was nothing more than wishful thinking. France knew well the obstacles that kept the Ottomans from entering the war, originating from both partners. The Porte requested an official alliance with France since it wanted to avoid the risk of being obliged to face Russia and Austria alone in case France withdrew from the fight in the later stages. But the French, although they acted as the *de facto* ally of the Ottomans many times and were again ready to perform as one, could not openly conclude an alliance with an unbeliever and against their coreligionists.⁶⁴ Both partners had their rightful reservations and a cooperated action could not materialize. The Austrian – Russian camp eventually succeeded in installing their own candidate to the Polish throne, and thus their political influence.

The Ottoman perception of its European neighbours and positioning itself among them went through major shifts after it was clear that the Ottomans were no longer the sole imposers on the battlefield and during the peace negotiations. This shift of balance also proved itself effective over the practical relations of the Empire with its European rivals. After the Treaty of Karlowitz, the Ottomans toned down their policies and adopted a more defensive position towards the west in the first place, perhaps fearing to lose further territory after the unforeseen crisis of 1683 – 1699. This sensitivity naturally paved the way for a reactive foreign policy.⁶⁵ It is

63 Mignot, p357.

64 Cassels, pp.90-91.

65 Thomas Naff, "Ottoman Diplomatic Relations with Europe in the Eighteenth Century: Patterns and Trends," in Thomas Naff, Roger Owen (eds.), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (Carbondale, 1977), pp.88-89.

possible to examine the Ottoman – European relations in the period between 1716 and 1737 in the light of this development.⁶⁶

Examining the revival of the corps of bombardiers, *humbaracı ocağı*, one comes across clear signs of fear of Europe. This military body, once well established and effective, had fallen into disuse after the last decade of the seventeenth century. Urged to revive and reform the institution, French renegade Comte de Bonneval (later Humbaracı Ahmed Pasha) was given the task by the Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, then the grand vizier.⁶⁷ The document that lays the foundations of the reformed corps has some remarkable points to mention. It begins with the confession that “as a result of the late easiness and negligence, the art of bombardiers (is now) in ruins” and it is ordered to be re-established.⁶⁸ As the document proceeds, it deals with what to do when head-bombardiers are required to serve in the frontier fortresses: “when the need arises to appoint head-bombardiers to the fortresses of Vidin, Nish, Khotin, Azov, Bosnia and others of the borders...”⁶⁹ The editor of the document could have counted major frontier fortresses of all imperial borders or escape this burden by just saying “border fortresses”. But what we see here is indeed a selective Ottoman sense of threat. No more fearing a weakened Venice, the fortresses of Greece, maybe the most fragile of all because of their naval accessibility, are not mentioned by name.

66 This phrase will not be touched upon over and over again, but the reader should keep it in mind while reading the events related to the mentioned time period.

67 Ahmet Halaçoğlu, "Humbaracı," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*.

68 “Lakin biraz müddetden berü müsahele vü müsamahadan naşi, humbaracılık san’atı münderis olmak rütbelerine reside olduğundan” Subhi Mehmed Efendi, *Subhi Tarihi, Sami ve Şakir Tarihleri ile Birlikte (İnceleme ve Karşılaştırmalı Metin) 1730-1744*, ed. Mesut Aydınar (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2007), p.218.

69 “Serhadd-i mansureden Vidin ve Niş ve Hotin ve Azak ve Bosna kıla’ı ve sair sarhadd kıla’ına humbaracıbaşı tayin iktiza eyledükde” Ibid., p.219.

Also, the empire was still fighting with the Persians in the east and the war was nowhere near to its end, but the eastern defences were missing, while only five names made their way into the document. The reason is obvious; Vidin, Nish and Bosnia were then the new Ottoman defence line against Austria while Azov and Khotin indicated the two major highways through which a possible Russian offensive would pass in the time of a war with the Ottomans. As of 1733, the empire refrained from an armed confrontation with these two powers. The events to follow further contributed to this outcome.⁷⁰

To return to the issue of the War of Polish Succession, under normal circumstances the Ottomans would, gladly or not, be expected to wage war against Austria and Russia in Poland. It was not solely a French interest that the Ottomans should intervene; Constantinople had been sensitive to Polish politics already for so long and ensuring this country's complete independence vis-a-vis Habsburgs and Russia was among its essential foreign policy goals in the eighteenth century. This issue had a central role in recent Ottoman – Russian conflicts and treaties. The first clause of the Treaty of Prut (1711) between the Ottoman Empire and Russia dictated that Russia was to withdraw its forces from Poland and from now on intervene under no circumstances or excuse. This point was once more verified in the treaty of 1721 between two powers.⁷¹ Had the Ottomans felt that they possessed the means to

70 Maybe the only institutional contradiction to this generalization throughout the 1720s and 1730s may be found in the naval operations. In 1721, Ottomans navy was before Malta with seventy vessels. Although no clash has occurred, it was a daring move when the recent Treaty of Passarowitz is taken into consideration. See Parvev, p.194. Again in 1731, Admiral Canım Hoca prepared ships without imperial orders and raided certain European coasts, committing acts with a high risk of triggering a new war. This event exactly coincides the time when the need for men and money to be employed at the Persian campaigns was pressuring the imperial resources and unrest was on the rise in Constantinople. However, a government with clear fears from Europe would not comply with such an act, Canım Hoca was discharged from his office and appointed as the governor of Rethymno in Crete for exile. See Subhi, 85.

71 *Muahedat Mecmuası*, (Ceride-yi Askeriye Matbaası, 1297, rep. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu,

prevent Russian intervention and put forward the dispatch of Russian troops into Poland as a violation of peace treaty, they would gladly act accordingly and in reality be doing it for their own interest rather than fulfilling the request of their long-time partner. Grand vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha was at some point close to accepting France's offer to fight side by side without being allies but he was briefly dismissed from office and the issue was dropped as France resisted signing an official alliance.⁷² One can clearly see the signs of an Ottoman policy which was opposed to any Russian presence in Poland during this war. The Porte, without a satisfactory alliance with France, could not enter the war at its own expense but still continued to lobby against the intervention and tried to give the impression that it may get involved in the conflict at any moment. The public anger against Russia was definitely among the reasons why the government still preferred to seem like a possible contender. Around this time, the English diplomat Kinnoull was told that if the Russian army remained in Polish territory, the Porte would have to take measures for its own security.⁷³ This conversation shall not be taken as an indicator of Ottoman willingness and decisiveness to challenge interventionist policies in Poland. The government indeed wished that it could undertake the proper action but ceased to have the material and human resources to carry out the task. But in this speech one finds the inability of intervention to an unwanted happening and reluctance to face one's two most powerful foes if decided upon to act so; thus putting his or her emotions into words rather than action.

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72 See footnote 3 in Uzunçarşılı, p.251

73 A.C. Wood, "The English Embassy at Constantinople, 1660-1762," *The English Historical Review* 40, no. 160 (October 1925), p.553.

As discussed, the Ottomans showed clear signs of awareness about the relative deterioration of their armed forces compared to their European counterparts. This awareness was the underlying reason that made them fear an all out war with Austria after 1718 and Russia after 1721. Their silence on the issue of Austrian – Russian alliance and the two allies’ unchallenged cooperation in Poland had much to do with this consciousness. Berkes cites the rise of Russia as the eventual cause that had made Turkey seek closer contacts with the west during the eighteenth century.⁷⁴ He argues that following the Peace of Passarwitz (1718), Ahmed III and his grand vizier İbrahim Pasha decided to avoid war at all costs. It was also during this period that the classical Islamic/Eastern heritage was found insufficient to answer the contemporary issues. Thus, some innovations had to be examined, and France was the main source thanks to the long partnership and common enemies. However, this interaction was in no way a social and cultural one, rather one that exclusively aimed to perfect the military and technological spheres.⁷⁵

The first outcome of the feeling of inferiority became apparent in 1720, when Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi was sent to Paris as an extraordinary ambassador. Under the name of an official visit, the Empire was willing to learn more about Europe than it did before. The defeats inspired curiosity in Constantinople and learning the infidel's ways was legitimized under this pretext. Among Mehmed Çelebi's main objectives was “to visit the fortresses and factories, and to make a thorough study of means of civilization and education, and report on those suitable for application in

⁷⁴ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey, with a New Introduction by Feroz Ahmad* (London: Hurst&Company, 1998), p.24.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp.25-31.

the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁶ It seems that the reason for this observation was not only to become informed of the developments in Europe and to employ counter tactics; their direct application as long as convenience allowed was already being considered in the 1720s. With the steps taken during 1720s and 1730s and the initiative of Mehmed Çelebi, it is hard to say that the Ottoman statesmen were not conscious that their upper hand in military affairs had come to an end.⁷⁷ They were conscious and aware in a manner that they had already internalized this concept and consequently started coming up with attempts which were meant to produce results for the reversal of this process.

Two works written in these decades help the contemporary reader better understand what the Ottomans were conscious about and what they feared during the 1720s and 1730s. The first example is a work of counsel for the *viziers* by Nahifi Süleyman. Its suggestions on border defence are noteworthy. The author says that “Through spies and informing of trusted ones, to know the current situation of the enemy is of great importance. Without information about the enemy, and as a result of negligence, many states have disappeared”.⁷⁸ He elaborates on this in the following manner:

Special agents should be sent to each border fortress and an inquiry should be conducted as to whether the required amount of ammunition is present, and whether all the fortress soldiers are on duty. Whatever is not in order should be corrected, and repairs and

⁷⁶ Quotation from Tarih-i Raşid in Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.87.

⁷⁷ Gibb and Bowen claim that even the leaders of the governing class were conscious of no inferiority in comparison with Europe until 1774 and 1792, when they changed their attitude. Hamilton Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Modern Culture in the Near East, v. I Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century, part I* (London, 1950) rep. (London, 1969), 19.

⁷⁸ “Cevasis ... vesatetiyle ve ihbar-ı mutemede ile ahval-i düşmanı bilmek mühimm-i azimdir.” Nahifi, 158b.

enhancements [of the castles] should be undertaken. Even when there is no possibility of an enemy attack, the needs of the border fortresses should be attended as if the enemy forces were on their way. Such degree of care is necessary, be it for the ammunition, provisions or repairs, these [measures] should be taken without any flaw, and work should be done in such a way that no defect remains.⁷⁹

This was clearly the output of a mind with defensive priorities. Initially the first quotation is not eye-catching; such an advice may be given under any circumstance; intelligence is an important aspect of power for any state. But in the next quotation, the author indirectly explains why the intelligence in question is essential. The provisioning of fortresses is out of defensive concerns, not for supporting an attack into enemy territory and the soldiers required to be on duty are fortress guards, rather than auxiliary forces for a main army. His last two sentences clearly underline his defensive motive. He also advises that “if possibility arises, the hostile enemy shall be treated with forgiveness, favour and cover”.⁸⁰ If this article had offered a general advice on the military affairs, it would have included at least basic information on how to make raids or lay siege to a fortress. But the mood of the empire around that time⁸¹ seems to have persuaded the author that a war against Russia or Austria would be fought on Ottoman soil and Ottomans would only have time for thinking about their defence, leaving aside any chances for a counter attack. In the part on “forgiving the hostile enemy,” it is meant that if the aggressor approaches for peace,

79 “Her bir serhadd kala’ına mahsus adamlar gönderilüb mühimmat-ı lazimelerinde noksanları var mıdır ve neferat-ı kal’a tamamen mevcut mudur, tefahhus olunub kusurları teknil oluna ve tamir ü teşyidinde ihtimam olunub düşmanın hücum ihtimali yoğiken serhadd kal’alarının mühimmatı şu vech ile görüle ki güya düşman gelmelidir. Ol kadar ihtimam lazımdır, gerek mühimmat ve gerek zehair ve gerek tamir ve termimidir, bila noksan görölüb kusur olunmamak üzere ikdam oluna” Ibid.

80 “Adavet üzere olan düşmana fırsat buldukda afv ile muamele ve lutf u gıta eyliyeler” Ibid., 155b.

81 The author Nahifi Süleyman died in 1738 over the age of 90 when he was already retired. It is most probable that this work was authored somewhere between 1718 and 1735.

and even though the terms are advantageous for the aggressor, the proposal should be accepted and peace treaty “granted”. Both concerns, especially the one regarding making peace, are in line with those observed during the outbreak of 1736 – 1739 war up to the termination of Nemirov peace talks.

The defensive and reactive atmosphere of the early 1730s gave way to another work and this one attracted more (contemporary and later scholarly) attention compared to the *Nasihah* discussed above. İbrahim Müteferrika's *Usulü'l-Hikem fi Nizamü'l-Ümem* shares the mentality that also gave birth to Süleyman's *Nasihah* but ended up being a more revolutionary and questioning work when their proposed methods and reforms are taken into consideration. In the *Nasihah*, war and the condition of the army is the primary concern, and it still is for Müteferrika since they both sense the shadow of a possible Russian or Austrian offensive. In a short manner, Müteferrika states the condition of the Ottoman army as such: “It has been ... required ... to observe that for some time languor in their zeal and lack in the bulk of their existence is seen and [the army] has been suffering from various causes and disorders.”⁸² Following this statement, he reminds his readers of the classical Ottoman army structure with its right, left and central bodies and also of their manner of open offensive and consequent encirclement and destruction of the enemy. Had he been thinking the way Nahifi Süleyman did, at this point he would be expected to advise on restoring this system and whatever sub-branches it had. But İbrahim Müteferrika tells us about the contemporary structure of European armies, such as the musketeer lines, a working chain of command, the overall regularity and nonexistence of individual attacks. According to the author, the adoption of this

82 “Bir müddet himmetlerinde future vecüsset-i vücudlarında kusur görüldüğü ve güne esbab u ‘ilelden tari olduğu tettebbu’ ... olunma ... mukteza ... olmuşdur.” *Usulü'l-Hikem fi Nizami'l-Ümem*, pp.138-139.

order by the Empire's European foes, and its lack in the Ottoman army, is the underlying reason of the late military disasters.⁸³ The author has the courage and the will to suggest these ideas since in his mind they are the only way out which would help revitalize the decaying power of the Ottoman army. In another words, his strong reservations of Ottoman Empire's entry into war with Austria and Russia made him come up with unconventional solutions and still be able to keep his position in the Ottoman elite circle, which he would otherwise not be able to do so.

The text also offers other suggestions for the improvement of capabilities of the army, though not as substantial and well defined as above. In short, they are the use of new geographical knowledge, the verification of military intelligence and cooperating with other Islamic states against the unbelievers.⁸⁴ Again, the phrase of "other Islamic states" is of great importance. The Ottoman Empire, with its self-defined responsibilities such as the upholder of holy war, ruler of the traditional lands of the caliphate as well as the holy cities, was "*the* Islamic State" in its own perception; Persia was ruled by Shiites while the remaining major Sunni states of Morocco and the Mughals were too distant to be dealt with. In the Ottoman's own eyes, the Ottoman state was theoretically the unequaled and unrivaled Islamic state. Yet the recent military setbacks must have led Müteferrika to suggest seeking the assistance of "other" Islamic states, though he doesn't push the issue further by mentioning which ones they might be.

Indeed one does not need to look too far to find the mentality that drove the author to write such a treatise. İbrahim Müteferrika at some point in his work

83 Ibid., pp.138-139.

84 Ibid., pp.156-157.

explains his motives for writing:

[I have been] thinking on the reasons for the sedition that has been taking place gradually in this Sublime State, yet my weak mind, twisting about and in pain, has been unequal to the task and remains mystified as to the methods of relief from these hidden causes and how to grasp their real meaning. The ministers of the state and the prominent ones in the Court have committed mistakes in the rules of politics, and showed languor in dealing with important affairs, laziness and dawdling in settling the uncertain [affairs] of the country, when premonition and caution was what the situation required. [I have] regretted their forbearance and carelessness. Because of a result of divine intervention or because of the nature of existence or because of the nature of human society, instability has arisen in the world-order and darkness has fallen over the regularity of human affairs. [I have] been in a fog of doubt and concern that it might be the signs of the causes of infirmity that afflict the disposition of this Sublime State and [I have been] sorrowful since this transformation in the situation of all creatures and the inclination to sedition among the people have seemed to be in the ascendent...⁸⁵

Focusing on this self reflection, one realizes that the author is mainly concerned with the internal decay of the empire. He counts the government in general, statesmen, prominent politicians, law enforcement, events of utmost importance, the overall transformation and the inclination to unlawfulness among the subjects as the main topics of decay. In this quotation, there is no mention of the disorder in the army, pressure on the western and the northern frontiers or any connection between them, not to mention the recent losses of Hungary and parts of Serbia, Bosnia and Wallachia. But as he proceeds, one observes that all he suggests throughout his work in order to reverse this process of internal decline are military-related points, as

85 “Peyderpey bu devlet-i ‘aliyyede vuku’ bulan fitne esbabı tefekküründe ve bu hikmet-i hafıyye ‘ilel-i teferrühesinde ve hahikat-i meali idrakında ‘akl-ı na-tüvan piç u tab u ızdırabla deycur-ı hayretde aciz kalub vükela-yı devletin ve erkan u ayan-ı divanın kanun-ı siyasetde kusur ve umur-ı mehamme himmetde futur ve hall u akd-ı mübhemat-ı memleketde tekasül ve tevahün ve her halde basiret ve ihtiyat lazıme-i hal liken; müsamaha ve gafletlerine hami ile can u dilden teessüf ve gah ber mucib-i adet-i ilahiyye ve mukteza-yı tabi’at-ı kevnıyye ve iktiza-yı temeddün-i beşeriyye, nizam-ı alemde hanel ve intizam-ı ahval-i beni-Ademde zılel zuhuru mukarrer olub bu devlet-i aliyye mizacında alayim-i ‘illet-i za’f tareyan eylemek ihtimali teşvişi ve endişeyisle mütelevvin ve ahval-i ‘enamda mugayeret ve tabayı’-ı nasda fesada meyl ü rağbet galib görünmekle mütekedir”, Ibid., pp.124-125.

mentioned above.⁸⁶ Taking the internal change in a negative manner on the whole, the restoration of the army as an effective weapon is perceived to be sufficient to restore the empire to its position about half a century ago. It is clear that İbrahim Müteferrika was well aware of the speedy change in Europe and Ottomans' relative weakness as a result of this development, but refrained from admitting that the recent developments proved the superiority of European ways and contented himself with relating the problems to the Ottoman internal affairs. The strong focus on the military affairs and reform proposals in line with European tactics throughout the work indicates that it was the perceived danger presented by Austria and Russia and a desire to evade it that made him author this work. He was not an exception; this was the general atmosphere in the Ottoman Empire in the early 1730s as seen previously in Nahifi Süleyman's *Nasihatu'l-Vüzerâ* and as we will see in the political decisions taken during the period in question.

Ottoman Inactivity in the Face of One-Sided Russian Offensive

The Ottoman intellectuals were not mistaken when they worried about the danger from the west and the north. Primarily Russia and partially the Habsburg Empire were real threats to Ottoman domination and influence in Eastern Europe. Although Austria seemed to be friendlier in the 1720s and early 1730s, it had already proved its potential and animosity in the last two wars. Russia was not perceived to be as

⁸⁶ The author, apart from sole military affairs, also touches upon the knowledge of geography as a useful instrument if learnt well, but again he mentions its usefulness in the domain of military. Apart from this chapter, the remaining two chapters solely concern themselves with military formations, military history, military order and military reform. In this respect, the work, apart from being a political treatise written in response to the Patrona Halil rebellion of 1730, is a military reform proposal resulting from the losses of 1716 – 1718, which was then still influential in the way of thinking of an Ottoman subject. The concentrated focus on the army may be regarded as an indicator for the level of self-perceived inferiority and the expected further losses from a possible war with Europeans, mainly Austria and Russia.

threatening as its ally due to the fact that it had had minimal gains in the war of 1683-1699 and already had to give them up after the Treaty of Prut. But Russia was the more determined of the allies in expanding its domains at the expense of the Ottoman Empire.

It would not be wrong to say that after the signing of the Habsburg - Russian alliance in 1726, the Russians prepared for war.⁸⁷ They looked for an opportunity by which they could provoke a war that would be justifiable in that context. The first opportunity came with the War of Polish Succession. While the Ottomans did not declare war and take it to the field, they openly supported France and shared the same expectations about the future of the Polish throne. After this problem was settled in line with Austrian and Russian interests, Russia could claim that the Ottoman policy in this war was in fact an intervention in Polish internal affairs, which was forbidden by previous peace treaties between the two empires. Not missing the opportunity, or rather creating an opportunity out of this situation, Russia committed itself to wage war on the Ottoman Empire as soon as the one in Poland was over.⁸⁸

Russia was also occupied in Persia just like the Ottomans, trying to get its share of the unrest in that country. But more determined to direct its main effort to the Ottomans, Russia made peace with Persia as soon as the conflict in Poland was over and even formed a de-facto alliance with its former enemy. Together, they could threaten the northeastern frontier of the empire while the Ottomans were already experiencing difficulties in the Persian war. Even more dangerous was the possible

87 J. A. R. Marriot, *The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p.139.

88 Manstein, p.86.

enforcement of the 1726 alliance, which then seemed more probable than ever after the Russian support to the Habsburgs in the contest for the Polish throne.⁸⁹ The generous offering of troops by Russia made it inevitable for Austria to refuse cooperation in a possible war with the Ottomans, be it a defensive or an offensive one. Russia would use this pretext intensively during the outbreak of the coming war.

The Ottoman Empire had to face with crucial consequences after Russia came to terms with two powers that had non-friendly relations with the Porte. The Ottomans had been fighting with Persia for more than a decade and without any discernible gain while what they considered of Austria has already been mentioned. Russia had to give up much in favour of Persia for this end. When it had to evacuate all the territories it had conquered in the Caucasian zone since 1724 with the Treaty of Gence on 17 March 1735, Russia was certainly apprehensive of the war with the Porte.⁹⁰ A revitalized Persia under Tahmasb-Kuli Khan must have made St. Petersburg more cautious about continuing the Persian campaigns with no definite end. Moreover, the use of those resources against the Ottomans must have seemed to be more preferable and in line with the general foreign policy of Russia. On the other hand, as mentioned previously, Russia had made a profitable investment when they did not deny their help in support of Vienna. Having offensive plans against the Ottomans, Russia then could have better estimations of Vienna's next move in case a war broke out. This must have been encouraging for Russia since they were already planning the Turkish war. The loss of Azov, and more importantly loss of prestige, at Prut were not forgotten at all in the court and this thought could only be put to rest

89 William H. McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier 1500-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p.171.

90 Olson, *Mosul*, p.99.

by a sound victory. As for the long-term foreign policy, Russia wanted and needed access to navigate in the Black Sea, which would be the first step of the ultimate goal of reaching the Mediterranean. Those in power in St. Petersburg also had similar aims. General Münnich ambitiously planned and awaited the execution of a campaign where a victory against the Ottomans would further solidify his prominent position in Russia.⁹¹

The Sublime Porte, ready to sacrifice much to avoid a war with Austria, did not feel obliged to spend the same care towards Russia. Russia was by no means perceived to be less dangerous but the general acceptance was that Russia did not seem to be looking for a pretext for a war. Indeed, the Porte had misjudged the two allies. Austria was satisfied with its recent gains and did not wish to see the hostilities renewed. Russia, on the other hand, contrary to Ottomans' assumptions, would do anything to provoke one.⁹²

Seeing that the Persian campaigns were nowhere near to be satisfactory, the grand vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha gave boost to the peace talks with Tahmasb-Kuli Khan. The coffers of treasury were running low and Ali Pasha did not have an optimistic view of the contemporary European affairs, especially during the War of Polish Succession. He was even inclined towards joining France in the war. But the peace with Persia could not be settled at once, and as the hostilities remained opened, the empire had to support the frontier. To this end, the Crimean army was assigned with the task of participating in the Persian campaign.⁹³ At first glance, this move seems to be completely natural, but the Porte had no idea that by this move it

91 Cassels, p.43.

92 See below in this chapter.

93 Olson, *Mosul*, p.97.

presented Russians with what they had been waiting for more than a decade. The following steps taken by the Ottoman statesmen verify this view.

The Porte did not expect hostile behaviour from St. Petersburg and they had no idea what this move could be used as a pretext for. With this consideration, they did not hesitate to send the Crimean cavalry to the eastern frontier in support of the main army. This action was not meant to carry the hostilities to a further level; a demonstration of force could well speed up the peace negotiation process with Persia. On 1 August 1735, letters verifying the march of the Crimean Khan towards the eastern frontier arrived at Constantinople.⁹⁴ Within this dispatch, there is no mention to avoid any hostilities with Russia or an act of border violation. These points would form the basis of Russian declaration of war later on but at this stage the Ottoman government had nothing in mind related to that. Without any idea about how this action would serve the Russian plans, the Porte acted freely, since they had no intention to present a threat for Russia.

Rather than offending Russia by a show of force, the Ottomans were concerned about the safety of the peninsula after the security deficit created by the march of the Crimean troops. Since Crimea was left without a proper force, the governor of Ochakov, Şahin Pasha, was assigned to maintain the security in the area. What was meant by the term “security issues” were not in any way offensive in nature, or aiming to prevent the Crimean cavalry from raiding deep into the Russian Ukraine. Just the opposite, Şahin Pasha was ordered to deal with any possible incursion into the peninsula and communicate with Constantinople in case a conflict

94 Subhi, p.256.

surfaced, as he was ordered in the imperial edict.⁹⁵ The Porte seems to have been over-concerned even with a minor border issue, which, under normal circumstances, would be dealt with by related local administrations, let alone having in mind any provocative behaviour against Russia. It would only later be understood what this decision would lead to when St. Petersburg wrote a detailed explanation for the declaration of hostilities.

After the Crimean army's attempt to cross the disputed zone *en route* to Persia, Russian troops in the region gave a warning that this act would be taken as a violation of Russian borders. The zone in question was claimed both by Russia and the Ottoman Empire as spheres of influence and the Persian wars only further complicated the dispute for control. Ottomans were considering that the passage was through a non-Russian zone while Russia happily announced it a violation of its borders. The Russians dispatched an official note to the Porte listing the violations committed by the Crimean army. However, the note was not written in order to inform the addressee. Instead, this communication was dispatched to serve as the legal basis for the coming war declaration. One night before its dispatch to Constantinople, the court of St. Petersburg had already decided for offensive action against the Ottoman Empire and even the division of conquests following the campaigns was considered in depth.⁹⁶ Russians now started to make preparations for this end and pressed Vienna to cooperate in the field while the Porte initially thought that it was only dealing with an issue destined to stay within the limits of diplomatic communications, and without giving birth to a hot conflict.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.269.

⁹⁶ Cassels, p.97.

Not perceiving a profitable outcome from issuing a counter-protest, or even replying it in a diplomatic manner which would assure Russia about its concerns and at the same time maintain its own dignity, the Ottoman government chose to remain silent. Russia's protest to the march of the Crimean army was received with silence and given minimal attention by the grand vizier. The Porte neither wanted to provoke St. Petersburg, nor sensed any risk of conflict that might arise as the final outcome of this communication. But no matter how their letter was received in Constantinople, "the court of Petersburg was overjoyed to find that the Turks afforded so plausible a pretence for the hostilities they were preparing against them."⁹⁷

Following the arrival of the protest at Constantinople, the Russian army conducted a raid against the Crimean Tartars. This raid was carried out without a formal declaration of war and when asked by the Ottoman government about this issue, Russia replied explaining that their offensive was targeting the Crimean Tartars in retaliation for their unlawful behaviour and had nothing to do with the central Ottoman government. Laugier states that if Russia's aims were really confined to a satisfaction on the issue of Tartars, the Ottomans would not display a major reaction about this.⁹⁸ At this point, traces of fear and hesitation were still not visible in the Ottoman documents and narratives. However, it should be kept in mind that the Crimeans were vassals of the Ottoman Empire and their bonds were much more than nominal. In other words, it would not be unreasonable to expect the Ottomans to receive the Russian attack on the Tartars as an attack on the Ottoman state. However the Ottomans chose not to retaliate. The heavy emphasis on the

⁹⁷ Laugier, p.13.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.14.

perceived danger from Austria rather than Russia depended upon the assumption that the Habsburg offensive was more probable than the Russians', not from an assumption that Russia was perceived as an inferior power. Now that the armies were on the field, the Ottomans had every reason to fear since what they tried to evade was step by step becoming real. Thus, they chose not to declare war or take a similar measure when the Russian troops attacked Crimea.

Simultaneously with the Crimean campaign, Russia laid siege to the prized fortress of Azov. When news of the siege reached Constantinople, no declaration of war was yet received⁹⁹ despite the fact that Azov was under direct Ottoman administration and not a dependent territory like Crimea. The fortress fell earlier than supposed and bad news travelled fast to the Ottoman capital. But still, despite the simple truth, the Porte could not act decisively. Instead of taking solid measures to prevent Russian aggression and at the same time either borrowing time for negotiations or directly marching towards the frontier, the grand vizier chose to depose the khan for he was perceived as a potential provoker for further Russian aggression.¹⁰⁰ The deposed khan must have been a warlike leader in order to meet this end, and at this time the empire needed warlike leaders if it still wanted to keep its territory intact from future offensives from the north. Adversely, the current administrators wished for anything but war, and seemed ready to cede territory if only to check the aggression at this stage.

The political climate in the capital went through considerable change after the

99 In this interval, St. Petersburg and the Porte communicated through the Russian resident at Constantinople about the latest developments. They are of a purely political nature, with no extra conclusion to be drawn from as this paper is concerned. Its details are not narrated in order not to diverge from the main topic.

100 Laugier, p.23.

fall of Azov. The pressure on the government rose so much that a formal declaration of war became inevitable and was eventually issued. But as the formal declaration took place, the Porte's reservations were underlined. It was recalled that for long the two empires had been living in peace (deliberately not mentioning the war ending with the treaty of 1700) until Peter the Great broke it in 1711. The Russian army's and tsar's quasi-captivity at Prut is said to be a direct consequence of their unjust behaviour and they had been offered freedom at little cost as necessitated by the "compassion of Islam." In the next incident, when they did not evacuate Azov, the Ottoman army was already in Adrianople marching north, only to return as a result of a formal apology from Russia. Also, the peace was renewed before the collective action taken against Persia.¹⁰¹ These are acceptable statements from a state entering into an armed conflict that justifies its actions and legitimizes its use of force under the pretext of inevitability.

Then Subhi starts to count the reasons for declaring war from the Russian perspective. The first one is damage from and uncontrolled behaviour of Ottoman vassals in Caucasus; this one is justified by the author since "for a long time their actions and gains have been looting."¹⁰² The Ottoman unwillingness to bear the responsibility of its vassals was already evident in the case of a Crimean raid by the Russians and did not seem to change when the Porte decided to counteract. The Porte neither protected its vassals nor took responsibility for their actions at the outbreak of this war. This may have been the result of a declining self-confidence. Subhi reacts to the next Russian pretext for breaking the peace after the khan of

101 Subhi, pp.280-281.

102 "Öteden berü kar u kisbleri nehb ü garet olub" Ibid., 282.

Crimea's march towards Persia: “as if it was Russia's duty to be the protector of Persia”.¹⁰³ The Ottomans still seemed not to understand that Russia was looking for a pretext for war, the conflict was not the real result of this march. That is probably why they problematized Russia's declared justifications, without considering or mentioning what was behind the curtains.

Then Russia's breaches of peace from an Ottoman point of view narrated. The Caucasian vassalage problems and the Persian campaign are present but one detail is interesting. The Ottomans pointed to the Russian troops' entrance to and intervention in Poland as evidences of their breach of peace.¹⁰⁴ However the Porte had already missed the opportunity of such an opposition when it agreed with the settlement reached after the War of Polish Succession. One year later, coming up with such a claim was as meaningless as Russia's act of starting an all-out war from an issue of passage. Theoretically, the Porte was right since the previous treaties forbade Russia from intervening in Polish politics but Constantinople did not, or could not, raise its voice during the war, thus losing its base for a future opposition. Moreover, in order not to start a war, the Ottoman Empire had a blind-eyed position against Russia despite its “peace-breaking” actions during the Persian campaigns and construction of fortifications along the border. It also bypassed the Russian raids into Crimea but when they coupled with the siege and fall of Azov, the war was declared, though unwillingly, on 2 May 1736.¹⁰⁵ Such a policy by the Ottoman Empire is reflective of its nature of thought on the eve of the coming war. All the clauses that were put forward by the Ottomans at the time of its formal declaration of war had taken place

103 “Guya Acem'in himayeti Moskov üzerine vacibe-i zimmet mesabesinde olmak” Ibid., p.282.

104 Ibid., p.283.

105 Uzunçarşılı, pp.252-253.

through the decade that preceded the upcoming conflict. But the Ottoman Empire did not object to those acts that were later mentioned to be breaches of peace, at least in a formal manner. These points further strengthen the view that the Ottomans had a low opinion of their military potential in comparison with its rivals. With this motivation, it had evaded raising opposition at many instances which were indeed thought to be offending the Ottoman dignity. These disturbances surfaced when the war was already on its way and declaring them was not going to make a difference.

The unexpectedness of a Russian for the Ottomans offensive also found similar reflections at the front. As their troops were gathering near Azov, Russian officials assured the Ottomans that they would honour the peace treaty and all their measures were taken against the Tartar aggression. Hearing this, the Ottoman guards in the fort were relieved from undertaking solid defensive preparations, only seeing the true side of the story when the two towers near the fort were ambushed. Later, as the siege was still going on, Russian raids into the Crimean Peninsula were also heard within Azov. The Ottoman official chronicler noted that “(Russia) violated and broke the peace treaty; and uncovered its secret malignancy...”¹⁰⁶ The events seem to have surprised the Ottoman officials, since the surprise surfaced after these developments is visible both in the written sources and contemporary policies. The lack of firm defensive measures in Azov must have originated not only from the non-hostile messages from the Russian commanders; the possibility of instructions received from the centre prompting the fort defenders not to take harsh defensive actions sounds meaningful in order to produce such easiness. But whether these orders were sent or not, the Porte's silence in the face of the Russian attacks to

106 “Nakz u ihkar-ı ahd ü peyman ile habaset-i nihânisin aşîkar” Subhi, p.292.

Crimea, an Ottoman area of sovereignty, indicates the level of reluctance to fight a war with Russia.

Despite the one sided military action from Russia, Ottomans had resisted against declaring war for quite a long time while taking into consideration the nature of those actions. The formal declaration took place on the beginning of May, but it shall not be taken as the point that the patience of the Porte had finally risen to the level that was beyond bearing. Just the opposite, Ottomans issued the declaration when they saw that they had nothing else to do. Prior to taking this decision, the Russian resident at Constantinople was questioned on the late military operations into the Ottoman soil. He answered that the Cossack-Tartar rivalry was the cause and Russia was friendly to the Ottomans. The reply was not found persuasive, but was at least taken into consideration though the nature of the offensive was obvious.

Ottomans, after Russia took it up to the field, were so sure of the meaning of what was taking place that they communicated with the English and Dutch diplomats and requested mediation from their governments. In reply, the diplomats expressed their astonishment for the recent developments and found it “suitable” for the Porte to answer with a formal declaration of war. Only at this point “it has reached to the level of certainty that (Russia) clearly violated the treaty and the agreement...”¹⁰⁷ It was previously obvious that Russia had attacked the Ottoman vassal Crimea, a vassal with more than nominal ties, and also laid siege to Azov, eventually capturing it.

Azov was not within the borders of Crimea; it was directly held and administered by the central government. But even these two open violations were not sufficient to make Constantinople conclude its evaluations of the late events as a breach of peace,

107 “Sarahaten nakz-ı akd u müsak itdikleri rütbe-i sıhhat ereside olub” Ibid., p.294.

holding this intention as the untold truth within, hoping that it might come to terms with Russia. It was only after the deception of the Russian resident and astonishment of British and Dutch representatives that the chronicler Subhi states the events reached to the level of clarity. Before this, he reserved himself from declaring that while the Ottomans were looking for mediators, Russia was already fighting a war without a formal declaration. For this reason, Ottoman declaration of war on 2 May 1736 shall be considered with a perspective that takes these preceding attempts into consideration, not with a limited understanding that employs the public pressure and Ottoman awakening as the main motivations.

The Ottoman government's reluctance to fight against Russia must be approached with caution. The line between unexpectedness and evasion is narrow and thus requires the utmost attention. The examples given above show that the Ottomans were aware of what was going on and made use of every method available to avoid the foreseen outcome while throughout this process acting as if they had no expectation for a war, in order not to cause further provocation.

As early as the Gence Agreement of 1735 between Russia and Persia, there was enough evidence for the Ottoman Empire for the upcoming Russian hostility. By the treaty, Persian silk trade, one of the major sources of Ottoman custom revenues, was monopolized by Russia. It also had given up much of its Caucasian acquisitions but still reserved the right to keep garrisons in some forts and a navy in the Caspian Sea. The disadvantages presented by these clauses were no secret to Constantinople but anyway they had chosen to accept its validity and started to negotiate with Persia in order to end the hostilities.¹⁰⁸ This was a move to block the way for further

108 Olson, *Mosul*, p.100.

Russian-Persian rapprochement and possible alliance against the Ottomans that might have resulted from that.¹⁰⁹ The attempt to negotiate with Persia is similar in nature with attempts to cast a blind eye on the initial Russian aggression and look for mediators as settling a peace with Russia became impossible from the Ottoman point of view. Even the year prior to the formal declaration, Ottomans had sensed the rising danger and tried to minimize it with supplementary actions, but chose not to express their observations since they wanted to avoid the outbreak a war at all costs. The step taken by starting negotiations with Persia was also in line with the general Ottoman policy of minimizing the scope of a war on multiple fronts.¹¹⁰ Having long and overstretched borders that were difficult to defend simultaneously, fighting at different fronts would only further complicate the situation and the gains from the eastern campaigns were already given away with the late Persian resurgence. Closing that frontier would help concentrate on a possible war in the west and north; in other words the Porte, though willing to do everything to evade it, probably sensed that fighting might occur anytime. All the developments after the Gence Agreement of 1735 up to the declaration of war on May 1736 should be read without setting this reality aside.

The negotiations started on March 1736 with the aim of placing Persia out of the equation, and the border was defined in line with the *Kasr-ı Şirin* treaty of 1639. The peace treaty was not signed due to the disputes over religious issues but the political chapters were concluded immediately. Without the peace treaty obtained, Nadir Shah launched his Indian campaigns and the Ottomans considered the eastern

109 Subhi, p.285.

110 Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge&New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.202.

front closed.¹¹¹ The Porte had to focus on the surfacing problems with Russia and the aggression only served to speed up the process of settling with Persia. The uninformed and non-expecting image of Constantinople was still to be upheld in line with these policies out of fear from the coming war, for the Ottoman Empire then still hoped to avoid it one way or another.

After the formal Ottoman declaration of war, Russia turned to Austria. The alliance between two powers proved to be long-lasting compared to the shifting political equilibrium and the unstable nature of the era; the underlying factor was long-term common interests.¹¹² On the Polish question, both allies had shared similar concerns and goals.

Between 1733 and 1735, Russia did not deprive its ally of substantial military and political support in Eastern Europe and this time it was Russia who was expecting its ally to honour the cooperation against the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, Russia was determined for immediate war as early as 1733. On the Polish question, the Ottoman Empire had sided politically with France, against whom the Austrian-Russian alliance was fighting, and Russia had planned a coordinated campaign against the Porte in cooperation with Austria; however, it was only the beginning of the Polish Succession War and the Russian influence was not yet felt that much on Vienna. When asked, Austria had said that it would do anything to avoid a war with the Ottoman Empire.¹¹³ Contrary to Ottoman fears, Austria did not wish to see the restoration of hostilities. Had it agreed, Russia was ready to fight its way towards the south although it was clear that troops would also be needed in Poland to install their

111 Uzunçarşılı, pp.231, 234.

112 Anderson, p.63.

113 Roeder, *The Reluctant Ally*, p.44.

common candidate as the new king. This possibility had been discussed in detail between Russia and Austria. In 1733, it was not yet clear if the Ottoman harmony with French policy towards Poland would remain limited within the diplomatic realm or whether the Porte would use force to support its policy and join the war. As the Polish question necessitated a war to be fought and Russian requests of an allied attack to the Ottoman Empire were expressed, Charles VI replied to the Russian ambassador that a military alliance against the Ottoman Empire would only take place if the Ottomans chose to intervene in the Polish affair and took their army to the field.¹¹⁴

However, the generous Russian military aid in Poland implicitly assured the realization of Austrian aid in case war with the Ottoman Empire broke out. Either in the form of an informal promise or through the workings of mutual understanding, Austria felt obliged to join the possible Ottoman war, and St. Petersburg had no doubt about that after fighting over the Polish question. In 1733, Vienna had refused to mobilize an army against the Ottomans but after the Russian cooperation in Poland, Vienna tried to prevent the Russian declaration of war, since if then, Austria would be obliged to fulfil its duty as an ally. In this manner, during 1734 Austria spared no diplomatic effort to prevent the outbreak of a Russian-Ottoman war in order to evade a situation at which it was bound to act in line with Russia.¹¹⁵ The next year came with no big changes for the three empires. Russia still looked for ways to start a war, Ottomans first unaware and then evasive and the Habsburgs were trying to prevent Russia from moving towards their goal so that they would stay

114 Parvev, pp.203-204.

115 Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, p.52.

away from further engagement which required extraordinary resources. Russia, as previously told, when it protested the march of Crimean army through Dagestan towards the Persian front, had already decided for war and was determined to realize its plan earlier than what actually happened.¹¹⁶ What stopped them from doing so was the reluctance of Austria to cooperate. An ally obliged but unwilling to act accordingly prevented Russia from attacking the Ottoman Empire for about three years.

Ottoman international policy shift in 1736 shows that the Russian threat was perceived and acted upon accordingly while the Habsburg fear remained, only to surface in the year to come. The Porte was politically inclined towards France in the first half of the 1730s, especially during the grand vizierates of Topal Osman Pasha and Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, in accordance with Cardinal Fleury's pro-Ottoman foreign policy. As a result of this rapprochement, England and the Netherlands, the mediators between the Ottomans and the Holy League in the treaties of Karlowitz and Passarowitz, were left aside as far as Ottoman international policies were concerned during the early reign of Mahmud I.¹¹⁷ The Porte had refused to fight in Poland without a formal alliance with France but this did not strain the relationship between the two partners and in the meantime no development occurred to ensure a realignment between the English-Dutch camp and Constantinople. But as the Porte realized that its own methods of evasion were not effective enough to prevent a war with Russia, it approached the former mediating powers and requested their services once again for the establishment of peace with St. Petersburg. The supposedly

116 Ibid., p.52.

117 Uzunçarşılı, p.237.

unaware Ottoman government was indeed well aware of what was about to come but lacked the resources and political will to execute the necessary precautions. The absence of this political will was due to the previous western wars and resulting Ottoman fears of experiencing another one and consequently losing more land. This mentality was what made the Ottoman government to forward this issue to the English and Dutch representatives at a time when these two states lacked the influence over the Ottoman court that they used to enjoy in the earlier eighteenth century.

Towards the Ottoman declaration of war, the Ottoman court was communicating with St. Petersburg through its resident at Constantinople, suspecting but still not sure that Russia had already decided for war and now was executing its long-planned campaigns. A letter from the tsarina expressed that if the Porte wished for peace, it should send representatives to the border; or deport the Russian resident with his whole stuff and property if war was the Porte's choice. The Grand Vizier in reply said that the Ottoman Empire would act accordingly whichever of two Russia chose to abide by.¹¹⁸ It is difficult to find a clearer manifestation from Constantinople underlining its unwillingness to fight a war with Russia after a period throughout which its policies gave an impression that a fight was not expected at all. It was expected, and extremely unwanted in such a way that the official communication of the grand vizier could not escape expressing the lack of a political will to act accordingly.

It was just after this communication that the Dutch and English governments were asked to mediate between the Porte and Russia. Although for too long it was

118 Subhi, p.298.

evident that the war was about to break out, Constantinople could not make the necessary preparations for the very probable campaign and this was the main motive for the request in question. Without a mobilized army while Russia was actively campaigning in the Crimean Peninsula, Silahdar Mehmed Pasha, then the grand vizier, felt obliged to look for mediation from these two powers and letters to these governments were dispatched. Still, the Empire did not wish to express its current inability, stating that the expectation from the two candidate mediators was “the fulfillment of an approved service worthy of the glory of the Sublime State”¹¹⁹

Because of several reasons, the employment of England and the Netherlands as the sole mediators could not be realized.¹²⁰ Informed of the earlier Austrian-Russian alliance and Vienna's relative influence on St. Petersburg compared to the mentioned states, the *kethüda* of the grand vizier, Osman Efendi requested Austrian mediation in order to avoid the breakout of an all-out war.¹²¹ The resulting contemporary negative comments on Osman Efendi and his policy choices may not be taken as too harsh and one sided. The Porte, at the time of mediation request from the Habsburg Empire, was well aware of the former Austrian-Russian alliance and also understood that Russia's recent military activities in the Crimean Peninsula and Azov were the manifestations of its trust in the alliance. The Ottoman government estimated that Russia would expect military aid from Austria when the time was

119 “Devlet-i Aliyye'nin şanına layık bir hizmet-i mergubede bulunmak için” Ibid., p.298.

120 In order to avoid from diverging from the main thesis, such developments are not given in detail, instead focusing on the ideological shifts and descriptions. One of the main reason that this mediation did not take place was that Russia did not want to leave Vienna out of the picture since it eventually wanted to pull it into the theater of war. This will be further discussed below.

121 *Şem'dani-zade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi Tarihi: Mür'i't-Tevarih*, ed. Münir Aktepe, 3 vols, vol.1 (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1976-1981), p.65. The author comments that this move was out of "incapability and weakness without any hope".

right. This was even made clear with a letter to Vienna asking questions about these concerns.¹²²

If we were not supplied with such information, one would rightly think that the Porte was not informed of the inner workings of the relationship between St. Petersburg and Vienna. If this had been the case, Constantinople's request of Austrian mediation could be taken as a sign of inadequate political intelligence. But the Ottoman awareness of the situation is documented in the contemporary sources along with the letter dispatched regarding this issue. The Porte, consciously and deliberately, asked Russia's trusted ally to mediate between itself and Russia; and the alliance was embodied and carried out with mutual content and success only three years earlier. The Ottoman Empire had been drawn into a war from which it had made every effort to escape, at the cost of acting in a way that considerably degraded its reputation. Seeing this, it sought a helping hand which was then by definition obliged to fight against the Porte, let alone be of any assistance.

Living the Fear: The "Peace Talks" and the Ottoman Border Commanders
The initial Ottoman requests of mediation from England and the Netherlands, and then from Austria, are indicators of how reluctant the empire was in declaring war against Russia.¹²³ A peace conference was to be set up where the issues that gave way to the hostilities and possible measures to be taken for the restoration of peace would be discussed.

At the same time, the fact that the Ottoman Empire and Russia were formally

122 Subhi, p.297.

123 Wood, p.554.

at war necessitated the materialization of some preparations, however minimal. The Russian army, having raided Crimea and captured Azov, was already in the field. The Ottomans, despite their trust in the efficiency of the future peace congress, still had to mobilize an army until peace was formally signed with Russia. This was the minimum requirement to be fulfilled after the formal declaration of war. Preparations for the army and the delegates to march northwards from the Balkans were carried out. However, the army was mobilized in a very reluctant way and only for the propitiation of the public opinion, which was in support of a war against Russia. If the Ottoman government had no hesitations about the public reaction, as we are told, it would immediately accept the first peace offers, even by ceding some territory.¹²⁴ The modern reader cannot be sure about the validity of this statement but when it is considered in the light of the previous actions and the policy followed *en route* and during the negotiations that are about to be discussed, one cannot help but give credit to it.

The Ottoman army's departure from Constantinople was accompanied by an official ceremony. In this specific case, the Habsburg resident Talman was invited to attend this ceremony as the troops marched towards the Russian front.¹²⁵ This was a display of power to the future mediator. Furthermore, if one takes for granted that the Ottomans were highly suspicious of a possible Austrian-Russian cooperation in the field, this was also a display of power to discourage Austria from joining the war. There is one more possibility for the reason of his presence. After the mediation talks with English, Dutch and Habsburg envoys at Constantinople, it had become the

¹²⁴ Laugier, p.29.

¹²⁵ Parvey, p.212.

Ottoman policy to display trust in the Habsburg side; a policy which was thought to be eventually effective to prevent Austria from joining Russia.¹²⁶ Whatever the reason behind the invitation of Talman to the ceremony was, it did not produce the expected result. Austria did not prove to be an effective mediator between Russia and the Ottoman Empire and in the end, it joined Russia in its cause. Thus, inviting Talman is only notable for allowing modern elaborations on possible Ottoman considerations just before the Nemirov peace talks. But again, the three possibilities counted above all lead to the same outcome; the Ottomans' unwillingness to fight a war.

As already observed in its policies regarding the Ottomans in the 1720s and 1730s, France was pessimistic about the potential of Ottoman power after the Treaty of Passarowitz and this tendency did not transform into a more optimistic one after 1735. Because of this, Villeneuve, the French ambassador at Constantinople, did not foresee success on the side of the Ottomans as their army marched from Constantinople. He was already sure that Vienna was just about to join the Russian cause.¹²⁷ For France, the peace negotiations were nothing more than borrowing time for the mobilization of the Habsburg forces. The ambassador considered that Austria had already decided to fight in cooperation with Russia; the mediation was a trick in the greater game of war. In this perspective, the Ottoman Empire, viewed as a relatively weak party by its partner France, was marching towards a real war while it perceived the peace to be more probable, and the coming war was one which the current strength of the Ottoman army would not be able to endure.

126 Laugier, p.19.

127 Cassels, p.106.

To prevent the expected but unwanted outcome, Villeneuve communicated with the grand vizier Silahdar Mehmed Pasha and conveyed him the message that Austria's mediation was in fact a deception. However, the grand vizier and his *kethüda* Osman Efendi gave no credit to this warning and did alter their policies. It was thought, especially by the *kethüda*, that it was the traditional French–Habsburg rivalry and especially their late hostilities in the War of Polish Succession which made the Parisian court and its ambassador advice in this direction.¹²⁸ The refusal, in my opinion, further strengthen these two approaches: Either the Porte was highly suspicious of a possible realization of the Austrian–Russian alliance and abstained from anything that would irritate Vienna, or the mediators were placed so much trust that their capacity to reconstruct the Ottoman–Russian peace was given too much credit in such a way as to manipulate the Ottoman government from paying at least a moderate attention to the advices of its only long time partner in Europe.

Whatever the Ottoman considerations about Vienna were, it was clear that the reestablishment of peace with Russia would remove the risk of war in the west. To this end, the Porte hurried for the renewed negotiations with St. Petersburg. During a conversation between the grand vizier and the Habsburg ambassador regarding the issue of mediation of Austria, Mehmed Pasha told Talman that “the Sublime State will not relinquish its traditional borders or even one stone of the fortress of Azov. If the mediation takes place, it shall be on this principle.”¹²⁹ If this command-like communication is taken in isolation, one cannot see a point of weakness in the Ottoman will either to negotiate tough or fight in case this request was not realized.

128 Uzunçarşılı, pp.249, 261.

129 “Devlet-i Aliyye hudud-ı kadimeden ve Azak Kal’ası’nın bir taşından geçmez. Eğer tavassut olunur ise ol vech üzerine olunsun” Mehmed Emni, 8a.

But the event to follow refutes the enforceability of this will. When Talman's credentials of mediation arrived, the conditions were accepted by the Ottoman government without an inquiry about the content.¹³⁰ If the request of the grand vizier was the real reflection of the Ottoman mind, the credentials would be thoroughly investigated and the presence of clauses which satisfy the Ottoman point of view regarding the peace talks would be inserted, or at least an effort would be made in this way. But the speech given by Silahdar Mehmed Pasha turned out to be nothing more than a formality with words chosen in a careful and diplomatic manner. When the issue of mediation came to be real, Talman was not reminded of this conversation.

Nearly all of the contemporary and near-contemporary Ottoman sources make extremely negative comments about the *kethüda* Osman Effendi. Most of them were written after the Treaty of Belgrade, thus being in a position to judge the pre-war policies of the *kethüda* after the end of the war, but nevertheless, their assessments are valuable since they reflect the political mood of their time and still one cannot altogether dismiss the negative views regarding Osman Efendi just because those were authored after the completion of a relatively successful war. They deserve to be mentioned since the policies of Osman Efendi form the peak of actions and efforts of the Ottoman government¹³¹ that now make us able to label them as the fear of Russia and Austria.

According to Şemdanizade, any sane person would realize from its acts and statements that Austria was deceiving the Porte in disguise of mediation. But Osman

130 Ibid. Before the mediation, his rank was raised to ambassador.

131 He enjoyed a decision-making power over the imperial policies beyond the conventional boundaries that had limited his predecessors. Subhi, p.311.

Efendi, in a state of “donnishness,” perceived the peace to be certain and proved deficiency in campaign preparations.¹³² This was not a general assessment that took place when the overall flow of events was observed by the author. The *kethüda*, in a strong belief that Talman had persuaded the Russians not to proceed further, prevented the Ottoman army from crossing the Danube towards the Russian front.¹³³

Şemdanizade's observations seem to have a true side. Remaining in the south banks of the Danube meant that the army was far away from the main action. In other words, the Porte did not wish to intervene with force, possibly thinking that such a confrontation would make an all-out war inevitable. The risk of war with Austria may also be counted among the factors but the later orders of Osman Efendi prove the opposite. The only remaining option for the modern reader is to see that the negative comments about the *kethüda* have a true side. Most of these works also supply us with quotations from his speeches. True or distorted, these quotations also comply with what actually happened. They should be treated in the same manner with the comments about Osman Efendi since they do not contradict with what was taking place in real and still there is not yet any information that would make one suspicious of these quotations' validity.

Osman Efendi is quoted saying in a meeting with Talman at the Ottoman army camp Babadağı, after his formal appointment as the mediator:

We have wintered here. Next year we shall winter in Bender, if necessary in Ochakov and if we can make it, on the Russian soil and [we shall] ... employ all our potential effort to teach them their place. This shall be realized, if it is meant to be... If you help the Russians, we cannot oppose that, since you have been in an alliance, we do not urge you not to. But if you also insist on

132 *Mür'i't-Tevarih*, p.66.

133 Uzunçarşılı, p.262.

breaking the peace with us, we request the completion [of the peace treaty deadline] and we shall send an extraordinary ambassador if necessary. And even if your soldiers cross into our borders, again we shall not retaliate. If these acts do not prove to be fruitful and you attack us ... we will undertake the armed clash.¹³⁴

This speech is almost self-insulting when one relates it to a high official but nevertheless it is more or less what was taking place in reality. The Porte promised not to react against a future Austrian aid for the Russian war effort. If it was realized, Austria would be indirectly in war with the Ottoman Empire and still the Empire would guarantee its non-hostile stance. Probably the administrators knew that Austria, one way or another, would be involved in this war and wanted to keep its contribution to Russia at minimum by offering an option where it would fulfil its responsibility as an ally and still not be technically in war with the Ottomans. But despite this possibility, the speech still has less self-respect than one expects from one of the major powers in the first half of the eighteenth century. Up to now, Ottoman fears were reflected by their actions and steps taken but dignity was kept in formal speeches. If this address is authentic, and it seems to be because of what was to take place in the months to follow, the Ottoman government feared the coming war in such a way that they did not spare similar expressions from their communications when evaluating the situation that they were in.

The peace congress delegates were convened at Nemirov, Poland, under the shadow of the approaching war.¹³⁵ The first draft given by the Ottoman delegation to

134 “Kış bunda kışladık. Gelecek sene Bender’de ve dahi iktiza ider ise Özi ve elimizden gelür ise Moskov memleketinde kışlarız ve ... hadlerini bildirmek üzere sa’y u makdurumuzu sarf ideriz. Mukadder ne ise olur... Moskovluya imdad ü ianet iderseniz ne mani, çünkü ittifakınız bulunmuş, biz size imdad itmeyin demeziz. Yok biz dahi sizinle nakz-ı ahd ideriz dersiniz itmamınız için reca ideriz ve iktiza ider ise mahsus elçi göndeririz. Ve askeriniz hududumuza dahi girerse yine muharebe itmezüz. Bu muamelelerimiz müfid olmayub üzerimize gelirsiniz ... muharebeye mu’aderet ideriz.” Subhi, p.350.

135 The peace negotiations will not be retold here. For details, see Mehmed Emni Bey, Cassels, pp.127-137, Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, pp.94-117.

the Russians recounts the reasons of the conflict and proposes a negotiation solely on these chapters. In the document, what was going on between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was defined as “coldness.” The same is true when the Ottoman delegation was conversing with the Polish host. In this conversation, the process that they were going through was described as “while (the Ottoman Empire) is still in a state of coldness with the others (Russia and Austria)”.¹³⁶

The delegation of the Ottoman Empire refrained from admitting the existence of a war between their state and Russia. This war had started much earlier; when the first Russian operations in Crimea and Azov had begun. The Porte for long ignored this *de facto* situation and waited to see if Russia was to stop at all. When it proved to be the opposite, Ottomans had to declare war, against their own will and after this stage Russia was still marching south and west deep into the Ottoman soil. This was the real situation when the Ottoman delegation defined a hot war as a state of coldness. They also knew well what was taking place around them but probably the instructions they received from the grand vizier's camp compelled them to begin the negotiations in this manner. But this word-trick did not work. The Ottomans' addressees were more inclined to carrying out the struggle in the field than coming to terms under the spell of the words of the Ottoman delegates.

Russia, as told earlier, had already decided to fight. Before and simultaneously with the negotiations it was executing its plans and this was what the Ottomans were failing to realize from the start. It required the Ottomans to witness the devastation of the Crimean peninsula and loss of the key fortress Azov just to gather an army. To accept the challenge was still not a path that was envisaged.

136 Mehmed Emni, 24b, 25a, 30b.

Austrian mediators conveyed the Ottomans the message that the tsarina did not aim to expand her realm and Russia was conducting communications in a positive manner with the sultan's delegates. Taking this seriously, the Ottoman delegation in reply said that after the peaceful settlement of the points of dispute, expanding one's realm only serves to waste one's treasury and subjects, and the security that the Russian delegates requested was only possible through peace.¹³⁷

If it was a negotiation in a real sense, the Ottoman delegates would just have had the upper hand, since the language they employed was serving to bring Russia closer to a ceasefire and peace. Considering they were getting somewhere, the Ottoman officials proposed three zones of separation which would serve to keep the disputed Tartars, Cossacks and other Caucasian communities away from one other's border areas. They finished saying that "if the intent of the Russian delegates, in line with their claims, is security, it is also the intent of the Sublime State. The requested security and comfort shall only be embodied through these conditioned separations."¹³⁸ However, as mentioned previously, Russia had already decided in favour of war when the Ottomans were offering to contain the Tartar raids.¹³⁹

For the average aggressor, the Ottoman offer was enough to make the hostilities cease. They offered to remove the problematic populations away from the Russian borders and requested the same from their northern neighbour. But Russia was not the average belligerent; it was a tough foe and did not consider peace as long as extraordinary concessions were made by Constantinople. Seeing that their offer,

137 Ibid., 25b-26a.

138 "Rusya murahhaslarının iddialarına göre maksudları emniyet ise nitekim Devlet-i Aliyye'nin maksudu dahi odur. Matlub olan emniyet ü rahat ancak bu misüllü şartlı fasılalar ile vücuda gelür." Ibid., 26b-29a.

139 Manstein, p.91.

indeed a fair one, did not attract the attention of the Russians, the Ottomans, except Osman Efendi, being for long aware of what was happening, had to admit that they now understood the non-peaceful agenda of the St. Petersburg administration.¹⁴⁰

The Russian refusal took away from the Ottomans the ground on which they were trying to negotiate. Seeing that no more concessions were possible and at the absence of specific orders from the army camp with directions to quit, the Ottoman unburdened their troubles to the Polish host officer:

As long as the Sublime State was in a state of mutual peace with a party, whenever (that party) broke the peace and turned towards the Sublime State with evil intentions, with the permission of God, they have suffered great damage; their whole country or a part of it has been annexed to the Imperial Domains. And whenever the move to break the peace originated from the Sublime State, it proved to be harmful... The Sublime State's present degree of extensiveness is a result of acquisitions made from those who broke the peace [with us].¹⁴¹

Having nothing else to do at Nemirov, the Ottoman delegation might have wanted to sound like a caretaker of peace in Eastern Europe towards their Polish neighbours. For Poland, a strong Ottoman Empire would always help counterbalancing the Russian threat from the east and the delegates may have chosen to give the impression to Poland that all the ignorance of the Porte throughout the last year was out of desire for a peaceful settlement, not out of fear of the Russians. No matter why they spoke this way, the situation was obvious. The Ottoman officials had no more moves to make at the negotiation table since the doors were closed by Russia and

140 See above the quotation from Subhi.

141“Devlet-i Aliyye bir taife ile musalaha üzere iken öyle taife ne vakit nakz-ı ahd idüb Devlet-i Aliyye’ye su-i kasd iradesinde olmuş ise, bi-iznullah-ı teala, külli hasaret çeküb memleketi veya bir mikdarı zamime-i memalik-i hüsrevane olmuşdur. Ve ne zaman ki hareket ve nakz-ı ahd Devlet-i Aliyye tarafından zuhur eylemiş ise zararı görülüb... Devlet-i Aliyye’nin bu mertebe vüs’at memleketi nakz-ı ahd edenler tarafından berüye geçe geçe vuku bulmuşdur.” Mehmed Emni, 33b.

their government still did not order them to quit the negotiations, in order to evade a war which was already on but without the Ottomans retaliating back. It shall even be said that this address to the Polish host was partially serving to rebuild some of the self confidence of the Ottomans prior to the conflicts, of which they had lost much in the previous year.

The negotiations at Nemirov were not the sole stage of the Ottoman, Austrian and Russian contest. The Ottoman army winter camps at Babadağı was another centre where one can see the reflections, or the sources, of the Ottoman policies pursued up to now. While the negotiations were still on, there was unrest in the field and events were reported through communications by the Ottoman governors to the government officials at Babadağı.

Russian troops had not withdrawn from the field throughout the negotiation process and the grand vizier persisted on camping at Babadağı, a relatively farther location to the Ottoman border fortresses than the Russian army's position. Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha, the commander of Bender, asked for urgent reinforcements for the fortress defence, especially cannon, munitions and food supplies in order to endure the expected siege. Otherwise, he told, it was impossible to resist the enemy forces. Osman Efendi, in reply to Abdullah Pasha's request, wondered ironically whether the pasha was campaigning somewhere, and continued "if he is afraid of the enemy, we will bring him cannon a hundred times his request in the near future."¹⁴² However, this reply was intended to evade the request. The reinforcements never arrived at the fortress. The Ottoman government considered it more probable for the peace to be re-established than the evolution of the current

142 "Paşa hazretlerinin bir mahalle seferi mi vardır, eğer düşmandan havf ider ise kariben biz dahi ol tarafa varmak üzere yüz matlubu olan topları beraber götürürüz." Subhi, p.360.

situation into an all-out war. Although the Ottoman army was prepared and wintering in the Balkans, the grand vizier abstained from putting it in the field, even in the form of an intimidating force to make the Russians behave in a more cautious manner, let alone as a fighting force.

Ochakov was closer to immediate threat from the advancing Russian troops and its commander Yahya Pasha, already in communication with the commander of Bender, informed the Ottoman main camp that his agents had discovered a Russian plan. According to this information, the Russians were using the negotiation process as a disguise and marching with the main army to besiege Ochakov. For these reasons, Yahya Pasha requested more soldiers for the defence of Ochakov and warned the Ottoman camp: “It has also been witnessed that negotiations are followed by conflicts.” Probably, he was already aware of the grand vizier's and the *kethüda*'s confidence in the workings of the current negotiations and wanted to warn them since he foresaw a war to be more likely, and Ochakov would suffer the first blow. However, Osman Effendi replied as such:

We are about to arrive. If his fear is too much, he should build up some courage. ... The pasha has been dreaming. We also did not stay idle and have sent our eyes and ears in all directions... He shall not trouble himself with believing the lies of the Tartars. The issue is nearing the final stage; with the conclusion of negotiations, our return in a short time [to Constantinople] is decided upon.¹⁴³

Yahya Pasha was right to think that the first Russian siege would be laid to his

143 “Biz varıyoruz, korkusu fazla ise biraz cesaret etsin.”Uzunçarşılı, p.260. “Paşa hazretleri sevdaya tabi olmuş, biz dahi hali durmayup daima etraf u aknafa havale-i çeşm ü guş-ı basiret itmişizdir... Tatar taifesinin kizb ü düruğuna itimad ile kendülere zahmet vermesinler. İşler derece-i hitama peyveste olmağla kariben itmam-ı maslahat ile avdetimiz mukarrerdir.” Subhi, p.360. Ochakov, being a giant fortress in a key position, needed 30000 defenders during a siege while there was less then 3000 defenders within the gates according to peacetime allocations. When the army sent no reinforcements, Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha send another 3000 men to the defense of Ochakov. See Uzunçarşılı, p.264. He had already requested reinforcements from Babadağı and received non but must have seen that Ochakov was in a more urgent and strategic position at the face of the Russian troops.

garrison and the presence of their army in nearby regions further urged him to strengthen his defences but his requests also fell on deaf ears at Babadağı. From the *kethüda*'s reply one sees that he not only had optimistic expectations about the negotiations but also he was convinced that it was about to end the way the Ottomans wanted and the armies would soon retire to their homelands. The Ottoman government had fallen into this trap before the siege of Azov and when the real situation was understood, war was inevitably declared though it was already late to act. Now again, after experiencing such transformation in the year before, the government again had overly optimistic considerations for the negotiations at Nemirov, in a degree that its officials ridiculed the key commanders of the border fortresses.

The Ottoman camp was receiving requests of reinforcements from numerous fortresses and not all were regarding the perceived Russian threat. Vidin, an important fortress on the Ottoman Danubian defence line and particularly the southern key of Wallachia, was also disturbed. İvaz Mehmed Pasha, the commander of the fortress, sent similar notes to the officials and reminded them that the Habsburg mediation was a disguise for the offensive to come; the garrisons of Vidin and Nish were lacking sufficient troops. He requested an authoritative vizier to be appointed to command at Nish and extra soldiers for the defense of both fortresses. At the face of these demands, the nature of Osman Efendi's reply was not altered: "I, myself, guarantee that Austria will not break the peace, may the Pasha enjoy (the tranquility) and prevent the state resources from being devastated."¹⁴⁴

The Ottoman high command was approaching towards a peace with Russia

144 "Nemçe'nin nakz-ı ahd etmeyeceğine ben kefilim. Paşa safasında olsun, mal-ı miriyi itlafdan sıyanet etsinler." For Mehmed Pasha's requests, see Uzunçarşılı, p.261 and for the reply, see Uzunçarşılı, p.261 and *Mür'i't-Tevarih*, p.67.

with optimism and this was thought to result in the removal of the possibility of war with Austria. Considering the replies dispatched to the commanders of Bender and Ochakov, the one received by İvaz Mehmed Pasha is a natural extension of such thinking and still he was not located in the most urgent place on the map against the Habsburg offensive. Bosnia and Nish were at greater risk, just like the case for Bender and Ochakov. İvaz Mehmed Pasha was aware of this threat and did not only ask for his own garrison but requested Nish to be reinforced by soldiers and a capable general.

Bosnia, taking both Russian and Austrian fronts into consideration, was maybe the farthest border region from the winter camp of the Ottoman army and the one least likely to receive aid even if the requests were answered positively. In İvaz Mehmed Pasha's letter, it was reported that Austria was amassing troops across the Ottoman border but this information was not found to be persuasive. Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, governor of Bosnia, also reported the mass of soldiers and their ultimate aim of attacking Bosnia in exactly the same manner İvaz Mehmed Pasha did and he received a similar reply. The grand vizier Silahdar Mehmed Pasha wrote to the governor that: "If Austria crosses the border, it is for the [successful] conclusion [of peace talks]. Do not retaliate back under any circumstances."¹⁴⁵ In terms of its tone and meaning, this answer is very similar to the previous words of Osman Effendi in his conversation with the Austrian ambassador Talman. The Porte had allowed Russia to raid and devastate the Crimean peninsula, without protecting its soil or aiding its vassals but this later turned out to be opposite of the Ottoman expectations. But the trust in Russia was renewed, or the fear grew bigger, as it also was for the

145 "Nemçe hududu geçerse maslahata mübtenidir. Zinhar mukalebe etmeyin." *1736-1739 Türk-Rus Savaşı*, pp.30, 34.

case for Austria. Any retaliation from the side of the Ottomans would guarantee that armed clash would begin. For this, the Porte was even prepared to tolerate the march of a foreign army on its own soil if in the end they could be sent back with minor concessions. The officials failed to understand that even the amassed troops' routes to their prescribed sieges were ready.

At the time that Austria emerged as the channel of mediation between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, the common understanding in Vienna was against entering into a war. But as the process of negotiations continued, it turned out to be that the Russian demands and Ottoman expectations would nowhere meet at a middle road. Since the Russian aid in Poland had practically guaranteed the Austrian aid to Russia against the Porte, the officials in Vienna started to calculate a pros and cons. The Ottomans were perceived to be in a weak condition and this presented a good opportunity for the emperor to enlarge his domains eastwards with a relatively easy Habsburg victory. This view was further strengthened when the Austrian government understood that Russia believed its unaided southwards expansion at the expense of the Ottomans to be easy and the participation of Austria would further help to breakdown a possible Ottoman resistance. If Russia was to attack the Ottoman Empire on its own, Austria would lose a strong ally and at the same time leave Russia to acquire a considerably high ground in Eastern Europe with the possible invasions of Moldavia and Wallachia. This possibility helped to break the Austrian reluctance towards war. With their participation, they would hold Russian expansion under control and add considerable territory to the imperial lands. In this way, Austria would also compensate for the late losses suffered in Italy and prevent Russia from driving the Ottomans to the south of Danube and enjoying the spoils on

its own.¹⁴⁶

When Russia realized that its demands were not to be met by the Ottoman delegation, the army was ordered to march. In Ochakov, the march of Russians was heard and Yahya Pasha repeatedly asked for troops and workers for the repair works of the fortress walls. Also at the Ottoman camp the news of the march was known but their reply to Yahya Pasha shows how they interpreted this action: “It is obvious that the Muscovite infidels' dispatch of troops is (only) for the defense of their borders. If they attack that side (Ochakov), he (Yahya Pasha) may be sure that the whole imperial army would be ready before the fortress. It is requested that he not trouble himself with such considerations of low possibility and be at ease. Let them come.”¹⁴⁷ As one would expect from this reply, no help or reinforcements were dispatched to the defence of Ochakov until the siege started. It seems that the grand vizier and his *kethüda* still wanted to believe in the Russian pretext for the initial outbreak of the hostilities that its military operations were meant to take measures against the Tartar raids. In line with this understanding, they still considered the Russian military maneuvers to be against the Crimeans. The Ottoman delegation and the army camp must have been in constant communication and the dispatches reporting the deadlock in negotiations must have been no secret to the Ottoman statesmen. But this seems not to have affected their attitude towards Russia and their own commanders.

Osman Efendi, thinking this attack was never meant to take place, had to

146 For the perceptions, expectations and calculations of Vienna prior to joining the war actively, see Roeder, *The Reluctant Ally*, pp.55-60, Cassels, p.118 and Parvev, p.213.

147 “Moskov keferesinin iradet-i askerden garazı muhafaza-i hudud için olduğu zahir ve ol taraflara suikasd eylediği suretde umumen Ordu-yı Hümayun’u pişgah-ı kal’a’da hazır bilüp bu gune mülahazat-ı ba’ide ile zahmetkeş olmayup, müsterih olmaları reca olunur. Allah virsün, gelsün.” Subhi, p.363

consult with the other high Ottoman officials, to whom he did not pay attention until the siege of Ochakov.¹⁴⁸ Again, the Ottoman Empire decided to go to war only when it was inevitable: The negotiations were in deadlock, the Habsburg army had already crossed the border into Bosnia and Serbia while the Russians besieged Ochakov. As it became certain that this war would be nevertheless fought, the Ottoman delegation was ordered to leave Nemirov. Before the delegates set off for Babadağı, they summarized the situation to the Polish host as such:

While the Sublime State ... was ... in a state of eternal peace with Russia and the Russian border commanders were communicating with the guards of Azov in a manner of expressing warm feelings, originating from their desire within, ... they arrived with an heavily equipped army and besieged the fortress adverse to the internationally recognized legal and logical laws and from another direction [they] entered Crimea. While that year the Sublime State acted on certain grounds because of its good will and this year was taking measures...¹⁴⁹

The Ottoman government was repeating its actions from the previous year's declaration of war. Bypassing the Russian raid into Crimea and even their military restlessness near Azov, the Ottomans had only put forward these actions as their basis of war declaration when it was too obvious that Russian intentions were not limited to taking measures against the disturbances created by the Crimean Tartars, as shown by Azov's fall. However the same attitude of silence and ignorance was restored throughout the later negotiation process in the face of similar Russian military unrest, as a result of ungrounded optimism or out of fear of fighting the

148 Ibid., p.369.

149 "Devlet-i Aliyye ... Moskov ile ... müebbed sulh u salah üzere ve Moskov hudud zabitleri Azak'da olan muhafızlar ile mektublaşub kemal-i germiyyet birle dostluk izharında iken derunlarında olan tam'a binaen beyneldüvel cari olan kavaid-i şer'iyye ve akliyyeye mugayir bir vechle bir dürlü haber virmeksizin ... kal'a-yı merkumeye gönderdikleri dostluk mektubundan üç gün sonra .?. ağır askerleri gelüb kal'ayı muhasara ve bir taraftan dahi Kırım'a duhul ve Devlet-i Aliyye hayır olmak hasebiyle o sene bazı mertebe hareket ve bu sene tedarüküne mübaşeret üzere iken" Mehmed Emni, 38a-38b.

enemy in the open, or both. When the news of the siege of Ochakov arrived, the Ottomans again had to put forward the reasons for the restoration of hostilities with the claims originating from the previous Russian acts; those that were initially not retaliated back or responded in kind.

Then the speech given to the Polish host continued with the attention turning to Austria:

Just then the Roman Emperor intervened and requested the Sublime State to send delegates by declaring its mediation, partnership and the will for renewal and extension of the peace (with the Ottoman Empire)... The Sublime State trusted the words and actions of Austria, the current peace that still had more than four years to go and the (Ottoman) unexpectedness from Austria to act against the previous clauses of the peace...¹⁵⁰

The Porte for long seemed to rely on the sincerity of Austria's mediation. It had earlier suspected that Austria might join forces with Russia against the Ottomans but did not reveal its second thoughts as long as Austria was the acting mediator. The Ottomans' suspicion and their policy of displaying trust are understandable and consistent. However, it is difficult to view the communications between the Ottoman army and the high command in the borders in the same manner, especially when the Austrian military mobilization is taken into consideration. A government with earlier concerns about a possible Austrian-Russian alliance on the battlefield would not be expected to cast a blind eye to the Austrian military activity, at least through its internal communications with those who will be responsible for the defence if an offensive was undertaken against the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, proceeding with the negotiations even after the crossing of Austrian forces into

150 "O esnada Roma imparatoru araya girüb kah tavassut ve kah hissedarlığı ve kendü sulh u salahının dahi ancak medd ü tecdidini irad iderek... Devlet-i Aliyye dahi Nemçelü'nün öteden berü olan kavlı fiiline ve ...sulh u salahın henüz dört seneden ziyade vakit kaldığına ve mukaddemen eyledikleri sulh kısımlarının hilafına hareket eylemek bir dürlğ Nemçelü'den me'mul olmamasına itimaden" Ibid., 38b.

Ottoman territory with no peaceful aims was the peak point that this policy of compulsory tolerance had ever reached. Because of this inconsistency, the context of the speech above, whether just a selection of words in a diplomatic manner that puts the blame on Vienna or an admittance of a real deception, is vague. Our sources do not supply us with more data in this issue and do not allow reaching a clearer judgement.

The policy of ignorance pursued by the grand vizier and the *kethüda* throughout the negotiations did not work out as they had expected. Russia, and after a certain point Austria, carried out military preparations and with the opening of the campaigning season in 1737 the war transformed into its full scale form before the Nemirov congress came to an end. The first officials to bear the responsibility of this failure were the top two ones, Silahdar Mehmed Pasha and Osman Efendi. After Constantinople received the news of Ochakov's fall to the Russian besiegers, Austrian troops' border crossing, their engagements in Bosnia and Nish's surrender to the Austrian forces with little or no resistance, orders were issued for the execution of Osman Efendi and appointment of Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha, the commander of Bender, as the new grand vizier.¹⁵¹ The execution of Osman Efendi further supports the argument that the quotations of his speeches in the works of the contemporary historians may be true. The greater sentence suffered by him compared to his master Silahdar Mehmed Pasha may only be explained with his great influence on Ottoman politics and those quotations underline his power in directing the wheel during the most critical matters. On the other hand, Silahdar Mehmed Pasha paid for the mistake of denying his attention in the face of the

151 Subhi, p.374 and *Mür'i't-Tevarih*, p.69.

advices and requests of border commanders and witnessed his office being filled by one of them.

CHAPTER 3: THE YEARS OF WAR

The first year of the war was at least as important as the preceding years in terms of understanding the motivations of the belligerents. In the first campaigning season, one can observe the initial objectives of the states in a way that is less distorted than it would be in the years to follow; since the occurrences in the battlefield and politics during the war reshaped the initial picture. Indeed, it presents a situation that lets us observe the manifestation of the previous plans and motives more closely than the prolonged battle years that were about to follow.

The Ottoman Empire as Viewed by the Allies and Europe Early in the War

As early as 1733, the Russian government thought that a minor army could end the Ottoman presence in Southeastern Europe and even conquer Constantinople. This consideration had much to do with the reports of the Russian resident at the Ottoman capital and the ongoing Ottoman-Persian war.¹⁵² The long years of fighting had not yielded any real gains for the Ottoman side; the territory taken by the Ottomans was recovered by the Persians and the conflict was still alive and in a deadlock. The failure of the Ottoman arms to dominate the battlefield against the Persians must have encouraged the Russians such that they would give no credit to the possibility of a failure in case they declared war against the Porte.

Prior to the formal declaration of war and parallel with the previous Russian willingness to attack, the possibility of an uprising of the Orthodox Ottoman subjects in the Balkans was seriously considered and Russia increased its ties with this target population. In 1735 and 1736, they were called to arms. The expectation was a

¹⁵² Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, p.42.

general revolt in the Balkans and the Greek lands. On the eve of this call, General Munnich told the Empress Anna that "all the Greeks regarded the Czaserina as their legitimate Sovereign..." and that it was desirable to seize this first moment of their hope and enthusiasm and march to Constantinople.¹⁵³ The project of keeping the Ottoman forces in the Balkans occupied with a rebellion better explains the Russian objective to go as far as Constantinople with a relatively small force. The revolt of the Orthodox subjects was considered sufficient to keep the Ottoman forces occupied and to lay the way open for a decisive victory of the Russian army. However, Russians had miscalculated the likelihood of this revolt. The Ottoman government did not have any major problems arising from its Orthodox subjects throughout the war.

Probably the strongest element in the miscalculation was the encouragement in the dispatches of the Russian resident at Constantinople. His writings led the Russians to underestimate the power of the Ottoman army. Also, the idea of a general Orthodox revolt received a high degree of support from the resident. He suggested to his home government that the subjects in question were ready to revolt as soon as the Russian forces arrived.¹⁵⁴ The ultimate aim of conquering Constantinople was also supported by the reports from the same source. The resident Veshniakov reported that the capture of Constantinople was a probable outcome of the coming war. These dispatches found reflections at the Russian capital. Russian statesmen certainly believed that the war would end with a decisive Russian victory.¹⁵⁵

153 Albert Sorel, *The Eastern Question in the Eighteenth Century. The Partition of Poland and the Treaty of Kainardji*, trans. by F. C. Bramwell (London: Methuen & Co., 1898), p.10.

154 Cassels, p.98.

155 Ibid., pp.97, 99.

Shul'man argues that the reports of the Russian diplomats at Constantinople and the ambitions of the Russian general staff had not transformed the Russian objectives into an unrealistic plan. He supports this argument by pointing out to the initial Russian objectives which were directed against the Crimean Peninsula.¹⁵⁶ However, this is a narrow approach. At a first glance, Shul'man seems not wrong in his judgment since the campaign plan of 1736 was aiming to acquire control over the steppes around Crimea, rather than the peninsula and the khanate itself. But what he overlooks is the existence of a four-year plan for the Russian campaigns from the start. In 1737, the Crimean Khanate would be reduced and Russian domination in the Sea of Azov would be established. In 1738, the Moldavian and Wallachian principalities would be conquered and in the fourth campaign year the Russian forces would pass to the south of Danube, invading the rest of the Balkans with the ultimate aim of Constantinople.¹⁵⁷ When this grand plan is taken into consideration, coming up with a realism presented by the Russian government rather than the optimism of its diplomats and high command, when one takes the objectives of the first year in isolation, is somewhat pushing too hard against what actually happened. This four-year plan carries the influence of the reports dispatched by the Russian resident. The whole European territory of the Ottoman Empire was included in the areas to be captured throughout the coming war and the ultimate aim was Constantinople, just like it was written by Veshniakov. In line with this, the expected fall of both the Romanian principalities and the other European provinces of the Ottoman Empire were allocated equal time with the establishment of Russian rule in and around the

156 John R. Broadus, "Soviet Historians and the Eastern Question of the Eighteenth Century," *East European Quarterly* 15, no.3 (September 1981), p.363.

157 Cristopher Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West: Origins and Nature of Russian Military Power, 1700-1800* (London ; Boston : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1994), p.49.

Crimean peninsula. Compared in size, the Crimean peninsula was no match with the land mass of Ottoman Europe but it was probably the expected revolt in the Balkans which made the Russian strategists allocate a relatively short time for their takeover in Eastern Europe. When all different inputs are considered as a whole, the Russian resident's role in policy making can be neither ignored nor underestimated. His entire suggestions and motivations found their place in the decisions taken by the St. Petersburg government. In fact, this does not stand as a major break from the previous years. The previously argued Russian decisiveness, ambition and overgrown objectives were probably the outcome and manifestation of the Russian trust in a decisive victory during a war with the Ottoman Empire and the Russian perception of their southern neighbour as an already decayed power with no ability to organize a working resistance or undertake a counterattack.

Russia was not the only ally to ground its offensive strategy on the information supplied by its diplomat at Constantinople. Talman was also feeding his capital with news regarding the military capabilities of his host state. He proposed a full-scale offensive against the Ottomans and also considering Russia in his plans, he allocated more than half of the Ottoman Europe as the Habsburg zone of invasion, leaving the rest to Russia. In his proposed plan, Salonika was the final destination for the Habsburg armies.¹⁵⁸ Thus, one cannot blame the Russian resident for being a day dreamer; his Austrian colleague was not so different at all but their respective governments measured these dispatches with different degrees of caution. Talman was a relatively better informed diplomat on the condition of the Ottoman Empire

158 However, the Habsburg government was more cautious towards taking its representative's words for granted. Unlike Russia, they came up with a more realistic plan in comparison with the reports from Constantinople. In this plan, the targets for invasion were Nish, Vidin and ultimately the province of Bosnia. Roeder, *The Reluctant Ally*, p.76 and Parvev, p.217.

and he was trusted in repairing the bonds between his host state and his home country's ally. This fact makes one reject the idea of blaming the Russian resident of misleading his government by supplying them with wrong information; Talman had spent considerable time at the Ottoman army camp at Babadağı and still came up with similar assessments. In short, the two allies predicted an easy war where they would only have to move their forces to their assigned zones of invasion.

The Austrian offensive plan was the more practical one and required a shorter time to be undertaken. Austria had mobilized its army while the Nemirov peace talks were still on and by the end of that summer of victorious campaigns, planned to force the Porte to a separate peace. By this way Vienna would fulfil its duties as a loyal ally, wrest the key fortresses out of Ottoman hands and keep this war short and the campaign expenditures down. These three advantages depended on a single objective: An Habsburg campaign to last about four months which was to end with the invasions of Nish, Vidin and Bosnia. It was expected that the Ottomans would put up a minor and inefficient resistance.¹⁵⁹ Upon first look, Vienna's plans seem to have been more realistic in comparison with St. Petersburg's but when one takes into consideration that the Austrian plans were expected to come true in only four months, the two allies again meet at the same point in their perceptions of the Porte and the judgments resulting out of those.

The perceptions of the Habsburg government had enjoyed similar expectations with public by 1737. The people were in favour of a Turkish war. The Ottoman Empire was perceived to be weak and the victory certain. Therefore, the public donations for the war effort reached a total of 8.000.000 *gulden* while the

159 Cassels, p.123.

amount required was only 5.000.000.¹⁶⁰ It also has to be kept in mind that Austria had just come out of a resource-consuming war and unlike Russia, the Habsburg domains were under great pressure from the east and west throughout this war. Worn out in this decade, the Austrian public was not expected to show such decisiveness for a renewed confrontation but it was the general perception of the Ottoman Empire that shaped and supported such ideas. No wonder, the inconclusive Persian wars also contributed to these inferences. This atmosphere proved itself effective also on the execution of the campaign plans in the first year of this war. In this initial phase, the Austrian army officers took decisions which were risky.¹⁶¹ The idea of a weaker Ottoman Empire had led to overconfidence in different layers of Russian and Habsburg societies.

The only reservation in the strategy of Vienna was a Russian failure. If Russia was to be defeated by the Ottoman forces, Vienna feared an all-out Ottoman offensive focused towards its domains. It should be underlined that this had nothing to do with the foreseen possibility of sustained Ottoman resistance; otherwise the Austrians would have calculated the possibility of their own failure as well. Here, a possible gap was noted in the Russian organization and its probable results. Other than that, Austria expected an easy victory.¹⁶²

At the Ottoman side no big change took place. The replacement of Silahdar Mehmed Pasha with Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha had brought a renewed energy for the defence effort but the long existing fears did not vanish so easily. The measures

¹⁶⁰ Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, p.95.

¹⁶¹ McNeill, p.171

¹⁶² Parvey, p.216. What Austria feared would eventually come true. The Ottomans, although not victorious, would hold against the Russian offensives with relatively fewer forces and concentrate their strength against their Austrian foes for three consecutive years.

to be taken were realized in a more efficient and decisive way than they were carried out during the previous period of Osman Efendi but for the Ottomans it still required a whole campaign season to recover the lost courage and the will. A first-hand witness of this war claims that papers were seized from the Austrian forces during the conflicts in Bosnia and they documented Austria's deceptive policy of stalling off the Ottomans throughout the Nemirov negotiations and in the meantime mobilizing its army. In the same documents, it was purportedly written that the Ottoman army had perished in the Persian war, very few troops were available for defence and if attacked, the sultan would surrender its European domains as far as Adrianople.¹⁶³ The existence and contents of these documents are not certain but the author of these lines, Musaffa Mehmed, has a point. His claims are in agreement with the Austrian perceptions and the Ottomans seem to be aware of those. On the other hand, the reference to the three Ottoman weaknesses sounds more like an Ottoman perception. The inconclusive wars and insufficient forces were the Ottomans' problems as well as being the advantages for the allies. But the concept of surrendering as far as Adrianople was more likely to be the manifestation of Ottoman fears than of the Austrian plans since it did not match with what Vienna planned for. A similar approach is observed in Şemdanizade's work. He describes the Austrian perceptions of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the war as such: "As a result of the Persian campaign(s), where are the Ottoman soldiers, treasury, measures and order?"¹⁶⁴ Like Musaffa Mehmed, he sounds more like transmitting to us the self-assessments of the Ottomans rather than the Austrian perceptions. Throughout 1737,

163 Musaffa in Çoruhlu, pp.42-43.

164 "Acem seferi sebebine, hani Osmanlı'da asker, hani hazine, hani tedbir, hani nizam" *Mür'i't-Tevarih*, p.77.

the Ottoman government continued to stand as a party that was unconfident of itself. Only the successes against the Habsburg forces at the end of this campaign season and further replacements in the top administration would broaden the horizon for the Ottoman eyes.

The concept of a weak Ottoman Empire was an established understanding in Europe during the 1730s. Not only the Ottomans and their belligerents commented on the perceived weakness of the Empire. As mentioned before, European publications that employed the same theme started to circulate around this time. At the breakout of the war, a publication appeared in England that gives us more insight about the general European views concerning the Ottomans: Charles Perry's book on his observations on various provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The work is a suitable source to extract the perceptions of a contemporary European on the Ottoman Empire. Perry offered his thoughts on the rise and fall of major empires and positioned the Ottomans within this frame. On this issue, his ideas can be summed up with these words:

Kingdoms and States ... have each their Beginning, State and Declination ... have their Times of Sickness, and Times of Health, Times of Vigour, and Times of Langour... For such has heretofore been the fate of Egypt, of Greece, and of Rome, of Assyria, of Parthia, of Media, and of Persia, not to mention many others... The Turkish Empire ... has already varied and fluctuated, has ebbed and flowed considerably, since its first Birth and Foundation; and at this Day ... it is past the Meridian of its Glory and Power.¹⁶⁵

For Perry, the late defeats suffered by the Ottomans augured their decline and fall in accordance with this greater story of the ancient world empires. According to him, the reversal of the Ottoman advance towards Central Europe and their recent losses in Eastern Europe was irreversible. The picture he presents leaves no chance of

165 Perry, pp.7-8.

success for the Porte's future recovery attempts.

As Perry goes on his evaluation of the Ottoman Empire as a declining power in comparison with rising Europe, he makes clearer statements of what he expects to happen in the near future and this time he chooses explicit expressions rather than fitting the Ottoman affair into a greater picture. At the same time with the termination of the Nemirov negotiations and the transformation of the war into its full scale form with three parties fighting in full capacity, he narrates the current situation and general expectations:

In the year 1736, when the Muscovites commenced Hostilities with the Turks, we have heard good Politicians from Conjectures and Calculations, which seemed to carry Reason with them; supposing it not improbable, that the Muscovite Arms might make a descent upon Constantinople, and conquer it, should the war continue but a few years. And in truth we do not see what can reasonably hinder it, since the Germans are now engaged in the Quarrel ... if these two Powers are zealous, hearty and vigorous, in what they have undertaken...¹⁶⁶

These words, if not exaggeration, tells us that these predictions were not only put forward by Perry; public opinion had been fixed on this matter. If this is true, than the Ottoman Empire was seen somewhat as a failed state in today's terms, destined to dissolve with the first intrusion. Now, this prediction was about to come true; powerful Russia and her ally Habsburgs had begun their offensive into the Ottoman heartland. Perry also shows us that the idea of Constantinople as a reasonable terminus for the Russian armies was not only an over-encouragement of the Russian resident to his home government. We have already seen that it was the final stage of the four-year Russian campaign plan and was already circulating beyond the Russian borders. If we are to believe the author, the invasion of the entire Ottoman Europe

166 Ibid., p.8. Printed in 1743 but from these words it is quite certain that the time of authoring was around the second half of 1737.

and the ultimate fall of Constantinople was a hot topic among British politicians and thus found its way into his book.¹⁶⁷ Although one cannot be sure about the currency of these ideas, it is still important to see that what we observe in Austrian and Russian sides were not originating only from the fact that they were the ones fighting against the Porte. Either marginally as in the case of Cardinal Alberoni's *Scheme* or on more conventional grounds as in Charles Perry's book, similar views were being voiced throughout Europe. They might well have been influenced by their contact with the Habsburgs and Russians in coming to such conclusions but in the end these ideas did not sound unreasonable to them and it would be a mistake to blame them for making up their minds depending on single-sided sources; the representatives of Britain were also present in Constantinople and other major cities of the empire. The flow of information was not that much restricted from this part of the front. In the light of these facts, it might be argued that the British evaluations on the Ottoman Empire were not the mere products of dim-sightedness. They must have supposed that they have reached realistic conclusions with information available from both sides and what they had concluded was more or less common around the European capitals, and even true for some Ottoman statesmen such as Silahdar Mehmed Pasha and Osman Efendi.

Despite the negative political inheritance from the previous government and

167 Horatio Walpole, a British diplomat and the brother of the Prime Minister Robert Walpole, was speculating on the weakness of the Ottoman Empire just as the war broke out. Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, p.80. Charles Perry also claims that the weakness of the Ottoman Empire was a major topic among the European states and its fall was only delayed by European political disputes: "The Christian Princes and States are very sensible, doubtless, of the present weak, feeble Condition of the Turkish Empire; and consequently must imagine, that it would fall a very early victim, would they once invade it with their united forces. But what promises a longer Existence to this Empire, than it could otherwise, with Reason, be supposed to enjoy, is, that the Christian Princes in general, and especially the mercantile Powers, would look with a very jealous eye on any one that should invade it..." Perry, p.9. It is obvious that the author perceives a war against the Ottoman to take place via a united European front and expects the continental politics to be ignored or prove ineffectual in the face of a decisive war against the Ottoman Empire.

the advance of Russia and Austria before the establishment of organized defence, the new grand vizier played it tough. The unbreached parts of borders were reinforced with troops and garrisons received additional provisions while the main army marched west with the ultimate goal of removing the Habsburg presence in Ottoman soil.¹⁶⁸ Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha seems to have brought fresh blood to the Ottoman war effort. The effects of this renewed energy would appear after this year's campaign season.

Russia had caught the Ottoman army off-guard during its offensives before and after the Nemirov negotiations and in the meanwhile captured Azov and Ochakov, and raided Crimea. However, the Russian incursions to the peninsula in 1736 did not go smoothly. Russia had to withdraw due to heavy losses caused by winter and starvation.¹⁶⁹ The Crimean army also contributed to this outcome by pursuing a war of attrition rather than open confrontation with Russia's better trained troops. But the real disappointment for the Russians occurred during the 1737 campaign. This year, their army thrust into the heartland of the peninsula unlike the previous attempt and had to withdraw with heavier losses back to the Russian Ukraine. But this time the problems posed by nature and Crimean tactics were coupled with overstretched supply lines.¹⁷⁰ Russia could not realize the first half of its four-year plan. It could dominate the steppes as long as it held Azov and Ochakov, but Crimea could not be reduced.

At the same time, Austria was operating in Ottoman Europe and the Ottomans chose to concentrate on this front. The battles and sieges did not proceed

¹⁶⁸ Subhi, p.375.

¹⁶⁹ Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, p. 53

¹⁷⁰ Laugier, p.58.

as smoothly as Austria had considered during the calculation of the pros and cons for this war. The initial stages were unproblematic for them in Bosnia and before Nish. But at the end of summer 1737, the Ottoman Empire had recovered Nish and after the unfruitful Habsburg attempt to capture Vidin failed before the tough defence organized by İvaz Mehmed Pasha, the pursuing Ottoman forces restored Little Wallachia, which had been surrendered to Austria in 1718.¹⁷¹ Concerning the Habsburg battle initiative in Bosnia, the situation was no different. After the first incursions, the Austrian forces began to undertake sieges, however they were driven back.¹⁷² Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha had organized the local defence as soon as he realized what lay under the Habsburg activity in the border, despite the discouragement from his government. The decisive conflict in Bosnia was the siege and the battle of Banja Luka. The besiegers failed to breach the defences. As a result of the Ottoman counterattack and raids, the northern part of Bosnia, which had also been ceded to Austria in 1718, was placed back under Ottoman control.¹⁷³

The campaign season of 1737 was a reflection of the perceptions, plans and expectations of the earlier years. Russia at last put its long awaited offensive into force and for Austria, the expected gains of war overwhelmed those of peace. For the Porte, the change of government had vitalized the will to fight but probably a

171 Parvev, p.221 and Laugier, p.8.

172 Hickok, p.29. Ottoman fortifications in Bosnia were in a relatively good condition than those in the rest of Ottoman Europe. Moreover, the government had contributed with additional supplies which it had abstained from bestowing to other provinces before the war. The provincial militia consisting of around 20.000 men was supported with money from the imperial army, gunpowder from Salonika and lead shot from Constantinople. Coupled with the organization of Hekimoğlu, the Bosnian defenses were ready to endure prolonged attacks and even drive them back and make raids into the enemy territory. Ibid., pp. 16, 20, 22.

173 The besiegers refused to surrender after the failed siege and in the face of Hekimoğlu's counterattack, the main Habsburg army in Bosnia fled, losing more than half the troops in the field. See Ömer Bosnavi, *Tarih-i Bosna der Zaman-ı Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa*, prep. by Kamil Su (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979), pp.45-47 and Hickok, pp.33-35.

realistic observer still saw the Ottoman chances of success very low against two allies, each one of which was still perceived to be stronger than the Ottomans in a one-to-one conflict. But the summer and the autumn of 1737 brought about transformations in the battlefield that were not calculated by the Russian-Austrian alliance and unexpected by the Ottoman Empire. Although Russia still possessed the Ottoman fortresses of Azov and Ochakov, it could not invade and settle in the Crimea. This had put the main army off its way to Ottoman Europe. To leave a standing Crimean army behind and march towards Khotin seemed too risky. The 1737 battles were a disaster for Austria, if abortive for Russia. Nish was taken but immediately surrendered back. The following offensives into Wallachia and Bosnia failed and recoiled. The parts of these provinces ceded to Austria first in 1717 and for a second time in 1737, were recovered by the Ottoman forces within the same season.

The battlefield developments naturally reflected on the perceptions and policies of the belligerents through the late 1737 and early 1738. As a result of the 1737 campaigns and the experience of Nemirov, for the Ottoman Empire it was now only France now who could act as the mediator if peace was to be established and Austria knew this well. Its objectives that foresaw a quick invasion in one season had already failed. Unenthusiastic about prolonging the war and hoping to save the recently lost territories with a quick peace settlement, Austria asked the French ambassador at Constantinople, Villeneuve, to mediate and negotiate a peace.¹⁷⁴

1737-1739: The Ottoman Counterattack and Transformed Visions Brought

¹⁷⁴ Musaffa in Çoruhlu, 72.

about by the Military Developments

The allies came up with a peace proposal at the end of the year 1737. Austria asked for the abandonment of Nish and parts of Bosnia, which had been lately taken by the Ottomans. On the other side, Russia had a more realistic and negotiable offer. They contended with keeping Azov and Ochakov, which they still possessed, though Ochakov was under Ottoman siege.¹⁷⁵ Austria's offer could not be much of a help to the Ottomans towards signing a treaty. The offer had a contradiction with the battlefield realities. The side who lost territory was asking for peace and recovery of the territory in question. But to see the situation through Viennese eyes makes the picture clearer. Until several months ago, it was the Porte who tried so hard and seemed ready to sacrifice a lot for the reestablishment of peace with Russia and continuation of Austrian neutrality. On the other hand, the Austrian public was geared towards a successful, decisive and short Turkish war. Under these circumstances, as a result of the poor performance of its army, this was the maximum possible change for the Austrian state of mind. The war objectives were forgotten in favour of peace but the case would only be closed with the recovery of recent losses. However, the Habsburg Empire also had some more down-to-earth statesmen. Bartenstein, an influential diplomat and statesman, advised the Emperor to withdraw all claims of territorial recovery and offer a restoration of the status quo, which was still not much agreeable for the Ottomans.¹⁷⁶

Early 1738 saw the revival of negotiations, or the offers for the grounds of negotiations. The allies, both in cooperation and individually, the mediator France

¹⁷⁵ Laugier, p.73.

¹⁷⁶ Parvey, p.221.

and the Ottoman Empire all had their own principles for the peace to be negotiated on. The policymakers at Paris calculated the present situation and demands of the sides and came up with a basic proposal. For the Austrian front, the Treaty of Passarowitz was to be taken as the basis while Russia would possess Azov but cede Ochakov and Kilburnu back to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷⁷ At first, the new Ottoman government¹⁷⁸ was inclined towards the idea of peace. They had made a tough defence and even major counterattacks with fruitful results but this might have been all; the chances could have reversed with the coming spring. However, the Ottoman offers were not altered by this inclination which brought them closer to peace. The victories had come with a baggage; the Porte requested the Treaty of Karlowitz to be the basis and beyond the boundaries to be drawn by this treaty, Hungary and Transylvania were to be placed under the administration of an Ottoman vassal-king. This offer had a gap too big to negotiate on compared with the mutually unrealistic offer of Austria. The Habsburgs demanded the surrender of Nish and northern Bosnia for their wounded pride, and while the Ottoman offer of Karlowitz was closer to the real situation, the Porte further asked for a client state in Hungary and Transylvania to repair their already stained dignity. In the formal offers through the mediation of France, Russia added Ochakov to the list of territories to be ceded to the Ottomans for peace and only kept Azov for itself, but Austria continued to insist on the Passarowitz boundaries. The Porte replied that it insisted on the recovery of Azov and the establishment of a large client state past its western borders.¹⁷⁹ At this point

177 Laugier, p.91.

178 Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha had been replaced by Yeğen Mehmed Pasha after the end of the campaigning season.

179 Subhi, pp.442-445.

one sees the transforming perceptions among the decision-making statesmen in the Ottoman administration. The solid defence and territorial gains under the command of Muhsinzade was influential in turning the tide for the desperate Ottomans but this is expected to result in a restored dignity and negotiating without the threatening pressure of enemy armies. However, the Ottoman demands concerning Hungary and Transylvania, which were beyond the reach of their arms, can only be explained by an ambition and a desire that was driven by these wars which eventually gave birth to a self-confidence beyond this success' capacity of influence. It was the new grand vizier Yeğen Mehmed Pasha and his policies that were to be the driving force of Ottoman initiatives and campaign plans during 1738, and even 1739, and the process had started with the negotiation overtures in early 1738. Mehmed Pasha was pressing for the restoration of Karlowitz boundaries and Austria's withdrawal from Hungary and Transylvania in favour of an Ottoman vassal-king.¹⁸⁰

The allies' offers were for the last time communicated by the French ambassador to the Ottoman government in Adrianople where the Ottoman army had already gathered and was beginning its march towards the front for the 1738 campaign. As expected, the offers of all three empires failed to attract the other to cease hostilities and negotiate for peace. But it should be noted that the most warlike of the three, Russia, was coming up with the most realistic offers. While Austria was asking for the territory it had lost and the Ottomans for the one that they had not yet reached, Russia was observing a strict *uti possidetis* which was ultimately the most justifiable way to draw new boundaries after a conflict. However, the Ottoman Empire, “to everyone's surprise,” chose to carry on with the war and the allies made

180 Laugier, p.144 and Uzunçarşılı, p.280.

no more fresh overtures.¹⁸¹

Russia's behaviour until the beginning of the renewed confrontations in 1738 is noteworthy. Parallel with its official offers through France, it also sent Constantinople several messages for the basis of a possible peace. The first attempts were through the former commander of Ochakov, Yahya Pasha, then a Russian captive after the fortress's fall. By a close trustee of Yahya Pasha, Russia offered a separate peace to the Ottoman Empire, leaving Austria aside. This was more than what Yeğen Mehmed Pasha could hope for. All he wanted was concentrating the imperial arms on the western front without having to consider the north. This mutual benefit enabled the continuation of separate communication between the two parallel with and secretly from the three-party talks through the mediation of France. After the first attempt of this kind at the end of 1737, the communication was repeated in early 1738 and this time it was Villeneuve who was also in the picture. He was encouraged by the new Ottoman government to negotiate separately with Vienna and St. Petersburg, which was beyond the powers entrusted to him by his credentials. Seeing that the French would not assist Russia and the Ottoman Empire in an alternative way, Russia again sent a separate message to its enemy in February. At that time, Russia still had not offered the Ottoman restoration of Ochakov and Kılburnu, as it would do in a month. The official offer was the demolition of these fortresses and it was to be known as the ultimate Russian sacrifice for peace. But through the 'unofficial' communication, Russia offered the Ottomans the unconditional recovery of these fortresses before France knew that Russia had such

181 Laugier, p.125 and Roider, *Eastern Question*, p.80.

intentions at all.¹⁸² For several reasons, the separate peace between the two did not realize. Russia's weakening but yet standing reluctance to desert Austria in the middle of a war and Yeğen Mehmed Pasha's unwillingness to leave Azov to Russia might have blocked the way for further negotiations. The armies were once more in the field and campaigns had started. But the change in the policies of the three empires was not negligible. Austria was still holding onto its original plan and making offers accordingly but since the real situation had nothing to do with the initial Austrian objectives, their offers only further irritated the Porte and possibly added fuel to the already burning flames inside Yeğen Pasha's head. Russia was the most realistic party concerning the offers of late 1737 and early 1738 but could not attain a result. On the other side the Ottoman Empire with its renewed grand vizier and commander in chief, seemed more determined than ever to wage war against the Habsburgs. Concerning the northern front, although the Russian-Ottoman overtures were abortive, the Russian rapprochement possibly backed up the Ottoman plans on concentrating their power in the west since from an Ottoman point of view the secret Russian attempts for peace must have proved the Russian reluctance to fight with all their might.

The transformation of the attitudes of Ottoman statesmen regarding this war can be traced as early as the decomposition of the Nemirov peace talks. Although the late stage of the negotiations coincided with the beginning of the Austrian offensive in line with continuing Russian advance, the two allies' fates were not identical. Russia had made its major conquests, Azov and Ochakov, before the Habsburgs' march into the Ottoman territory. The Ottoman army was initially unable to confront

182 Laugier, pp.82, 88, 106.

the advancing Austrian forces, however at the same time the Russian advance was halted, if not driven back, by reinforced defence in the north. In a few months, the halt of Russian advance was coupled with the Ottoman recoveries in Serbia, Bosnia and Wallachia from the Habsburgs. This relative slowdown of the Russian army's conquests and quick counteraction in the west had immediately proved influential in the language employed by the Ottoman delegation of Nemirov. Most possibly at the end of the 1737 campaigns, the scene was summed up as such: "By divine favour, the recovery of the fortresses of Islam at the same year of their fall into the [aggressors'] evil hands was a spectacular and grand conquest without any precedent...."¹⁸³ Nish and those in Bosnia and Wallachia are most probably the recoveries mentioned in this text.

Simultaneously with the Ottoman policies towards their enemies, the interaction of the Porte with the European courts in the context of this war also went through a similar change. When the war had finally started in full-scale, the Ottoman government had contacted the European capitals. The insistence upon the responsibility of Russia and Austria for breaking the peace and Ottoman Empire's still surviving support for peace were the main issues stressed. As a result of its 'good intentions' for peace, the government was asking for their mediation. But after the change in the office of the grand vizier in late 1737, Yeğen Mehmed Pasha made a

183 "Eyadi-i habasetlerine giren kıla'-ı İslamiyye'nin inayet-i rabbaniye ile heman senesi içinde istirdadı, misli sabık eylememiş bir fütuh-ı celile-i harilu'l-ade olmağla" Mehmed Emni, 4b. At the end of the negotiations, probably the last sessions, the Russians had accepted the separation of the problematic populations of both sides along the border but insisted on retaining Azov, Kılburnu and Ochakov. The Ottomans replied that they requested the territories which their recovery was a requirement and offered the demolition of Azov in order to remove the cause of dispute. However, no solution was agreed upon. As the Ottoman delegation was leaving the town, probably in the official ceremony of the conference's decomposition, the Ottoman diplomats had said "It is no secret for the experienced wise that the states which breach the peace and break their promise have been suffering much damage and taking great pains by the (will) of God." Mehmed Emni, 48a-49b.

declaration to the European capitals where he blamed Austria in a strong language. According to him, the Habsburg Emperor had resorted to tricks that would not have been committed even by a lesser duke and the Ottoman Empire would defend its rights; those who help the Habsburg Emperor would suffer the same misfortunes with him and it was only France whose mediation was acceptable.¹⁸⁴ The tone of expressions and the blames were distorted considerably from the 1735-1737 period. A formal and rather urgent letter of justification for the Ottoman policies and request of mediation turned into a belittling of the Habsburg throne, an open threat to its possible collaborators and refusal of all mediation attempts other than the long time Ottoman partner, France. Again, this has to do with the attitude and policies of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha as well as the performance of the Ottoman armies. But nevertheless, the new grand vizier's vigour would probably not have surfaced as much as it had if the 1737 campaigns had followed a different course.

In such an environment, the armies were once more mobilized and took to the field for the 1738 season. During the previous year, the Ottoman Empire was only thinking of defending its borders. If one seriously evaluates the communication of the government with the fortress commanders in 1736 and 1737, it can be concluded that the Porte had indeed no plan as the war broke out; the provincial garrisons organized the defence during the first wave of attacks and they were only later provisioned by the new government under Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha. But before

¹⁸⁴ Uzunçarşılı, p.278. It has been earlier said that the Ottoman Empire was also testing the waters for the French mediation and the officials were in close contact with the ambassadorial interpreters. But this shall not be taken as a proof for a more peace-like picture of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha. Under his leadership, the Porte had agreed upon Belgrade, Buda and Temesvar as the ultimate Ottoman objectives of war. Laugier, p.72. These objectives may be taken as an exaggeration; the recent Ottoman victories after the succesful defenses were no match in size and the resources required in order to fulfill these objectives. But anyway the plan supports a picture of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha as a administrator who want to carry the war into the Habsburg territory.

the spring of 1738 in an assembly of consultation of Ottoman statesmen led by Sultan Mahmud I himself, the objectives of that year were formalized: 1- the commanders and generals of Vidin, Crimea and Bender were to be reinforced with extra troops and ammunition, 2- the grand vizier was to march with the main army towards the Habsburg frontier, 3- the Habsburg forces were to be ejected from the entire Ottoman territory and Belgrade was to be recovered.¹⁸⁵ It was previously argued that the secret negotiations with Russia might have given the Ottomans the impression that Russia's presence in the war would be without its entire resources at the disposal of the war effort. Now, the campaign objectives embody this approach. The Russian front would be defended by provincial garrisons reinforced by the central resources. As a result, Yeğen Mehmed Pasha could concentrate the sources and troops on the Austrian front. This idea of his is obvious through his actions but it was also made very clear in the proclamation dispatched to European capitals where he stressed that it was the Habsburgs who would face the main Ottoman aggression.

As mentioned above, the ultimate Ottoman objective in 1738 was the recovery of Belgrade, which had been lost to Austria in the course of the 1716-1718 War. Belgrade, along with its heavy fortifications, was a key location between Central and Eastern Europe and one of the main pillars in the Ottoman Danubian fortress system, and also for Austria after 1718.¹⁸⁶ For these reasons, the Ottoman Empire started thinking of the recovery of Belgrade as soon as its armies gave positive signals on the battlefield in 1737. This objective was the main determinant in the execution of campaign plans in 1738. When the imperial army and the grand

¹⁸⁵ Subhi, pp.434-435 and *1736-1739 Savaşı*, p.40.

¹⁸⁶ Roider, *The Reluctant Ally*, pp. 6-7. After the Habsburg takeover, even the pope had levied a special tax to improve the fortress' fortification and with regard to Belgrade's exceptional position, the inner city became only German and only Catholic.

vizier arrived at Nish and İvaz Mehmed Pasha's (the commander of the Vidin front) request for help during his siege of Adakale reached the main camp, he received an affirmative reply since besieging Belgrade would require extensive resources and their smooth transfer was only possible through the Danube. But if Adakale was left behind, this route would not be safe for passage and transportation.¹⁸⁷ Thus, its capture became the immediate Ottoman aim *en route* to Belgrade.

The 1738 campaigns were concluded with Adakale's fall, but it was costly for the Ottoman Empire in terms of resource and time allocated. Because of the fortress' long resistance, the campaign season had come to an end by the time it surrendered to the Ottomans and the march towards Belgrade could not be undertaken. But after the fall of Adakale, the idea of the recovery of Belgrade was no longer only an Ottoman envisagement. In the surrender agreement signed between the Ottoman besiegers and Adakale's commander, the first clause ordered that the civilian merchants of Habsburg origin in the fortress would be sent with all their property and provisions to Belgrade, or to another safe Habsburg territory if Belgrade was besieged.¹⁸⁸ It is obvious that this clause concerning an alternative safe haven was inserted as a result of Austrian demand since its absence would present no problem for the Ottoman side. From this document, we understand that after the fall of Adakale, the Habsburgs understood that Belgrade was now in real danger and the next Ottoman attempt might well be to reduce that fortress. Thus they felt the need to underline what was to be done if Belgrade was no longer safe for the Habsburg subjects. V. Königsegg-Rothenfels, who was the commander in chief of the

187 Subhi, pp.449-450.

188 A. Z. Hertz, "The Ottoman Conquest of Adakale 1738," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 4 (1972), p.205.

Habsburg forces in 1738, summarizes the situation after the campaigns as such: “At the end of the campaign the Turks were in retreat and we were still in possession of Belgrade, Temesvar, Slavonia and Siebenbürgen, which was more than we had a right to hope for.”¹⁸⁹ The retreat mentioned by the commander in chief refers to the winter retirement of Ottoman forces after the fall of Adakale and further advances at the other fronts. The more remarkable point is the ironic and positive attitude towards being in possession of Belgrade but more importantly Temesvar, Slavonia and Transylvania. Then, the field marshal calls for a reassessment of the viability of Ottoman military objectives. An Ottoman capture of Temesvar, Buda and a client kingdom in Transylvania and Hungary could still seem like a long shot but surprisingly it was not only the Ottomans who were considering such possibilities. After the fall of Adakale, the Habsburg high command considered itself lucky to be still in the possession of these territories. This year's campaigns were directly influential in making up the Habsburg mind and the interaction between their policies and the ongoing war. The turn of the tide in 1737 had not been that much effective in the policy-making process at Vienna, maybe because the Austrian withdrawal of 1737 was attributed to bad luck and a new offensive was hoped to be decisive. But after the summer of 1738, Vienna was not of the same opinion. Now Habsburgs considered themselves lucky to possess the territory, the inclusion of which in Ottoman campaign objectives can be simply named as unrealistic. In late 1737, the Habsburgs' conditions for peace were not practical due to having exceeded their armies' performance against the Ottomans and again in late 1738, their considerations were not realistic, but this time they were positioned on the opposite

189 Cassels, p.158.

side of the spectrum. On the other hand, the transformation of the Ottoman perceptions triggered by the military situation of 1737 was further strengthened first by the policies of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha and second as a result of the campaigns of 1738, which were also born out of the grand vizier's policies.

In Vienna, the inconsistency between the military objectives and the results of the last two years' campaigns triggered a change in the high command. As a result, Field Marshal G.O. Wallis was appointed to the supreme command of the Habsburg forces. If we can define Königsegg as being too pessimistic with his words on the war, Wallis was even more than his predecessor. Prior to the beginning of the last campaign of this war, the new field marshal summarized the last two years and predicted the end of the third under his command with these words: “The Emperor has entrusted me with the command of his army...the first of my predecessors in this post is in prison, the second has been demoted to the status of a palace eunuch; it only remains for me to have my head cut off at the end of the campaign.”¹⁹⁰ If it can be said that Wallis' words reflect the general atmosphere in Vienna in early 1739, then the loss was accepted prior to the effort. The need to uphold the alliance for future occasions or a hope for recovering some territory that the Ottomans had just occupied, or a little bit of both, were the possible reasons that kept Austria in the war.

For the Ottoman side, the process that began to evolve in 1738 only grew more effective in 1739, just like it was for Austria. The restored self confidence and offensive war objectives were observed throughout 1738. The recovery of Belgrade was planned as the end-year objective, only to halt when the prolonged siege of Adakale put the Ottoman army off-track. But after the fall of that fortress, by 1739

190 Ibid., p.172.

the Ottomans were again ready to march towards Belgrade. Regretting the time spent before Adakale, and yet knowing that it was the last obstacle *en route* to Belgrade, it was decided that “from now on never staying and resting in any place or location, the gearing and the march of the imperial army, God willing, is going to be towards Belgrade.”¹⁹¹ Yeğen Mehmed Pasha was discharged from his office and İvaz Mehmed Pasha, the commander of Vidin, was to fill this position. But it is clear that no change of policy regarding the campaign plans or peace-making was adopted.¹⁹² The capture of Belgrade was the main objective in 1739.

As the Ottoman army marched towards its predefined destination, Vienna had to adjust its position in order to put an end to the territorial concessions. When the Ottoman army arrived before Belgrade and laid siege, Austria offered the Lesser Wallachia and the imperial Serbia. If accepted, it was guaranteed that peace treaty would be signed without waiting for Russia to be involved.¹⁹³ However, this did not make much impression on the Ottoman high command. Lesser Wallachia was already recovered two years earlier in the wake of the Austrian offensive to Vidin and the Habsburg-controlled part of Serbia did not mean much without Belgrade, the dominant fortress of the region. Most probably motivated by these considerations, this offer was rejected by the Ottoman high command. This makes us view the last snapshot before the Peace of Belgrade: Austria's perceptions of the military situation had changed and its confidence had considerably declined. Austria confirmed the territorial losses in this war and offered further land in Serbia in order to save

191 “Bundan böyle bir yerde ve bir mahalde kat’a meks ü aram itmeyüp bundan sonra ordu-yı hümayunun inşaallahü teala teveccüh ve azimeti Belgrad-ı sengin-bünyad canibine olup” Musaffa in Çoruhlu, p.36.

192 This issue will be discussed in the last chapter.

193 Laugier, p.273.

Belgrade and re-establish the peace. On the other side, one can see the final stage of the evolution in the Ottoman mind that was taking place since 1735, and definitely since 1737. The recapture of Belgrade had not been considered an unrealistic plan from the start and it was not mentioned just to increase the bargaining power; the army had arrived before the fortress and its mastery was what stopped the Ottomans from compromising with the Habsburg offers.

Under such conditions, the Peace of Belgrade was signed. The fortress, with its pre-1718 fortifications was ceded to the Ottoman Empire and the later improvements were to be demolished. The remaining territories that the Ottomans had acquired since 1737 were also confirmed. As a matter of course, the conditions of the peace were not welcomed by the emperor and for a temporary period the Habsburg government resisted its ratification; however, it was ratified eventually. On this matter, the traditional view holds that it was the Russian conquests of Khotin and Jassy that encouraged the emperor to resist the ratification.¹⁹⁴ This view has an element of truth since the declaration of Vienna blames the unfavourable peace conditions on their lack of information about the Russian front and the resulting compromise with the Ottoman demands. However, a totally different interpretation can also be made and it makes such sense that dismissing the argument in the first place is not impossible. It holds that the Russian advance in the northern Ottoman soil only increased the Austrian eagerness for peace since under such conditions, Ottomans could easily come to terms with an advancing Russia and consequently Austria might have to face the Ottomans on its own.¹⁹⁵ No matter what the reason

194 Uzunçarşılı, p.291.

195 Laugier, p.315.

was, the treaty seems to be settled within the framework of *uti possidetis* and the brief Habsburg reluctance to ratify it may well have been to quell the initial public reaction and to prevent the loss of prestige in the eyes of other courts; because in the final analysis the war had ended in a way that Austria had not ever considered it possible.

By this time, most probably as a result of the concentration of the Ottoman manpower and resources in the west, Russia had made its first breakthrough towards Ottoman Europe; its armies managed to cross into Moldavia.¹⁹⁶ But in a short time, St. Petersburg also came to terms with the Porte and withdrew from all the lands it had conquered since 1735; as a result Russian-held Moldavia, Khotin, Ochakov and Kılburnu were evacuated but as an exception it was agreed that the fortress of Azov was to be demolished and that area was to be declared a no-man's land.

The Russian compromise with the Porte is arguably more crucial than the Ottoman acquisitions in the west. The conquests at the expense of the Habsburg Empire were made with force, the knowledge of which takes away most of the questions that are aimed to explain the Habsburg-Ottoman peace conditions. But why did Russia withdraw from a considerably vast territory in Eastern Europe when the main Ottoman forces were far away at Belgrade?

Turkish historians generally pass over the Russian case within the treaties ending the War of 1736-1739 and a general view suggesting the Russian evacuation at the face of the probable Ottoman concentration in the north after the settlement of peace with Austria is upheld and other studies on this war do not contribute much to

¹⁹⁶ Jeremy Black, *War and the World: Military Power and the Fate of Continents* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), p.104. I do not mention the treaty and the chain of events surrounding it in a lengthy way since rewriting the history of this war is not the primary concern here.

this argument. While linguistic barriers hold this study from feeding itself with Russian sources, the non-Russian sources already allow us to take a different approach to the reason behind the Russian compromise that at a first glance seems to be unevenly favourable to the Porte.

The Russian overtures for peace at the height of the conflicts from the late 1737 well into 1738 were already discussed above. Those examples might be expanded with several other cases. Indeed, even during the outbreak of the war, Russia was not a black-box state in terms of the realist theory of international relations. There was an anti-war group in the Russian court and they had developed an attitude against the Turkish war, pointing out to the potential material and human cost without any real gain in the end.¹⁹⁷ Thus, this opposition allows us to track the origins of Russian intentions for peace as early as 1735-1736. During the later stages of the war, the Russian attempt via a trustee of Yahya Pasha was discussed earlier. This offer had been rejected because the Porte perceived the empowering of an official in captivity to be unacceptable. Following this rejection, the Russians declared that their offensive originated from their security concerns posed by the Tartars and now peace was the best option between the parties. Also, the Ottoman Empire was encouraged to declare its principles for a peace treaty. Although the Ottomans had not shut off the communication, they had carried on with the war.¹⁹⁸ These negotiations were held from the start of the Ottoman army's march from Constantinople until its arrival at Nish in 1738. Further in the same campaigning season, during the first siege of Adakale, Munnich proposed to hold separate

¹⁹⁷ Manstein, p.97.

¹⁹⁸ Subhi, pp.479-481.

negotiations with the Porte without Austria and France involved, which however did not materialize.¹⁹⁹ The Russian reluctance to carry on fighting is maybe best expressed by M. Ragıb Pasha: “Yet the Muscovites were, on the one hand supplying ablaze tools for the fanning flames of combat and on the other hand providing the necessities of the fire extinction by discharging abounding streams of caution.”²⁰⁰

Other factors also accustomed the Russian government to the idea of a peace prevailing over further conflict. One of these is the unrealized Russian expectation of a Moldavian cooperation after their entrance into the principality.²⁰¹ After the failure of a general Orthodox revolt in Ottoman Europe, this was the next stage of the Russian disappointment in relation with the Ottoman Orthodox subjects. Another factor is the increasing probability of war between Russia and Sweden during 1739, which would transform itself into a real conflict within a year.²⁰² It should not be forgotten that prior to its outbreak, the Ottoman Empire and Sweden had come to terms on the issue of Charles XII’s debts, an agreement which also included a defensive alliance clause.²⁰³ Thus, despite the thesis suggesting that Russia came to terms with the Porte after the Peace of Belgrade foreseeing that an undivided Ottoman power would be much stronger than the resistance it had faced for the last

199 Laugier, p.180.

200 “Lakin taife-i Moskov dahi ... bir taraftan iş’al-i na’ire-i kıttale fûruzine-i edevat i’dad ve bir canibden dahi isale-i cuy-bar-ı ihtiyat ile tedarük-i levazım-ı itfa ve ihmâd iderler idi.” Fatma Çiğdem Uzun, *Belgrad Hakkında Ragıp Paşa’ya Ait Bir Risale: Fethiyye-i Belgrad* (M.A Thesis, Sakarya University, 2000), p.40.

201 Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, v.1 (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976-1977), p.245

202 For the Ottoman extraordinary ambassador to St. Petersburg Mehmed Emni Pasha’s observation on the initial stage of the war, see Münir Aktepe, *Mehmed Emni Beyefendi (Paşa) ’nin Rusya Sefareti ve Sefaret-namesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1974), pp.69-70.

203 Subhi, pp.734-735.

three years has a true side, yet the Russian walkout cannot be considered without the other developments counted above. And still, at the time that Russian forces entered Khotin and Moldavia, it was the end of the fourth year of the Russian campaigns and the objective completed was yet somewhere between that of the second and the third years'. But the material and human loss, as anticipated by the anti-war group in the Russian court, had reached extreme levels as exemplified in the first two years' Crimean campaigns.

As the war was finally over, the story of the three contestants became clearly established. Russia, the main provoker of this war, had planned to put an end to the Ottoman presence in Southeastern Europe and march as far as Constantinople itself but the farthest place its troops had ever stepped on was Moldavia and they eventually had to withdraw from all the lands they had initially captured. Austria had also wanted to incorporate a sizable portion of the Ottoman Balkans but ended up losing the previously occupied territories in northern Bosnia, Serbia and Wallachia. On the other hand, the Porte did everything possible to prevent the outbreak of the war and after the outbreak its officials would still have been very glad if they could defend the existing borders in the north and the west. But in 1739, aside from keeping the existing territory, major gains were made at the expense of Austria and Russian advance was halted.

CHAPTER 4: REFLECTIONS ON THE POST-1739 EVENTS

After the hostilities came to an end, the effects of the war continued to be visible in the decision-making process of the belligerents for quite a long time. As a peace and on the other hand as a document that reminded the signatories of the course of the battles of the preceding years, the Peace of Belgrade, though not in a stable way, influenced the three parties on their decision making, especially when it came to the bilateral relations between any two of these states. But in any way, the treaty was a reference point for the prominent actors in domestic politics as well.

The New Position Attributed to the Porte in the European Balance of Power after 1739

In 1740, Maria Theresa acceded to the Habsburg throne succeeding her father. For her part, the late war and the peace were better digested in comparison to the final moments of Charles VI and policies in accordance with this new approach were undertaken by the new monarch.²⁰⁴ But despite accepting the failure of the Habsburg arms, Maria Theresa still suffered from its consequences. Upon her accession, in her diary she says that she found herself “without money, without credit, without an army.”²⁰⁵ This was what Austria had been afraid of from the beginning when Russia first requested the fulfilment of the alliance responsibilities. That is why the Austrian general staff had planned a quick and a decisive attack which would yield immediate

204 Maria Theresa underlines her immediate activity upon her accession to the Ottoman extraordinary minister Mustafa Hatti Effendi in 1748: “When the helm of the imperial affairs had been transferred to me, first I had spent my entire effort ... to the consolidation and fortification of the structure of peace ... and had been pleased that this purpose had been realized.” Mustafa Hatti Efendi, *Viyana Sefaretnamesi*, prep. by Ali İbrahim Savaş (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), p.34.

205 Rodier, *The Reluctant Ally*, 17.

results in one season. By this way, the war-weary empire would not suffer from further exhaustion of human and material resources. But as explained previously, Vienna had to go through the exact opposite of this course and Maria Theresa had summarized it in a few words.

Not only the Austrians were pessimistic about the unforeseen consequences of the conflict; the outsider observers were also of the same opinion on the situation of the empire. Three days after the death of Charles VI, Thomas Robinson, the British minister in Vienna told Austrian statesmen that “the Turks seemed ... already in Hungary, the Hungarians themselves in arms...”²⁰⁶ Even though the direction of Habsburg relations with the Ottoman Empire has changed, just like in the previous cases of Charles Perry and Horatio Walpole, once again the British were in harmony with Vienna in their thoughts concerning the late war.

In any way, the process of 1735 – 1739 had introduced much change for the Habsburg foreign policy making process. The concept of a weakened, fragile Ottoman Empire, along with the related considerations about a failed army and territories waiting to surrender, had disappeared. The Habsburg statesmen arrived at the decision that they and Russia had underestimated what it took to capture Ottoman land. After 1739, there were no more talks about conquering most of the Balkans with a relatively modest army. Instead, keeping the Ottomans out of the continuing and future wars that Austria was involved in became one of the main foreign policy objectives of Vienna. This choice made it crucial to prevent the eastern neighbour from joining Austria’s opponents. That is why when Frederick II of Prussia invaded Silesia in 1740, stonewalling a possible Prussian-Ottoman

206 Anderson, p.62.

alliance was Vienna's primary concern since its realization was thought to be a serious threat to the existence of the state.²⁰⁷ This condition of utmost care towards the Ottomans did not fade away within a few years following the Treaty of Belgrade or after the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748). In the 1740s, Vienna was still on the alert and spent effort in order not to present to the Ottomans any pretext of war.²⁰⁸ For good or ill, especially when looked through the eyes of 1740s, the care of Vienna for handling the Ottoman Empire was not above necessity. It had lost parts of Serbia, Bosnia and Wallachia at a time that it had planned to acquire the rest of these provinces along with Macedonia. Apart from the understandable but unrealistic fears of perceiving a threat in Hungary, the manner of caution in Habsburg foreign policy was logical and in confirmation of the transformation that had been experienced from 1737 on.

An Ottoman success in the last war was the least expected outcome among the European circles and it produced results that affected the foreign observers above the degree of its real gains. The pre-war predictions were prejudiced at the expense of the Ottomans and for this reason they made the Ottoman success more of a surprise for Europe. As a result, the post-war assessments about the outcomes of this conflict were again far from being objective, but this time in favour of the Ottoman Empire.

The Swedish minister in St. Petersburg is among the best examples of those who overestimated the results in the post-war period. He reported that "Russia was entirely ruined by its campaigns against the Turks; that the regiments were made up

207 Roider, *Eastern Question*, p. 90.

208 Kemal Beydilli, *Büyük Friedrich ve Osmanlılar: XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı-Prusya Münasebetleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1985), p.18.

of nothing but young raw recruits, who scarce knew how to handle their arms, and that many of them wanted a third of their complement.”²⁰⁹ The view of the Russian army was not vivid in 1740; it had lost approximately 100.000 men in the campaigns of 1735-1739.²¹⁰ This loss is nowhere near to be ignored and must have really dried up the resources of the country. But in the final analysis, to say that Russia was entirely ruined by the Turkish war is at best wishful thinking by Sweden, which was about to wage war against Russia. Despite the amount of resources spent for no gain, the damage inflicted upon Russia was not even comparable with that of Austria. The Ottoman troops did not ever step foot on the Russian soil and the territory evacuated at the end of this war by Russia was its recent acquisitions, not its formerly held territory. But the unexpectedness of Ottoman success produced such imaginations in the European state of mind. The fact that Sweden was about to enter into a war with Russia increases the importance of this misleading report. It amplified the military capability of the Ottoman Empire, whom Sweden was about to ask to honour the treaty of alliance against Russia, which would be rejected on the grounds of the defensive nature of the alliance.²¹¹

Overestimating the Ottoman potential was a common feature among the opponents of the allies that fought against the Ottomans in this war. It was Sweden for Russia as seen above and Prussia also kept up with the times. Immediately after the finalization of the peace treaty, through the mediation of Sweden and agency of the prince of Moldavia, Prussia tried to set up friendly relations with Constantinople.

209 Manstein, pp.268-269.

210 Nicholas Riasanarsky and Mark Steinberg, *A History of Russia to 1855* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.233.

211 Subhi, pp.734-735.

The time corresponds to the Peace of Belgrade as well as the accession of Frederick II. But the interest and communication of Prussia with the Ottoman Empire caused unrest in some European circles,²¹² and certainly in Vienna. By that time the War of the Austrian Succession had begun, while the position of the Ottoman Empire in European politics and perceptions was consolidated and further strengthened by its recent victories. For this, we may easily assume that communication and relations with Constantinople was attributed great importance. The western capitals and especially the opponents of the Habsburg Empire and Russia seem to be attracted by the Ottoman success in the last war and in order to get a share from Austrian and Russian domains, they waged new wars and at the same time tried to play the Ottoman card against the signatories of Belgrade.

The Ottomans themselves were not excluded from the new wave of revived Ottoman prestige in Europe. Their performance in the war had already helped them recover their self-confidence and build up new policies in line with their renewed outlook. The reflections of the war and peace will be discussed in detailed in the next chapter and here I will content with the effects of this regained confidence on the Ottoman foreign relations.

It was previously mentioned that in 1736, after the initial Russian offensives on the eve of the breakout of an all-out war, the Porte had to negotiate a peace with Persia after long years of fighting coupled with the recent revolution of Nadir Shah. The political clauses were agreed upon but the Ottoman *ulema* and the statesmen had not consented to the religious clauses. As a result, Nadir Shah did not ratify the peace draft but in any way marched to India. Assuming Nadir's campaign, under the

212 Beydilli, pp.8-12 and 14.

pressure of an immediate threat of Russian invasion, as a *de facto* peace, the Porte considered the eastern front closed throughout the war. But after monitoring the Persian setback in Dagestan and surely with the confidence built up during 1737-1739, the Porte 'remembered' its unclosed frontier in the east and amassed troops along the Persian border. Moreover, before Nadir Shah's return from Dagestan and against the clauses of the unratified treaty, the Persian merchants began to be charged with extra tolls and customs duties.²¹³ Rejecting the renewed offer of religious clauses of Nadir Shah, the Porte ordered its troops to march east. The memories of a long Persian war that had turned into a deadlock was still fresh in the Ottoman eyes and the state was just out of a successful but yet resource consuming four-year war at two fronts. But still, the motivation and the driving force of the successes and acquisitions must have made the decision-makers at the Porte believe that it was the right time and the Ottomans were ready to deliver a decisive blow to Persia after long years of inconclusive fighting. No matter the resulting inconclusiveness, the determination to renew the hostilities with Persia well supports the validity of the wave created by the psychological outcome of the Treaty of Belgrade.

As soon as the war was over and peace was re-established, we begin to coincide with steps taken resembling the case above. They make the observer perceive them as influenced by the atmosphere created by outcome of the war. This is right to a certain point; the late war was a key determinant in the European and Ottoman cases provided above but yet other factors may still play a role in their materialization. But in a half decade's time we come across such an initiative by the Ottomans that for it there is none but little possibility of being mistaken about the

213 Olson, *Mosul*, pp.108, 117 and 119.

motivations behind it.

In 1745, at the height of the War of Austrian Succession, the Porte wrote to certain European capitals²¹⁴ and offered its services as a mediator in order to put an end to the ongoing war. Süleyman İzzi Effendi, then the official chronicler, starts narrating this attempt by first introducing his readers with the formation of the Holy Roman Empire where he still paid homage to the idea of empire existing as a loosely held but still unitary state. In following, he describes the succession crisis that surfaced after the Pragmatic Sanction and the death of Charles VI. For the readers who may be uninterested in supporting an Ottoman intervention into pure European affairs, the author adduces the naval conflicts of the belligerents that had even spread to the Ottoman waters, the enslavement of merchants and the resulting shortage of goods imported from Europe.²¹⁵

The pretexts put forward by the Porte for the justification of this attempt were a-“simply relieving the condition of the subjects and satisfying the hearts of the settlers in the Islamic domains”, b-“simply because of good will, the strength of piety and mercy; and because it is known by all that to spend effort on the mentioned matter occasions the attraction of benefits”, c- The human loss that happened up to this year, the potential human loss in the next year’s campaigns and as a result of the non-existence of security in the land and sea routes, the deformation of trade, which is the cause of the prosperity of the subjects.²¹⁶

214 France, Venice, Sweden, Austria, Russia, England, the Dutch Republic, Sicily and “to the others that are necessary.” Süleyman İzzi Efendi, *Tarih-i İzzi* (Istanbul: n.p., 1785), 21a.

215 Ibid., 21a.

216 “Mücerred terfih-i hal-i ibad ve tatmin-i bal-i sükkân-ı bilad-ı İslamiye kasdıyla ... mücerred hulus-ı niyyet ve kuvvet-i diyanet ve merhametlerinden naşi ve husus-ı mezbura sarf-ı himmet, mucib-i isticlab-ı menfaat olduğu cümlesinin malumu olmakdan naşi ... muceb-i refah-ı raiyet [olan ticaretin ihtilali]” Ibid., 21a, 22a.

These pretexts were not unfounded from the start; especially the commercial concerns were real. But this offer was unprecedented in the history of the Ottoman-European relations. So, what brought the Porte to this point? The Ottomans' familiarization with the idea of mediation since 1699 is a big plus but nevertheless not enough by itself to explain the initiative. Ottomans had observed that up to now they had made use of the services of England, the Netherlands and France as mediators between itself and European opponents. The position of mediator had been granted to these powers as a result of their prestige and trustworthiness. After the Peace of Belgrade, the Porte thought that the Ottoman Empire regained its prestige in Europe which it had begun to lose since 1699 but as a plus was then also familiar with the concept of mediation. Feeling no doubt that its European addressees shared the same feelings about the re-defined position of the Ottoman Empire; the Porte did not hesitate to propose itself as a mediator among the parties in a general European war. Here, the government showed too much self-confidence. However, it cannot be blamed for that since as previously discussed, the Europeans also make similar assessments of the power of the Ottoman Empire after 1739.

The offer, which was the product of either *Humbaracıbaşı* Ahmed Pasha or *Reisülküttab* Mustafa Effendi, roused a mild sensation and to some extent embarrassment among the European powers.²¹⁷ Inherently, the European states were surprised and estranged by the offer which had no precedent and no base in their minds; the reclaimed position of the Porte in Europe was not by itself sufficient for it to act as a mediator. Since 1699, it was considered natural for a European state to act as a mediator between the Ottomans and European belligerents but no state had ever

217 Virginia Aksan, "Ottoman-French Relations, 1739-1768," p.50.

considered the Ottoman Empire as a mediator candidate in affairs concerning solely Europe. Some factors stand forward in the alienation caused by the Ottoman offer of mediation in 1745. First, this attempt had no precedent and the rule of precedent was a decisive reference point in the European diplomatic traditions. Also, linguistic barriers that would have surfaced in a possible mediation of the Porte contributed to this outcome.²¹⁸

The attitude of the Habsburgs was also a determinant in the fate of this offer. As one of the major powers and the origin of conflict in the war, sharing a long history and border with the Ottoman Empire and having ceded considerable territory to the potential mediator; Austria was not expected to entrust its fate in the hands of the Ottomans and eventually the Viennese statesmen acted accordingly. In their discussions, the statesmen of the Habsburg Empire believed France to be the architect of this offer and a possible acceptance would benefit France, the enemy of Austria in this war. On the other hand it was sensed that a refusal would bring the Porte on the verge of a war with Austria as a result of French prompting. In line with the middle way constructed, first the Dutch Republic rejected the offer, with friendship and respect, on the grounds that the preliminary negotiations had already started. Pointing out to the Dutch refusal, Vienna declared that it had to turn down an offer, though “mandatorily” and “sadly,” that was formerly rejected by its ally.²¹⁹ In this way, the case was closed without insulting the Ottoman pride and yet without giving them a tool to interfere into the European affairs that it was thought to have no direct relationship with. The unprecedented offer did not produce any positive or

218 Roider, *Eastern Question*, p.95.

219 Ibid., p.96.

negative results but it was a noteworthy move in the chain of steps taken and formations envisaged by the Ottoman government in the wake of the Peace of Belgrade as a result of the partially virtual position it was attributed to by European states and its own statesmen.

Within a short time in the same year, the Porte took another step towards pressing its influence within Europe but this time the nature of the attempt was more of an interference into the internal affairs of Austria than mediating within Europe.

When Frederick II invaded Prague in 1744, the Jewish population in the city had welcomed the conqueror. But then the Habsburgs wrested it back from Prussia, and Maria Theresa ordered their ejection from the city in order to punish their attitude and boost the Catholic zeal. Ottomans protested this decision and declared that those Jews were given the right of asylum and settling in the Ottoman Empire. Again, the move did not produce any result as Vienna eventually abandoned this policy and the Jews of Prague were not exiled.²²⁰ But just like what had happened earlier in 1745, the Ottomans found in themselves the courage and the competency to intervene in a humanitarian but yet domestic affair of the Habsburg Empire and get out of that situation with no loss of prestige. The abandonment of this action by Vienna also served to protect the prestige of the Porte in Europe since the Ottoman policy did not eventually fail, but the grounds that created the interference disappeared.

Despite the one-sided action by Vienna without keeping the harmony with St. Petersburg throughout the negotiations that led to the Peace of Belgrade, the Austro-Russian alliance survived the 1739 crisis and continued in the decades to follow. But

220 Ibid., pp.97-98.

the result of the 1736-1739 War and the atmosphere created by its outcome led to an understanding that this alliance no more stood for a future Turkish war but was rather directed against the rising Prussian threat.²²¹ This transformation was well put into force throughout the War of Austrian Succession where Prussia attacked the Habsburg domains while Russia fought alongside its ally. In another agreement that was signed in 1746 between Austria and Russia, the Ottoman Empire was named as a possible threat but this was achieved mostly under pressure from and requests of the Russian side. We know that the Austrian statesmen motivated Russia to “live at peace with the Porte and avoid anything which might provoke a new war.”²²² The Habsburg Empire was daunted by their defeat in 1737-1739 and did not want to see the hostilities with the Ottoman Empire renewed. Thus, it urged its ally not to provoke a new war as it had done in 1735-1736. After 1739, the Ottoman Empire was a state that Austria no more wanted to see itself in a fight against. Driving the Porte to the verge of a new war and a possible Franco-Prussian-Ottoman cooperation would be destructive for an encircled Austria.

Under such conditions, in the early 1750s Russia began to erect an immigrant military colony in southern Ukraine which was fed by the Serbian and Montenegrin settlers from the Balkans. It did not take long for Austria to realize that New Serbia could trigger a Russian-Ottoman war and that she might once more be pressed upon by Russia to honour the alliance. Thus, Austria banned Serbian recruitment for New Serbia among its subjects and also denied access to recruitment in Montenegro which would cause further problems since the territory was under Ottoman

221 Harvey L. Dyck, “New Serbia and the Origins of the Eastern Question, 1751-55: A Habsburg Perspective,” *Russian Review* 40, no.1 (January 1981), p.1.

222 From the new instructions for the new Austrian Resident at Constantinople, Joseph von Schwachheim, 14 August 1754, HNSA, St.K, Türkei V, K.17. Quoted in Dyck, p.10.

sovereignty.²²³ This time, Austria did not want go with the flow and the will of St. Petersburg as it had done in 1736. Seeing that this settlement was an open threat to the northern security of the Ottoman Empire and could easily lead to a new war, and also being sure that it neither wanted a Turkish war nor would honour the alliance in case one occurred because of Russia, Austria acted quickly in order to obstruct a formation which would later be a reason of hostilities.

In such an atmosphere, the Austrian resident in Constantinople reported that the fort construction in New Serbia was perceived as aggression and violation of peace treaty by the Ottomans while rumours that the Porte was gathering war supplies and giving an ultimatum to Russia for the demolition of the fortress were in circulation. Austria did not deny any effort in order to stop the fort construction because “a Turkish war “was “the most pernicious greatest evil that could befall Austria.”²²⁴ Less than two decades ago, it was feared that the loss of Hungary and Transylvania may be the next steps of the Ottoman advance and now Austria saw no reason to kindle up a situation that might lead to the realization of its concerns for no reason. Consequently, the Porte sensed the degree of threat posed by this construction and gave an open ultimatum along with a threat of war in case the ultimatum was not abided by. Following the Ottoman ultimatum, Vienna declared that if a war began on these grounds, it would not honour the alliance with Russia.²²⁵ This time, Austria was acting in the opposite manner of what it had done in 1730s. Previously, until it had become clear that the Ottoman-Russian war was inevitable, Austria had chosen to stay passive in the issue and leave it to time to decide the fate

223 Dyek, p.10.

224 Ibid., p.12.

225 Beydilli, p22.

of the unrest. But with its fingers burnt from the experience of late 1730s, Vienna chose to make it clear that under no circumstances would it fight a war that would be provoked by its ally when there was no other reason for hostilities. It seems that in the 1750s, the memories of Belgrade were still so fresh, not to mention the comparative degree of threat that would be posed by a rapprochement of France, Prussia and the Ottoman Empire versus what the Ottomans had already realized on their own.

After receiving the war ultimatum and observing the joint pressure from Austria and England, Russia stopped the fort construction and disbanded the military settlement in the face of French and Prussian threat. In this way, the neutrality of the Ottoman Empire in the Seven Years' War was guaranteed.²²⁶ This process from the beginning to the end was an evidence of the image that the Ottoman Empire and the last Turkish had war created in the minds of Austrian statesmen. To say that the Ottomans could not threaten the Russian territories but could hinder Russia from advancing to the south would be a fair judgment. But Austria, from a new war with the Ottoman Empire, might "bleed."²²⁷ Russia had halted its hostile activity fearing a triple alliance but Austria strove for this outcome for its own existence, which was according to the dominant idea in Vienna, in a serious danger if the Ottomans would wage war.

Apart from the attitudes of the active parties, the assessment of the whole situation by Prussia is noteworthy. In line with its own and Swedish perceptions that has been discussed previously, Prussia, again in the 1750s, overestimated the

²²⁶ Dyek, p.15, Roider, *Eastern Question*, p.103.

²²⁷ Ibid., p.19.

potential of the Ottoman power. Russia had halted the construction in order to prevent an Ottoman rapprochement with France and Prussia but the Prussian statesmen believed that the real reason behind Russia's stepping back was the threat posed to it by the Ottoman war ultimatum.²²⁸ Thus it might be suggested that for Prussia, the intimidating force of the Ottoman Empire was well above the standards of Austria and strong enough to compel Russia to step back. In general, the post-1738 image of the Ottoman Empire as a revived military power that could produce further conquests in the case of a war survived well into the 1750s and Austria, together with Prussia, proved the best examples of the embodiment of the policies that resulted from the caution and reasoning caused by this image.

Reversals in the Ottoman Domestic Policy Goals and the Underlying Reasons

The Peace of Belgrade was "for the Ottoman Empire a respite on the side of Russia, and a signal revenge upon Austria."²²⁹ The results of the treaty on the international stage was observed in terms of renewed caution before the Ottoman military potential and an ever-increasing Ottoman belief that the Empire once again got the upper hand in its relations with the European states. In domestic politics, things were no different at the motivational level but the resulting acts were surprisingly inclined ultimately to produce negative results for the well-being of the state *vis-a-vis* Europe. From 1739 up to the breakout of war with Russia in 1768, the Porte was exempt from threat that was previously sensed from the west and the north. Europe, including Russia, was preoccupied with internal wars until 1763 and the Ottomans

²²⁸ Beydilli, p.23.

²²⁹ Marriot, p.141

had all the time to enjoy their victory.

Under these circumstances of a relatively long peace in the west enjoyed after a war which had more or less satisfied the Porte, the level of urgency attributed to the reforms and the measures taken for the well-being of the empire decreased dramatically.²³⁰ In general, Mahmud I had a positive approach towards the reforms that aimed to enhance the condition of the Ottoman army. The traces of this policy were visible in the first part of his reign until 1739. But mainly due to two factors, the reforms were either completely abandoned or left aside to the degree of ignorance. The first factor is formed by a combination of the regained self-confidence and the series of long wars that had been active in the better part of Europe until 1763. Together, these inputs practically removed the danger from an outside threat and consequently defensive considerations were not deemed as urgent as they had been in the preceding decades. The second underlying reason is the virtuality created by the post 1737 atmosphere which suggested that the conventional ways and traditional military institutions of the Ottoman Empire were sufficient in stopping one of the best armies in Europe and defeating another major one simultaneously. In a way, the supremacy of the existing military structure was reaffirmed in the minds of the Ottoman statesmen. In such an atmosphere, the reformists that were shareholders in the successes gained in 1737-1739 were no more the favourites of the sultan. To disturb the traditional usages and customs were perceived to be unnecessary when they proved to be more than sufficient for military success at the fronts. In short, "in the view of this situation, the urgency which had

230 For the critiques of the Porte for laying aside its reform program in the post-1739 period that are made use of below, see Shaw, pp.240, 246, McNeill, p.173 and Avigdor Levy, "Military Reform and the Problem of Centralization in the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century," *Middle Eastern Studies* XVIII (1982), p.234

briefly dictated serious effort toward military reforms, evaporated.²³¹

Comte de Bonneval, or then *Humbaracı* Ahmed Pasha, had been able to carry out his military reform, though with several interruptions, from 1731 to 1738 under the grand vizierates of Topal Osman Pasha, Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha and Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha. But in the post-war period from 1739 until his death in 1747, Ahmed Pasha was only the commander of the bombardiers, no more an initiator of sustained reform.²³² Although Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha was once more placed at the helm of the empire in the 1740s, he could not or did not choose to reintroduce the reformist content in the definition of Ahmed Pasha's assignment. Thus, the continuation and interruption of his reform program was affected by something more influential than the favouritism and contrasting policies of different grand viziers; it was rather the late military success.

Similar outcomes are also visible in realms other than the military. The general course of the contemporary history and the Ottoman Empire's position within that context compared to the European states as constructed in the mind of the Ottoman elite was naturally shaped by the military developments and the 1736-1739 War crowned the re-emerging optimism created by the victories of 1711 and 1715 despite the failure before the Habsburg forces in 1716. As several defects in the system were shadowed by these successes, up to the year 1774 the Ottoman elite thought that their inherited intellectual accumulation and conventional methods were in no urgent need of serious reform. Thus in a period of relative peace and minimum foreign threat, observing the existing rituals was deemed sufficient to reproduce the

231 McNeill, p.173.

232 Levy, p.233.

existing structure in the mind of the Ottoman statesmen and elites.²³³ Without any doubt, the Peace of Belgrade served well to postpone this internalization up to the dates given above.

During a discussion between Mustafa III and the Grand Vizier Koca Ragıp Pasha over a possible alliance with Prussia and joining the Seven Years' War, the sultan was openly in favour of taking part in this general war and in order to convince his grand vizier he said that "if the problem is the money, I can line up purses of gold coins from Edirnekapı to Rusçuk."²³⁴ The sultan was convinced that the empire possessed the financial resources and military capabilities required to wage and sustain a multi-front war in Europe. This was what had been materialized about two decades ago and in the eyes of the sovereign the empire was capable of repeating that success. According to the sultan, the latest conquests sufficed to construct the idea of superiority while the real situation that necessitated more caution was not unknown to the grand vizier and he worked towards ensuring Ottoman neutrality in the Seven Years' War.²³⁵

The same motivations and stimulants that shaped the post-1739 Ottoman policies were determinant in the process that resulted in the breakout of the Russian-Ottoman War in 1768 and in this way the victory of 1737-1739 became one of the preparatories of the 1768-1774 disaster.

233 Itzkowitz, "Man and Ideas," pp.16, 25.

234 "Eğer gazez akçe ise Edirne kapısından ta Rusçuk'a kadar iki keçeli altın dizerim." Uzunçarşılı, p.366, quoted from *Cevdet Tarihi*, v.I, p.78.

235 Koca Ragıp Pasha told his monarch that even if the state with its extensive territory was seemingly massive, in military affairs it was not as advanced as the Europeans were. As a reply to the sultan's words on the financial resources, Ragıp Pasha replied that "Devlet-i aliyyeniz eskiden beri yapmış olduğu savaşlarda bir muharip arslan olduğunu düşmanlarına göstermiştir. Fakar şimdiki halde tırnakları aşınmış olup muharebe esnasında düşman bu halini anlarsa vaziyet müşkil olur, askere nizam verildikten sonra bu iş düşünülün." Uzunçarşılı, p.366.

After the end of the Seven Years' War, in 1764, the succession crisis in Poland emerged once again. The Porte informed the related states that it preferred the elections in Poland to be undertaken in complete freedom. Thus it would remain neutral while it expected the same attitude from the European states. At this stage of affairs, Tansel claims that "as a result of complete negligence, it was believed that the European states were beware of the Ottomans."²³⁶ The first signs of this imagination, which enjoyed some reality in the Habsburg Empire and Prussia, had surfaced during the 1740s when the Porte was feeling confident enough to intervene to the central-European affairs. Now, the time would prove that the Ottoman attitude concerning the Polish succession was nowhere comparable to the one that the Porte had had in the early 1730s in the face of the same situation.

Just like it had been in the previous Polish succession crisis and war, Russia deployed its troops in Poland in order to pressure the electors. People of Constantinople, with the Peace of Belgrade being the terminus of the last war that the empire had experienced and Russia having failed at that attempt, openly thought that Russia would evacuate Poland with the first move of the Ottoman troops (from Constantinople). This state of mind was not exclusive to the people; an important portion of statesmen were also in favour of declaring war against Russia.²³⁷ In the previous case, the declaration had come too late and its consequences had been heavy but nevertheless the success was on the Ottoman side. Now was there any reason to wait for bearing the same fate of 1735-1736? This idea was haunting the thoughts in Constantinople.

236 Salahattin Tansel, "Osmanlı – Leh Münasebetleri 1764-68," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 4 (1946) p.74.

237 Uzunçarşılı, p.367.

Tansel says that most academic works takes the encouragement of France as the main stimulant of the Ottoman declaration of war in 1768²³⁸ but he disagrees with them. According to him, the encouragement of France could not exceed the limits of a minor contribution to an already existing atmosphere in the capital. France had already declared that its support to the Ottoman cause could not be more than praying for their victory and by that date France had already lost its long-standing prestige in the eyes of the Porte. The real reasons behind the declaration of war, for Tansel, are the disappearing independence of Poland, its inclusion into the Russian sphere of influence and the Ottomans' sense of the threat caused by these developments.²³⁹

The arguments put forward by Tansel are more convincing than the ones suggesting an Ottoman Empire acting along with French directives, a partner who aroused major disappointment when it cooperated with Austria in the Seven Years' War. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that the War of 1736-1739 was preceded by the War of Polish Succession. Now, the same scenario was on play but the Porte took the initiative which it had not done back in the 1730s. The connections that explain the war declaration of 1768 existed in the period 1733-1736 but they had not been enough to convince the Porte to take solid measures and respond swiftly against Russia's moves back then. This can only be explained by the living memory of 1737-1739 and its shadow on the Ottoman policy making that was still a determinant input in the late 1760s and what the Ottomans were lacking in the early

238 Tansel "Osmanlı - Leh Münasebetleri," p.84. For example, Uzunçarşılı argues that the delegation of 500 sent to the Ottoman capital by the Federation of Bar and the encouragement of the French ambassador Vergennes were influential in shaping the public opinion in the city. Thus, after a certain time, those who thought against going to war were considered as traitors. Uzunçarşılı, 372.

239 Tansel, "1768 Seferi Hakkında Bir Araştırma," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 8, no., 4, (1950), pp.478 and Tansel, "Osmanlı - Leh Münasebetleri", p.84.

1730s was the existence of such a victory as an example of the last war that the empire had fought. In short, the defeat of 1716-1718 prevented the Porte from executing extremely necessary policies in the 1730s while the success of 1737-1739 drove the government to act in a way that required more resources and potential than the contemporary capacity of the empire could offer. Aside from the memories of the latest wars, all other inputs that gave birth to these opposite undertakings were very similar.

The Later Eighteenth-Century Historiography on the War

Apart from the post-1739 influences of the war in the realm of politics and political thought, historiography of the corresponding period was also guided and influenced by the foreknowledge of the end and the consequences of this war. The shadow of this pre-knowledge is thoroughly felt in the works of various Ottoman and European authors of the period, especially when they talk about the late war or the relative Ottoman power in comparison with Europe.

Official chronicler Mehmed Subhi Effendi, when he recounts the events preceding Austria's active participation and full Ottoman engagement in the war, tells his readers of Russian politics and objectives:

As [the Tsarina] has proved to be careless for the conditions of the peace and like it was written [she has] dared to engage in countless unsuitable acts and hastened for various harmful [acts] against the peace, with her untrue dreams, [she has thought that] the generous lenity that surfaced from the Sublime State was a result of [its] incapability and non-dedication for starting hostilities...²⁴⁰

The steps taken by Silahdar Mehmed Pasha and *Kethüda* Osman Efendi's

240 “ [Çariçe] icra-yı şurut u ahd ü misaka izhar-ı ‘adem-i mübalat idüp, ber-vech-i muharrer hilaf-ı marzi nice nice harekete cesaret ve mugayir-i sulh u salah enva’-ı hasarête mübaderet eyledükçe taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyye’den ru-nüma olan müsamaha-i kerimane bi-zaaf u kuvvet ve acz ü future-i muhasametden neş’et eylemek hayal-i batılıyla güya fırsatı ganimet bilüp” Subhi, p.292.

government were subject to a lengthy discussion in the first chapter of this essay and Subhi Efendi was a first hand witness of this period. Yet when he writes after the conclusion of the war, he chooses to recount the 1735-1736 Russian aggression and Ottoman ignorance as above. But it is clear that the pre-war Ottoman government was nowhere near to be labelled the way Subhi does.

In the wake of the Ottoman declaration of war in 1736 that took place before the Nemirov negotiations, Subhi Efendi feels the need to provide an explanation to the sultan's unaltered residency in Constantinople. The current situation, he writes, did not allocate enough time for the necessary preparations for the sultan to lead the campaign in person and since the main relief force to Azov would be dispatched by the sea route, the sultan, for the moment had to stay in the capital.²⁴¹

In a way, the chronicler tries to emphasize that for the pre-1737 Ottoman observers, the victory was so certain that the sultan would lead the campaign in person, just like it was during the times of Ottoman expansion into Europe. Only time constraints prevented his presence from being materialized; as this was the pretext put forward by the author. With the rebuilt courage and territory acquisition; the pre-war events were retold from a post-1739 point of view. Leaving aside the sultan's personal presence at the helm of the army, the troops camping at Babadağı were not even put into use by the grand vizier, who feared further enraging the Russians and provoking them to advance.

The 1736-1739 War was also a reference point used by the authors to make comparisons with the later defeat suffered at the hands of the Russians in 1768-1774. Ahmed Resmi Efendi, when evaluating the mistakes made that led to the 1774

241 Ibid., p.295.

disaster, underlines that no one had remained who had witnessed the warfare of the 1730s. The supporters of war in 1768 were men of inexperience. Muhsinzade Mehmed Pasha, the son of former grand vizier M. Abdullah Pasha, disapproved of starting the hostilities and for this he was dismissed from the grand vizierate.²⁴² The fact that Mehmed Pasha participated in the 1737 campaign and that he was the son of Abdullah Pasha made him a powerful figure supporting Ahmed Resmi's opposition to the Russian war. Just like here, throughout Ahmed Resmi's book each failure during the period of 1768-1774 is compared with corresponding events of 1736-1739 and then questioned why no lesson had been learnt from the previous example. The same attitude is also present in the work of an anonymous author. The work is completed was 1779 and the late defeat makes itself felt on the language employed. For the failure, the author generally blames that the order that had existed back in the 1730s was absent in the late war and this was the main reason behind the defeat. He also talks about the virtues of a just ruler, statesman, of the necessity or harms of the war, the order and structure of the army, the condition of the subjects of the empire and the required reforms or improvements in these areas. Throughout all these, the examples focus on the 1736-1739 War. Even, the year 1739 is not mentioned in the conventional way but rather as "the year of Belgrade."²⁴³

Ahmed Resmi, in another work of his called *Layiha*, similarly refers to the 1730s several times as he did in his *Hülasa*. He reminds the readers that since for about thirty years the Ottoman Empire suffered no aggression [from Europe], the issues of military reform and order were abandoned.²⁴⁴ Surely, what he is referring to

242 Ahmed Resmi Efendi, *Hülasatü'l- İtibar* (Kostantiniye: Matbaa-i Ebuzziya, 1307), pp.11-12.

243 See the work in general, Mukaddimetü's-Sefer, especially p.8.

244 Ahmed Resmi Efendi, *Layiha*, Istanbul University Collection of Rare Works, T.Y. 419, 2b.

here is the over-confidence and the resulting languor that dominated Ottoman politics after 1739. As a fierce opponent of the war declaration in 1768, Ahmed Resmi Efendi uses the example and the influence of the previous war to refer to the present situation. The unexpected success and overestimated results of such a war placed it at the centre of related discussion that took place during the 1740s, 1750s and 1760s.

Mustafa Nuri Pasha, writing about a century and a half later, reformulates the considerations of Ahmed Resmi Efendi and the anonymous author as such:

[Concerning the Habsburg evacuation of the south banks of Danube and the recovery of Belgrade] In the eyes of the Sublime State [this happening] caused joyfulness, pride and pleasure as if the entire [territorial] losses that had happened up to then had been recovered. The memories of a world-conquest had been completely abandoned and no other hope and act other than the continuation and perpetuation of the present situation was pursued. [This way] for about thirty years, time was spent by turning away from the misfortunes of war and killing.²⁴⁵

The lively language employed by Mustafa Nuri Pasha in his description of the feelings aroused by the acquisitions of 1737-1739 is one of the best descriptions of the state of mind that prevailed as a result of the recoveries and the eventual peace.

It was not only the Ottoman imperial historiography that carried the shadow of post-1739 political situation in its discussion of the earlier events and the consequences of the war. European historiography, especially the works dealing with the 18th century European-Ottoman relations, focused on the events in question from a similar point of view.

245 “Devlet-i Aliyye nazarında şimdiye kadar vaki olan kaffe-i zayıat gerü alınmışcasına mucib-i memnuniyet ve ba’is-i fahr ü mübahat olub cihangirlik ve kişvergüşalık hatıraları dahi bil-küllüye metruk ve hal-i hazırın devam ü bekasından başka ümid ü amal tarikleri gayr-i mesluk olmağla otuz sene kadar ga’ile-i harb ü kıtalden ictinab ile imrar-ı zaman olundu.” Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Netayicü'l-Vuku’at, Kurumlarıyla Osmanlı Tarihi*, prep. by Yılmaz Kurt (Ankara: Birleşik, 2008), p.365.

Richard Rolt, writing in 1753, notes his assessment of what had happened in 1739:

The house of Austria, is now more incapable of opposing the Turks than ever: she has lost some of her finest provinces; consequently, a great part of her revenue, and a greater part of her strength; which would give the Ottomans an opportunity of extending their empire, if Russia had not seasonably grown up to check their insolence and ambition ... Without the assistance of Russia, the court of Vienna would be soon overpowered by the Ottomans: for the Turks are properly formed for invasion, and the Germans only for defence.²⁴⁶

It is noteworthy to observe that exactly at this period of following the War of Austrian Succession, Rolt claims that comparative Austrian-Ottoman balance of power was at its most extreme end in favour of the Ottoman Empire. Eventual Ottoman expansion was expected as a natural extension of this shift in the balance and it was Russia's policies that denied the Porte further territorial acquisitions; and the same beliefs were present in the Ottoman realm, the subjects of which were prone to invasion as claimed by Rolt. This statement carries one of the most direct influences of the 1736-1739 War; since the course of events after 1740 proves the opposite case of the author's construction. The Ottoman Empire, during two consecutive long wars of Austrian Succession and the Seven Years', possessed the opportunity, and maybe the most suitable one within the century, to extend its realm further west at the expense of the Habsburgs. But in both cases, the Porte refrained from renewing hostilities with Vienna, which refutes the picture presented by Rolt, who wrote under the influence of the late unexpected and relatively major Ottoman success. The same is true when he recounts the journey of his master, John Lindsay the Earl of Crawford, from Belgrade to Vienna. The entire narration is dedicated to

²⁴⁶ Richard Rolt, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late Right Honourable John Lindsay* (London: 1753), pp.261-262.

the condition of his illness and wounds, meetings, conversations and similar personal accounts, only to give a sizeable interruption in order to describe the Ottoman ambassador's formal entrance to Vienna which is described in some great detail.²⁴⁷

Mignot, in his *History of the Ottoman Empire*, puts forward some claims regarding the war which are remarkable for the point of view shared with the previous Ottoman and European examples mentioned here. He claims that in 1736, the Ottoman Empire received the declaration of war from Russia as if they were expecting it and the military unrest in Austria that started during its mediatory role in 1737 was well observed by the Porte.²⁴⁸ Just the opposite, the Porte had done everything available and beyond the conventional boundaries in order to prevent a full-scale war with Russia. To this end, it had postponed the counter declaration of war and further abstained from engaging with the Russian forces for more than a year after the counter declaration. And while through its generals and governors the Ottoman government was informed of the Austrian preparations along the border, the policy pursued was in no way inclined to take measures against such a threat. Concerning the middle stages of the war after 1737, Mignot confirms the common Ottoman claims and Austrian concerns that the Ottomans might recover Belgrade, Buda, Temesvar, and the impossibility of peace before the realization of these conquests.²⁴⁹ On the Peace of Belgrade he comments that "however disadvantageous this peace might appear to be for the empire of the West [Habsburgs], it might be

247 Ibid., pp.322-326.

248 Mignot, p.361. "The Turks, who desired it [the war] more than the Russians..." and Mignot, p.363.

249 Ibid., p.369.

thought indispensable and even fortunate with relation to circumstances.’’²⁵⁰

According to Mignot, the Ottoman dissatisfaction with the peace conditions,²⁵¹ European perceptions of an Austria having avoided further Ottoman expansion and the perceived Ottoman power and potential were grounded and true. These ideas had evolved after the peace of Belgrade and had a deep influence on the historiography of the war before the peace. In this way, concerning the over-estimation of the Ottoman potential and its transformed position in the power balance, European intellectuals and courts were no different than their Ottoman counterparts.

James Porter, writing in 1768 on the Ottoman Empire, also carries the traces of the positive attitude towards the Ottoman political capabilities during the post-1739 age. His work is mainly dominated by superstitions and negative remarks while the reign and conduct of government by Mahmud I receive praise from the author, a generosity not bestowed on the topics in the remaining chapters.²⁵² A similar approach is also visible in the narration of the Ottoman army. Despite some heavy criticism towards the imperial institutions which is a common feature of the work, the army is exempt from this degrading. Their numbers are radically overestimated and their present condition is considered to be unproblematic,²⁵³ which would prove to be false in a few years with the coming Russian war.

250 Ibid., p.401

251 Discussed further below.

252 James Porter, *Observations on the Religion, Law, Government, and Manners, of the Turks* (Dublin: n.p., 1768), p.93.

253 Ibid., pp.174-176.

CHAPTER 5: DIVISION AND POLARIZATION AMONG THE OTTOMAN STATESMEN ON WAGING WAR AND MAKING PEACE

In the previous chapter, the relation between the 1736 and 1739 War and the post-1739 politics of the Ottoman Empire, especially in its foreign relations has been the main focus. We saw that the progress of the war boosted Ottoman morale and self-confidence while making its European counterparts more cautious towards the Porte. Still, this reactive transformation, which was the most visible side-effect of the war, did not represent a homogeneous and uniform movement that was more or less shared by all Ottoman statesmen. Regarding war and peace, there was political fragmentation, and later polarization, among the Ottoman statesmen and bureaucrats as early as the 1738 campaign and this process gathered further pace in the later stages of the war as well as its aftermath. Thus, it is not accurate to speak of a “unity of purpose displayed by the Ottomans” or to argue that since they were “determined to recapture Belgrade, they moved methodically towards their goal.”²⁵⁴ The post-war period presents a relatively suitable ground to suggest such modifications in the Ottoman domestic political rivalries that originated from differing perceptions on foreign policy making. Despite the lack of any apparent disadvantage in the Peace of Belgrade, considered with the war performances, it “did not quell the disquiet of the people of Istanbul” and “did not satisfy the war party of the Porte,” a group of Ottoman statesmen who were in opposition with the limited warfare of 1739 and the terms of the treaties signed with Austria and Russia.²⁵⁵ It was thought that the

254 Hertz, p.151. Hertz claims that the Ottomans were united around the idea of the recapture of Belgrade and they represented a unity in this cause. This chapter will try to prove the invalidity of this argument during the war period and will follow the reflections of this polarization for the post-war period.

255 Olson, *Mosul*, p.141. For the terms “war party” and “peace party” and still for the envisioning of post-1739 Constantinopolitan politics of in such a way, I am intellectually indebted to Robert

Russian front was neglected beyond the limitations necessitated by a two-front war and renewing the hostilities with Persia only added fuel to the already burning flames. Furthermore, the territories acquired from the Habsburgs did not satisfy the war party and it was thought that the Peace of Belgrade had been signed too early and in a hurry. Olson argues that these were the real underlying reasons behind the 6 June 1740 unrest at the Ottoman capital,²⁵⁶ which we shall discuss further below.

The First Seeds of Divergence

Y. Mehmed Pasha's appointment to the grand vizierate following the 1737 campaign may be taken as the origin of the political conflict. Although the personality and appointment of Y. Mehmed Pasha to this post was not the immediate reason, his policies helped escalate the disunity among the leading figures of the Ottoman decision-making process in the late 1730s and early 1740s.

According to Laugier, Y. Mehmed Pasha was "a man of application and well versed in affairs." He did not approve of the behaviour of his predecessors, which he regarded as a show of impotence with empty hopes for peace. He was determined to employ his full effort and the maximum available resources of the state in the service of the war effort, especially towards the Habsburg Empire and force it to a separate peace.²⁵⁷

Olson, who came up with this accurate construction in his book which dealt mainly with the Ottoman-Persian relations of the first half of the 18th century. What I attempt in this chapter is supporting his construction with additional examples and enlarging its time span back to 1738. For similar tendencies in Ottoman domestic politics in the sixteenth century, see Gabor Agoston, "Information, Ideology, and Limits of Imperial Policy: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the context of Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. by Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 83, 91.

256 Ibid., p.141.

257 Laugier, p.79.

As a manifestation of his mentioned motivations, during the 1738 campaign the new grand vizier heavily concentrated the empire's power and resources on his offensive in the west. The recapture of Belgrade was his end-year goal and in order not to leave a weak link in the Ottoman supply lines along the Danube, Adakale was besieged prior to investing Belgrade. Its fall would remove the last obstacle in the way of the Ottoman army to the primary objective. The whole planning and organization of 1738 campaign was organized by Y. Mehmed Pasha in line with his mentioned aims and for this end the effort at the Russian front was dwarfed by that in the west. However, as a result of the unexpectedly prolonged resistance of the garrison, Y. Mehmed Pasha's 1738 objectives were distorted. Although Adakale was ultimately surrendered, the time needed for investing Belgrade in 1738 had already passed.²⁵⁸

The process from the first investment of Adakale until its surrender helped expose the friction between the different centres of power within the Ottoman high command. The siege of Adakale was entrusted to İvaz Mehmed Pasha, the governor and commander of Vidin, and the future grand vizier to replace Y. Mehmed Pasha. The incumbent grand vizier, with the pretext that the siege was lifted without informing him, had stripped İ. Mehmed Pasha of his command on this assignment. This recall had been instrumental for the gradual rise of İ. Mehmed Pasha as the leading opposition figure to the incumbent government, despite the fact that he continued to play a major role in the 1738 campaign. Following his recall, the besieging troops started deserting the camp. It was only İ. Mehmed Pasha's personal effort that prevented the desertion from escalating. For practical reasons; namely the

258 Ibid., pp.159, 167.

desertions among the troops and in the face of revived Austrian counter attack along with the new commander's inability to hold on, Y. Mehmed Pasha reappointed him as the commanding officer and the siege was concluded successfully towards the end of the season.²⁵⁹ Although the attempt ultimately bore its fruits, the 1738 plans of the grand vizier had to be postponed to the next year, which must have irritated Y. Mehmed Pasha. Also, this recall and reappointment process proved the intolerance of the grand vizier for any kind of delay in the military timetable and on the other hand showed the rising influence of an anti-Y. Mehmed Pasha group in the Ottoman army, which was influential enough to force him to reappoint the siege commander. This process must have inevitably contributed to the falling out of the grand vizier with İ. Mehmed Pasha and other notables who opposed his policies.

The rage of the grand vizier/commander in chief was directed not only at those who were emerging as his potential political opponents. He busied himself primarily with his war planning and anything which stood between him and Belgrade attracted his wrath. At a certain stage, he had even ordered the execution of the head-butcher of the imperial army for his "laziness and slackness." He was only saved by the mediation of *Nişancı* İsmail Efendi.²⁶⁰ Without any doubt, an interruption must have occurred in the supply trains which necessitated an unplanned halt in the army's march that angered Y. Mehmed Pasha to such an extent.

The siege of Adakale was not the first instance that the discontent against the policies of Y. Mehmed Pasha surfaced. At the capital, during the pre-campaign season of 1738, political fragmentation had already begun to manifest itself through

259 Fikret Sarıcaoğlu, "Hacı İvaz Paşa," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* and Uzunçarşılı, pp.281-282.

260 Subhi, p.451.

various means. The grand vizier's objective that foresaw a harsh offensive towards the Habsburg front was not approved of by some Ottoman bureaucrats in the first place even before the beginning of the campaign, let alone the existence of any unity of purpose and collective willingness. Some middle ranking Ottoman statesmen perceived this plan to be too risky and communicated to the French ambassador Villeneuve that he should deter the grand vizier from this plan by asserting his influence as the mediator. Instead of a full-scale offensive, they preferred peace to prevail because the 1737 campaigns had already restored the previously lost territory to the Ottomans while any counterattack against Russia was perceived to be unfruitful. However, their lobbying produced no results. Still, in order for the degree of attempts to be understood, it should be said that the opposition party had even written to the ambassador advising him to contact the chief black eunuch, Beşir Aga, in order to assert his personal influence over the sultan.²⁶¹ But the peace party's position prior to the 1738 campaign was not as firm and inclusive as it would be in late 1738, and so at this stage their effort against the aggressive policies of the grand vizier and towards undermining his position failed.

Then, who were these statesmen and bureaucrats who built up a political fraction against the politics of warfare pursued by Y. Mehmed Pasha? It is not an easy task to detect all those involved in this political opposition but still some prominent figures and their related acts were recorded in contemporary chronicles and histories.

The first circle includes İsmail Efendi, Mustafa Efendi and Ragıp Mehmed Efendi (later pasha and grand vizier). These three bureaucrats had played a leading

261 Laugier, pp.79, 177.

role in the Persian-Ottoman ceasefire negotiations in 1736; they were regarded as the most capable statesmen to deal with the situation. Following that, they had joined the army camp at Babadağı, to move with the army until the peace of 1739. After their return in 1736, as a reward to their celebrated work which had practically closed the Persian front, they were elevated to the posts of *nişancı*, *reisülküttab* and grand vizier's secretary respectively as soon as they arrived at the army camp, just before their assignment as the Ottoman delegates at the Nemirov negotiations.²⁶² For the rest of the war, they acted in harmony as they became the leading figures of the peace party. Later, they found an ally in the persons of Esad Efendi, the judge of the imperial army (*ordu kadısı*), and Atif Mustafa Efendi the chief treasurer (*defterdar-ı şikk-ı evvel*)

Ismail Efendi's intervention with the harsh methods and policies of the grand vizier was discussed above. It was indeed proof of his peace-oriented ideas and proposed participation in the peace party of Ottoman politics. And although Mehmed Ragıb Efendi's post was not yet so high as to allow his personal attitude to be recorded by the historians, his later opposition to the warlike ambitions of the Sultan Mustafa III²⁶³ might provide a clue for his political inclinations during this relatively early part of his career. In order to understand the active participation of Mustafa Efendi in this formation, it suffices to have a look at his attitude during an early phase of 1738 campaign. In Sofia on 16 May, the official papers which stated the guarantee of France for the future peace treaty had arrived. Reisülküttab Mustafa Efendi, as a response, said that for the interests of the Ottoman Empire, this

262 Ahmed Resmi, *Halifetü'r-Rüesa*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Laleli 2092-M, 46a and Subhi, pp.305, 316.

263 See the previous chapter.

guarantee was more advantageous even than the recovery of Azov but yet it was a difficult task to convince the grand vizier.²⁶⁴ We know that Esad Efendi was of equal importance in deterring Y. Mehmed Pasha from his decision concerning İ. Mehmed Pasha during the desertions and Austrian counteroffensive. Esad Efendi encouraged İ. Mehmed Pasha to accept the reappointment to his former post when he was hesitating to do so. Seeing that refusal to accept would be an act of disobedience and possibly in order to fortify the peace party's position in the army command, Esad Efendi warned İ. Mehmed Pasha about the person (the grand vizier) from whom this order was coming and convinced him to reassume the siege of Adakale.²⁶⁵ This chain of events must have sharpened the animosity between the war and peace parties. İ. Mehmed Pasha's reluctance to accept reappointment from his unconditional master in the battlefield is an exceptional show of political resistance while Esad Efendi made his affiliation with the peace party clear by his intimate relation with the commander of Vidin and besieger of Adakale. Yet, it is clear that the grand vizier's dislike of this party grew as he was compelled by the situation to reinstall one of his major potential rivals and an open critic back to his key post.

The Rise of Polarization and the Prevalence of the Peace Party

The post-campaign period also witnessed the continuation of political rivalries based on the opinions of each side about the ongoing war. Defterdar Atıf Efendi, as told above, was affiliated with the peace party, the ranks of which grew as time progressed. Probably in order to remove the possibility of any "accidental" problem

264 Laugier, p.147.

265 Muhammet Nur Doğan, "Esad Efendi Ebuishakzade," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* and Subhi, pp.460, 467.

in the financial organization that might disrupt his plans for 1739, the grand vizier removed Atif Efendi from his office and exiled him. The reason of his removal is described by Subhi as such: “Since the chief treasurer Atif Mustafa Efendi was unable to be on good terms with his highness the commander-in-chief, [he was dismissed and exiled] with the accusations of slackness and negligence in completing the [campaign] provisions.” Instead, Yusuf Efendi was given the vacant office. Y. Mehmed Pasha intended a full-confiscation of Atif Efendi’s property but this was eventually transformed into a partial confiscation with the personal intervention of the sultan.²⁶⁶ Also, Numan, Selim and Hasan Pashas who were thought to be inclined towards the peace party, were deprived of their ranks and the title of vizier.²⁶⁷ While the polarization between the war and peace oriented politicians had already started in the pre-campaign period, this fragmentation became clearer as the campaign advanced. Towards the end, by discharging them of their offices, the grand vizier even resorted to a political purge of those with whom he could intervene without receiving major criticism. However as in the case of İ. Mehmed Pasha, he experienced moments of setback when he felt that further insistence would undermine his own campaign objectives and probably his office. Even this is enough to explain the rising strength and influence of the peace party during campaigning in 1738. When the active campaigning of 1738 was over, Y. Mehmed Pasha, aware of the political disunity among his inferiors, hurried back to the capital in order to be personally present to prevent the effective lobbying of his

266 “Defterdar-ı şikk-ı evvel Atif Mustafa Efendi serdar-ı ekrem hazretleriyle hüs-n-i imtizaca muvaffak olamadığından naşi, tedarük ü tekmil-i zehayirde rehavet ü taksir töhmetiyle azl ü tekdir” Subhi, p.451 and Uzunçarşılı pp.284-285.

267 Uzunçarşılı, pp.284-285.

political opponents.²⁶⁸ During the post-campaign period, the grand vizier was busy both with preparing for the next year's campaign where he was expecting to achieve the ultimate outcome and also struggling against his political opponents, the peace party, which was growing more influential each day.

With the opportunity presented by the interruption of warfare by seasonal necessities, the three-party negotiations mediated by France had restarted in the late 1738. As a natural outcome of the definitions of their posts, Mustafa Efendi and Esad Efendi were among the leading Ottoman delegates who negotiated with Villeneuve. Eventually, the negotiations reached a deadlock and the situation was presented by the delegates to the grand vizier as a written report. Normally, since it would have enabled him to execute his objectives, Y. Mehmed Pasha was expected to have been pleased by the news of the probable prolongation of the hostilities for one more year. Leaving aside the objectives concerning Hungary and Transylvania, the recovery of Belgrade was a more realistic goal which would only be obtained through further warfare. But contrary to expectations, the grand vizier showed signs of anger and blamed the delegation for failing to negotiate effectively.²⁶⁹ This time, he was advancing upon the peace party. For a result that would no doubt have pleased him, he blamed Mustafa and Esad Efendis only to undermine their position and credibility by accusing them of having failed at the negotiations and occasioned the continuation of armed conflicts. His gain from the negotiation deadlock was obvious as he was too busy, and probably pleased to be so, with the campaign preparations and providing its resources while Villeneuve was not even able to meet with any

268 Fikret Sarıcaoğlu, "Hacı İvaz Paşa."

269 Laugier, p.224.

Ottoman official since the month of Ramadan necessitated the near-halting of governmental operations.

The closing days of 1738 and early 1739 brought about a development that turned the tide in favour of the peace party. After the campaign, the khan of Crimea had come to Constantinople in order to take part in the discussions which would establish the basis of the policy to be pursued during the future progress of the war. When he was asked for his opinion on the course of events and his desired course of action, he replied with the introduction that every war had been concluded with peace and even the Porte had previously accepted defeat and sealed it with a peace treaty. He suggested that peace was the best option when the Ottoman Empire was prevailing on both fronts; the advantage gained versus the Habsburgs had been without any precedent for a long time and the offer of Azov's demolition by Russia was also satisfactory, and even if they insisted on retaining it, they should be allowed to do so since its loss would not cause a major gap in the northern defences, because the northern defence line could be easily held with the fortresses of Ochakov and Kılburnu. He ended his speech with the self justification that even though under normal circumstances the Crimeans preferred war over peace, this war had devastated the peninsula and thus peace was the better option. With this motivation, the khan worked towards convincing the grand vizier for making peace and warned him that the tide may turn during the next year's campaign and the recent acquisitions may not be retained. His suggestions were incongruous with those of Y. Mehmed Pasha and yet his position required that these words would not fall on deaf ears. To prevent the khan from exerting further influence over the peace party, the duration of his stay in the capital and availability of contact with a range of Ottoman officials was limited by the intervention of the grand vizier. Peace ultimately

disappeared as a possibility to be realized before the upcoming campaign of 1739 when the sultan declared the campaign to be certain.²⁷⁰ But nonetheless, with the voicing of peace-inclined policies from a man of such high position and respect in the Ottoman hierarchy, the supporters of the peace party gained further strength even if they did not immediately obtain from the sultan what they expected.

After the khan revealed his opinion on what to do about the ongoing war, the peace party gained further strength. By winter 1739, in numerical terms they got the upper hand and their influence on the court reached the maximum level achieved up to that time. The declaration made by Y. Mehmed Pasha to the French secretariat about the firmness from his office and his alleged attempt to remove Beşir Aga from his position were indeed the manifestations of the fact that he was also aware of the prevailing peace party at the capital.²⁷¹ Under such conditions, he was discharged of his office and exiled on 23 March to be replaced by his foremost rival İvaz Mehmed Pasha, just two weeks before setting off for his awaited and planned campaign. Musaffa Mehmed, an author with a clear sympathy for İ. Mehmed Pasha, states that “not being on good terms with some of the statesmen, military commanders and officers” was the reason behind Y. Mehmed’s removal.²⁷² These men were, without doubt, the prominent members of the peace party. The new campaign would be led by the new grand vizier İ. Mehmed Pasha.

The Peace Party Leads the War

270 For information on the Mengli Giray Khan’s policy concerning the war at this time, see *Mür’i’t-Tevarih*, 87, Subhi, pp.509-511 and Laugier, p.232

271 Laugier, p.239 and Uzunçarşılı, p.285.

272 “Ba’zı rical-i devlet ve rü’esa-yı ‘asakir ve zabitan ile hüsni-ı imtizacı ol[ma]mak sebebiyle” Musaffa in Çoruhlu, p.19.

It is not easy to decide who emerged as the winner out of the conflict between the war and the peace parties in spring 1739. The weak opposition, which had started in early 1738 and surfaced only at rare instances, had gathered strength during the war and reached its climax at the turn of the year. This ultimately resulted in the removal of Y. Mehmed Pasha, the primary supporter of war, from his office and appointment of the most outstanding general in the ranks of the peace supporters, İ. Mehmed Pasha, in his place, while the other bureaucrats who supported peace kept their positions and probably increased their influence. Seemingly, this was an open victory for the peace party. But this is too simple to be the actual truth. This group had long lobbied for the ceasing of hostilities after the end of 1737 campaign, as soon as the losses of 1736 and early 1737 were recovered. Following the acquisitions of 1738, they were more eager than ever for peace because in their mind it was the maximum possible advantage to be achieved under the current circumstances. But as they were ultimately entrusted with the helm of the empire, they were also entrusted with executing the campaign which they had opposed. İ. Mehmed Pasha, along with the peace party serving under him, had to personally lead the campaign to Belgrade, to which he had objected and which was by and large planned and organized by the leader of the war party and his predecessor Y. Mehmed Pasha. The former grand vizier was sent to exile but, though unwillingly, his plan was being executed by his most prominent rival. One may well consider that the sultan, who seemed to be determined to carry out the war for one more year, must have deflated the political tensions which had been on the rise for the last one year. He sacrificed a vizier whose objectives were more or less agreeable to him in order to be able to carry out these objectives under less pressure and opposition, an opposition that would otherwise be difficult to contain if Y. Mehmed had remained in office.

Once he was in power, İ. Mehmed Pasha started to work on removing those administrators who were supposedly affiliated with his predecessor. The new grand vizier had to lead this unwanted campaign, but nevertheless he wanted to further build up his position through appointments. He was already welcomed by a majority of statesmen but a few key offices had to be changed. First, Defterdar Yusuf Efendi, who was considered a personal appointee of Y. Mehmed, was removed from the office. The post was to be filled by his predecessor Atif Mustafa Efendi, who was long known to support the peace party and who had been among the dismissed by the previous grand vizier partly for this reason. In exchange for Y. Mehmed Pasha's partially-materialized order of confiscation of Atif Efendi's property, İ. Mehmed Pasha ordered the full confiscation of Yusuf Efendi's fortunes and imprisoned him.²⁷³ In general, it was routine for a newly appointed grand vizier to choose his team of principal bureaucrats but the manner employed by the successive viziers leaves no doubt that these appointments and dismissals were done for the "greater good" of the fate of this war. Numan Pasha was also to be subject of such political polarization. During the term of Y. Mehmed Pasha, Numan Pasha had been dismissed from his command of Bender, deprived of his vizierate and exiled since he was affiliated with the peace party. For the same reason, the new grand vizier restored him the rank of vizier and initially dispatched him to aid Caffa without any permanent office but after the death of the commander of Caffa, Mehmed Pasha, he received the governorship of Adana and became the commander of Caffa.²⁷⁴ His affiliation with the peace party had cost him his position and freedom while the same reason brought

273 Subhi, p.521.

274 Ibid., p.521.

much of what he had lost back in a year as a result of the power transfer at the top level.

The degree to which the peace party bureaucrats were determined to press for their policies surfaced as the army made its way towards the planned siege of Belgrade. Despite the fact that İ. Mehmed Pasha was not willing to undertake this campaign but was only doing it under the orders of the sultan, *Reisülküttab* Mustafa Efendi and the prominent peace supporters approached the commander-in-chief before the siege effectively began. They told him that “the wish and order of our emperor is making peace by demarcating the border from [the river of] Morava, Yeğen Mehmed Pasha was dismissed for his objection and you were deemed worthy of the seal [of the sultan] in order to [establish] peace.” They were only silenced by Hasan Pasha, commander of janissaries who urged them to move faster.²⁷⁵ This moment of opposition is quite surprising for its manner. The bureaucrats with peace-inclined motivations verbally, and with a little presumption, tried to diverge the grand vizier and the army from their way and to this end they put forward the will of their monarch. But it was the same will that compelled them to carry on their assignment. It is also noteworthy that the conflict between the parties as exemplified in the personalities of the two successive grand viziers and its influence on their replacement by the sultan is openly put into words by the *reisülküttab* and used as a covered threat to inform the incumbent grand vizier that his hold in the office depended on the continuation of his peace-inclined policies.

However, this momentary friction did not cause any divergence within the peace party, for the unrestful bureaucrats knew well that İ. Mehmed Pasha was

275 “Padişahımızın muradı ve emri Morova’dan hudut kesilerek sulh yapılmasıdır, Yeğen Mehmed Paşa muhalefet ettiği için azlolundu ve size sulh için mühre layık gördüler.” Uzunçarşılı, p.286.

thinking no differently than the rest of them but anyway had to fulfil his assignment. We cannot come across any other disagreement between the peace party and the grand vizier from this point on. The author of an anonymous work, who himself states that he was a “companion” of the *reisülküttab*, constructs a very positive image of İ. Mehmed Pasha throughout his work.²⁷⁶ After all, it was this group of staff that carried out the siege and at the same time the final peace negotiations before Belgrade. Probably they did not expect to achieve this result; if they had considered the recovery of Belgrade possible along with the reestablishment of peace, they would not have objected to the policies of the former government as hard as they did. With a general evaluation, it is possible to think that all the conflict was a result of inter-personal rivalry and who would have the helm of the empire but if it had been so, then the discontent within the peace party during the march to Belgrade would not have surfaced. But in the end, it was under the leadership of the peace party that treaty was signed and Belgrade was recovered by the Ottomans.

The War Party Regains the Upper Hand

After the return of the victors to the capital, however, they could not enjoy the victory as they should have. The capital experienced a series of events that introduced instability and discontent to the subjects and the statesmen. Two subsequent fires were the first of those.

The first one was put out rather easily while the second one completely burned the grand vizierial palace. In the following days, unrest surfaced in the city as a result of food shortage which itself seemed to be caused by the long campaigns and

²⁷⁶ Mukaddimetü's-Sefer, p.6.

the harsh winter conditions. The unrest was put down harshly before it turned into a real uprising. As an easy way out, the blame was put on the recent migrants to the city by the administration. A general inspection in Constantinople was carried out by the government and those who had left their land and lived in shops at the capital were sent back to their homes with the accusation of provoking the unrest.²⁷⁷

However, the real situation was not as simple as İ. Mehmed Pasha tried to display it to be. The shortage and resulting dissatisfaction in the city was being exploited by those in the war party, who were dissatisfied with the content and execution of some clauses in the Peace of Belgrade.²⁷⁸ The summer of 1740 saw the peak of dissatisfaction in the city in relation with the Peace of Belgrade and its execution. As required by the treaty, prisoners of war were to be delivered to their respective homelands. In the summer of 1740, when the Ottoman government was reminded of its responsibility to repatriate the Russian prisoners, İ. Mehmed Pasha replied that it was not possible to do this so soon and on a complete scale because of the unrest regarding this issue at Constantinople.²⁷⁹ The degree of discontent rose to a further level when the demolition of Azov, which was agreed upon, was still far from being carried out by the summer of 1740.²⁸⁰ Even the most prominent leader of

277 For a good description of the unrest in Constantinople from İvaz Mehmed Pasha's return from the campaign up to his removal from the office, see Subhi, pp.614-633.

278 Olson, *Mosul*, p.145.

279 The latency in delivering the Russian prisoners of war back to their homelands was related with the public reaction. As the common practice, the government paid for these prisoners to their possessors. And despite the procedure of compulsory prisoner recovery compensated by money, the government felt that it had to "set [the prisoners] free after convincing their owners." See Prime Ministerial Ottoman Archive, Ali Emiri / I. Mahmud, n. 16473. For a number of prisoner recovery cases see, PMOA, Cevdet / Hariciye, n. 4056, Ali Emiri / I. Mahmud, n. 6941, 8828. The documents on the issue of Russian prisoners after 1739 can be traced as far as h.1158 (1745 / 1746).

280 Laugier, p.359.

the peace party had to admit that for the time being it was impossible for the Porte to repatriate all the Russian prisoners of war since the discontent of the pro-war statesmen and the public that was provoked by their discourse reached such a serious level. In early 1739, it was the overwhelming influence of the peace supporters that prevented Y. Mehmed Pasha from pursuing his objectives as the grand vizier and now it was the opposite party's pressure that made the grand vizier renounce his promises.

The reflections of the uneasy situation at the Ottoman capital are traceable also from several accounts other than the Russian prisoners' issue. At the beginning of 1740, the Porte revealed its desire to reinforce the fortification and build new ones along the border in Bosnia and Belgrade. The Habsburg government conveyed its displeasure with this action to the French ambassador, who probably as the mediator of the peace, was still responsible for its execution and resolution of later frictions since his state was the official guarantor. But Villeneuve did not consider it appropriate to transmit such a message to the Porte at a time when the opposition to the Peace of Belgrade was high.²⁸¹ The ambassador refrained from causing further dissatisfaction for one of the signatories and left the issue to cool down. Everard Fawkener, then the British diplomat at Constantinople wrote to the British foreign secretary: "In that case it is very probable the pretence of dissatisfaction would have been the accepting Belgrade demolished, consenting to such a peace, whilst the arms of the Empire were in a condition to procure much greater Advantages..."²⁸² Thus, it might be elaborated that the provocation of the war party and its effect on the unrest

281 Ibid., p.338.

282 Olson, "The Revolt of 1740," p.29.

in the city which was seemingly related with the food shortage was easily observable by a foreign diplomat. It is also interesting that he shared with his contemporary European and some Ottoman statesmen the image of an Ottoman army which was easily able to proceed and acquire territory past Belgrade, probably meaning Hungary, if peace was not settled the way it had been.

After the grand vizier's return to the capital, for a brief period he was subject to praise and esteem of the sultan but starting with the fire, the importance of which was thought to be underestimated by İ. Mehmed Pasha, he started falling from grace. As a result, he was relieved of his duty as the grand vizier on 22 June 1740. The official reasons were the recent fires, the food shortage and the unrest of the janissaries and the tradesmen at the capital. This last matter was emphasized in the imperial edict issued to his successor Şehla Ahmed Pasha.²⁸³ But as a matter of fact, we may easily take these as the virtual reasons for his removal, as expressed by Fawkenner and Olson. In reality, the influence of the war party, which started to fall apart from the middle 1738 on, was revived and completed its transformation into a determinant stimulant once again in the middle of 1740. Its reclaimed prevalence at the centre of Ottoman politics eventually resulted in the deposition of the leader of the peace party from the helm of the empire. Instead, Şehla Ahmed Pasha was brought forward as a figure who could have propitiate the dissatisfied war party. He would not disappoint those who had immediate expectations from him.

The new grand vizier started his work following the footsteps of Y. Mehmed and İ. Mehmed Pashas; he wanted to remove the bureaucrats who had supported the peace, and who were architects of the Peace of Belgrade, from power. Şehla Ahmed

²⁸³ For the accounts of his removal from the office, see Subhi, pp.633 – 635, *Mukaddimetü's-Sefer*, p.117 and Sarıcaoğlu, "Hacı İvaz Paşa."

Pasha was working in the same manner his predecessor had done, but in the opposite direction.

The grand vizier's first dedication was towards discrediting *Reisülküttab* Mustafa Efendi in the eyes of the sultan and eventually removing him from office. For this end, he deliberately raised difficulties during the post-Belgrade negotiations that covered a range of unsolved issues among the signatories.²⁸⁴ Obviously, since the *reisülküttab* was the chief negotiator, any deadlock or failure that resulted from the attitude of the Ottoman Empire would be under his responsibility. In this manner, Şehla Ahmed Pasha was employing the same tactic with that of Y. Mehmed Pasha during early 1739. Mustafa Efendi, as a key member of the peace party, was the first one to attract the wrath of a grand vizier among whose main preoccupations were discrediting the peace party before the court, statesmen and the public. Eventually, his effort seemed to bear fruits for the war party. On 5 February 1741, Mustafa Efendi was discharged of his duty and suffered exile to his preferred place Kastamonu. The secretary of the grand vizier, Mehmed Ragıb Efendi, replaced him as the new *reisülküttab*.²⁸⁵ This was a success for the architects of the unrest in the capital. The removal of the occupier of such a post was not something that the grand vizier could bring about on his own. The opinion of the sultan and the statesmen must also have contributed to the execution of such a will. Şehla Ahmed Pasha was successful in laying the way open for this attempt.

One may question whether this change of office was related to the conflict between the war and peace parties' in the capital on the grounds that it may not be

284 Laugier, p.389.

285 Ahmed Resmi, *Rüesa*, 46b and Subhi, pp. 662-663.

directly related only because the chain of events seemed to verify a phenomenon. However, the case of Mustafa Efendi is clear from such doubts. In fact, it was immediately after the death of Charles VI of Austria on 20 October 1740 that Şehla Ahmed Pasha had started raising difficulties in the negotiations in order to benefit from a possible succession crisis and increase the empire's bargaining power in the border demarcations of Serbia and Bosnia. This policy did not remain inconclusive; on 7 February 1741 the news of Prussia's invasion of Silesia reached the capital. The letter to Villeneuve from Vienna that urged compromising with the Ottoman Empire by any means immediately followed of the news of invasion.²⁸⁶

Then, the argument that the removal of Mustafa Efendi was not a decision taken on grounds of the war and peace parties' rivalry cannot stand. The grand vizier blamed him for the inconclusive stage that the negotiations were hanging on. On the other hand, Ahmed Pasha was pursuing the policy of raising difficulties in the negotiations not only as a policy of personal rivalry, but a seen above more as a state policy. Thus, the government's attitude towards the negotiations was *realpolitik* while the grand vizier's towards the *reisülküttab* was based on the political polarization that existed since early 1738.

The next high bureaucrat that was dealt with by the grand vizier was Defterdar Atıf Mustafa Efendi. The treasurer, "without any reason", was dismissed from office and replaced by his predecessor Yusuf Efendi.²⁸⁷ For the third time during the terms of three consecutive grand viziers, Atıf Mustafa and Yusuf Efendis were replacing each other in the top financial post of the imperial hierarchy. In fact,

286 Laugier, pp.424-425

287 Subhi, p.720.

within the period of 1738-1741, for one who wants to know whether the peace or war party was prevailing at a given time, it is sufficient only to look at which one of these two occupied the office of the treasurer.

For the foreign observer, from early 1738 to late 1739, the conflict between the two political groups were more or less preserved at a moderate level which only surfaced at several points during the negotiations with the French ambassador. The ongoing inner conflict was generally kept within the governmental circles, at least at the final decision making level. But after the Peace of Belgrade, as a result of the polarization that had become very sharp from the late 1738 on, the politics of Constantinople fell into a serious unrest. But unlike the pre-peace period, this time the reflections of the rivalry were felt beyond the political circles of the capital.

Following the peace, the Habsburgs and the Ottomans had sent commissions to the border in order to specify the separating line in an exact manner. Numan Efendi, in his work *Tedbirat-ı Pesendide*, tells us about his assignment in this commission as a *molla*, assuming the role of a jurist. At some point when the two delegations were discussing the border along some islands on the Danube, negotiations had reached a deadlock. Moreover, the Habsburg delegation wrote their complaints about their colleagues to Constantinople, blaming them for the deadlock. While waiting for the reply, the Habsburg interpreter visited the Ottoman camp and said that the situation in the capital was unsteady and the troops were about to riot. Numan Efendi retells his answer to the interpreter as such:

It [the news] should not have any basis...If it has, you know [it well] that, our soldiers are not satisfied with this peace. The gathering [of the troops] must have been because of the circulating rumours about [your] general's spending much time with unnecessary disputes and [they must have been saying] "[let us] make another campaign before the finalization of the border adjustment and [after the campaign] we can demarcate the border

wherever we like.’²⁸⁸

This communication corresponds to the last days at the camp before the arrival of the news about İvaz Mehmed Pasha’s deposition. It stands for two important phenomena. The first one is the break-out of unrest at the capital to the degree that the Habsburg delegation was using it for blackmailing the Ottoman camp to compromise with the Austrian requests. On the other hand, the second one is the popularization and resurrection of the ideas of the war party to such an extent that the Ottoman delegation did not hesitate to answer and explain the situation in line with the rising war cry at Constantinople.

A few days after this incident, the Habsburg interpreter visited the Ottoman camp again and wanted to converse with the Ottoman delegates about the deposition of İ. Mehmed Pasha and the appointment of Şehla Ahmed Pasha. Numan Efendi, either pretending not to know, or because of lagging messengers, asked the interpreter about the validity of the news. When he heard that there was no doubt, Numan Efendi sent the interpreter back to his camp with this reply:

What a pity! Our Emperor has made him [Ahmed Pasha] his [grand] vizier because he has learned that the general is spending much time with unnecessary disputes and [he has thought as such:] “This [İ. Mehmed Pasha] is a soft and a gentle vizier; out of gentleness he has contented himself with only Belgrade. The Habsburgs still do not give up [their] cursed [behaviours] and demarcate the borders, then I shall appoint such a vizier who shall make them restless in their domains.” If so, all our and the general’s effort come to nothing, since Ahmed Pasha is a warrior, brave and zealous vizier, he cares for [nobody’s words]. He is firmer than Yeğen Pasha, who captured Adakale, if it is true that he has become the grand vizier, then it is bad news, since, he will lead a campaign under any circumstances.²⁸⁹

288 “Aslı olmamak gerekdür ... eğer aslı var ise, sizler bilirsüz ki, bizüm asker bu sulha razı değillerdür. Ceneral bu adalarda bihude niza’ ile imrar-ı vakt ettiği tevatür bulup, ‘Bu hududlat kat’ olmadan bir sefer dahi itdürelüm ve istediğimiz yerden hudud kat’ itdürelüm’ deyü cem’iyyet itmek gerekdür.” Ebu Sehl Nu’man Efendi, p.96.

289 “Ne fena olmuş! Ceneral bihude niza’ ile imrar-ı vakt eylediüi padişahumuzun ma’lumu olmağla

The second reply of Numan Efendi leaves the reader without any doubt about the overwhelming position of the war party asserted back at the capital. İ. Mehmed Pasha is blamed for signing the peace before Belgrade while Yeğen Mehmed Pasha is presented as a measure of combativeness in order to point out and praise the policy that Şehla Ahmed Pasha was expected to pursue. Overall, Numan Efendi interprets the unrest at the capital and change of the grand vizier as the surfacing of a strong warlike political group and the inevitability of a future campaign if the border commission did not complete their task within a short time. It has been discussed earlier that Austria compromised with the Ottoman requests after the breakout of the war of succession. This issue was finalized in line with the Ottoman preferences with the Convention of Constantinople on 2 March 1741.²⁹⁰ On the other hand, the discourse employed by Numan Efendi is an indicator of a highly possible affiliation with the war party, or at least with its arguments.

The story of the Ottoman and Russian delegations that were constituted for and assigned with the same duty was not much different than Numan Efendi's. The low possibility of reaching an early agreement is natural since each state would want to acquire as much territory as it can but in the future phase, the attitude of Ahmed Merami Efendi, the head of the Ottoman delegation for the Russian border commission, makes a clear distinction from a case where the war party would be absent in the central politics and its shadow over the commission.

'Bu bir mülayim ü halim vezirdür; mülayemet ile yalnızca Belgrad'a kana'at eyledi. Nemçelü hala mel'aneti feragat ve hududları kat'etmiyorlar, bari bir vezir nasb ideyim ki, memleketlerin anların başına dar eyleye' deyü ol Ahmed Paşa'yı vezir eylemiş. Öyle ise bizüm ve Ceneral'in bu kadar emekleri heba olur; zira, müşarun ileyh Ahmed Paşa bir çeri ve cesur u gayur cenk ister vezirdir, kimesneyi dinlemez. Ada Kal'asını alan Yeğen Paşa'dan metindür, vezir-i a'zam oldığı vaki' ise, pek fena olmuş; zira, beher hal sefer açar." Ibid., p.97.

290 Hertz, p.203.

Even before the beginning of formal negotiations, Ahmed Merami Efendi was working towards raising obstacles on the path to reaching an agreement; he was even thinking of calling the negotiations off and leaving for the capital. Unlike the case of Numan Efendi, this delegate was not blackmailing his counterparts or pretending to seem tougher than he was; he really meant to quit at several points. Once, his subordinates had to leave a gathering in front of the secretary of the Russian delegation because they were enraged by Ahmed Merami Efendi's uncompromising behaviour.²⁹¹ Thus, even before the negotiation process, the relation between the delegations of the two sides was already strained as a result of Ahmed Merami Efendi's rough stance.

After the formal opening of the negotiations, when the issues of the demolition of Azov and the zone for the new fortification construction were being discussed, Ahmed Efendi once again wanted to quit the negotiations. His subordinates tried to convince him to stay on the grounds that the negotiations were still on and no final answer had yet been received.²⁹² However, after a short time, with the pretext that winter was approaching and despite the opposition of the Russian delegation, the Ottoman commission left the negotiation place in order to winter at Caffa.

Despite the similarities between the cases of Numan Efendi and Ahmed Merami Efendi, there is a line separating their behaviours, an imaginary line drawn by the grand vizierates of İ. Mehmed and Ş. Ahmed Pashas. Numan Efendi, although openly expressing himself in favour of the new grand vizier, still preserved his

291 Savaş, "Takrir-i Ahmed Merami Efendi," p.158.

292 Ibid., p.163.

caution when referring to his deposed master. He uses the threat of the rising war party at maximum as an effective tool to get what he wanted from the Habsburg side. But Ahmed M. Efendi had already crossed that line. He did not threaten his counterparts with leaving the table and causing a very possible discomfort between the two empires; he really meant to leave and in the end he did. Although there is little doubt that Numan Efendi was ideologically sided with the war party, he lacked something that Ahmed M. Efendi possessed when approaching their counterparts; it was the attitudes of their grand viziers. Numan Efendi had to keep his civility. No matter what he thought, he had been assigned to this duty by İ. Mehmed Pasha. Even after his removal from power, Numan Efendi chose his words carefully when supporting the war party. But even though the commission for the Russian border was appointed by the same grand vizier, Şehla Ahmed Pasha was brought to power long before the commission reached its assigned zone of negotiation.²⁹³ The attitude of Ahmed Merami Efendi is least likely to be explainable under a government that would not approve of his uncompromising behaviour. That is why he was not likely to do the same if İ. Mehmed Pasha was still in power when the two delegations met. But the appointment of Şehla Ahmed Pasha and his policies backed up by the strong wind of the war party, enabled the border commissioner Ahmed Merami Efendi to act in the manner he did and do this without worrying about the end he would meet back at home. This approach is verified as his rank in the bureaucracy was significantly raised in comparison with his pre-border commission position when he returned to Constantinople from this assignment.²⁹⁴

293 These dates may be determined with the information given in *Mür'i't-Tevarih* , p.95 and Takrir Savaş, "Takrir-i Ahmed Merami Efendi," p.154.

294 Savaş, "Takrir-i Ahmed Merami Efendi," p.154.

I want to show several examples from the narrations of the Peace of Belgrade and the political polarization around it as represented in the later Ottoman historiography. Thus, the later Ottomans' assessments of this phenomenon and the direction of political equilibrium after the climax of this rivalry may be further grasped.

In 1777, after the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, Şemdanizade Süleyman Effendi retells the story of the Peace of Belgrade as such:

By mediating for peace, France displayed friendship. In reality, if victory was not by our side, by saying that nobody was minding, France would watch us [as we] go [down]. For the praise of God, victory was by the side of the State. From Austria, if set foot on [the territory], it was possible to acquire as far as Buda with its consent and this was the consideration of the former grand vizier Yeğen Pasha. But the purpose of the statesmen was to get rid of the campaign burden since it hindered [their] pleasures [and for this] they were inclined to France [‘s mediation]. And [France] has done great help to Austria by ruining the fortitude and the victory of the State and by conducting the peace by means of lowering the fortress of Belgrade to its former condition and demolition [of the post-1718 fortifications]. Yet, who reads, who cares about the pages that are the seal of fidelity...In this Ottoman State, it has much [occurred] that those who are close to [the court of] the Sultan, for they are greedy, have undertaken such negligence.²⁹⁵

To say the least, the words of Süleyman Effendi are charges of high treason for İvaz Mehmed Pasha and the high bureaucrats that supported him in his effort towards peace. By attributing him with the unexecuted campaign plan, Yeğen Mehmed Pasha is praised by the author while the successor government and the group pointed out by him, called up to now as the peace party, are given the blame for halting the

295 “France sulha tavassut ile dostluk etti. Hakikatde, eğer galebe bizde olmaya idi, sözüm geçmedi deyüp, seyranımıza nazır olur idi. Lillahi’l-hamd, galebe taraf-ı Devlet’de bulundu. Nemçe’den, ayak basılsa Budin’e değin rızası ile alınmak kabil idi ve sadr-ı sabık Yeğen Paşa’nın mülâhazası bu idi. Lakin rical-i devletin maksudu, sefer sıkletini, safaya mani olur deyü def etmek olmağla, Fransız’a rağbet ettiler. Ol dahi Devlet’in salabet ve galesini mahv edüp, Belgrad kal’asını vaz’-ı kadimine tenzil edince hedm etmek suretiyle sulha nizam verüp, Nemçe’ye i’anet-i azime eyledi. Lakin varak-ı mühr-i vefayı kim okur, kim dinler. Bu devlet-i Osmaniye’de mukarrib-i padişah olanlar tama’larına binaen böyle gaflet etdikleri çokdur.” *Mür’i’t-Tevarih*, pp.96-97.

advance at Belgrade, accepting the fortress to be handed over in a reduced form and thus stealing the victory of Y. Mehmed Pasha and the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, they are said to have done this in order not to experience the shortage of resources that are necessary for living in the pleasures of the capital. The absence of most of those statesmen in the late 1770s enabled Süleyman Effendi to employ such a strong language and still, it reveals the perceptions about the war and peace party about forty years after their rivalry.

Writing during the later part of the nineteenth-century, Mustafa Nuri Pasha attributes a more extensive responsibility for the victory to the deeds of Y. Mehmed Pasha while abstaining from taking a negative stance against the peace party:

Since during the previous two Habsburg campaigns the Imperial Monarchy had experienced great losses and the statesmen had been daunted by a war with Austria; and despite they perceived the peace on the principle of the former arrangement as a trophy, the campaign was carried out and action towards capturing Belgrade was taken only by the deceased grand vizier Yeğen Mehmed Pasha's emprise and zeal.²⁹⁶

In a way, Mustafa Nuri Pasha summarizes the change of perceptions with its three main stages that are respectively fearing from a war that had already started, contenting with the recoveries of the past year, the aggressive policies of 1738 and the reluctant recovery of Belgrade in 1739. It is still noteworthy that in this very short summary, Yeğen Mehmed Pasha still finds himself a place to be present in name and to be credited with the crown of the Ottoman acquisitions in this war though he was not the chief executive officer.

Şehrizade Mehmed Said, in his addendum to the grand vizier biographies of

296 "Ve bundan evvel iki def'a vaki' olan Nemçe muharebelerinde saltanat-ı seniyye zayi'at-ı azimeye giriftar olmak hasebiyle erkan-ı devletin Nemçe muharebesinden gözleri korkmuş idüğünden heyet-i sabıka üzere sulhu ganimet ittihaz idgeldikleri halde mücerred sadr-ı azam bulunan Yeğen Mehmed Paşa merhumun ikdam ve himmetiyle sefere devam ve Belgrad Kal'ası fethine ikdam olundu." Mustafa Nuri Paşa, pp.364-365.

Ahmed Taib Osmanzade, leaves no doubt of his opinion regarding the war and peace parties, writing more than a decade after the deposition of İ. Mehmed Pasha. On Y. Mehmed Pasha's plans for his supposed second campaign in 1739 and his consequent deposition writes the author this way:

While he, with his all existence and mind, was busy with the [preparations] of the necessary supplies for the decided conquest and capture of Belgrade in the year to come, because of the sneaking of the snitcher, ... the imperial seal has been recovered [from his possession] and was sent to the general of Vidin, the reverend vizier el-Hac Mehmed Pasha.²⁹⁷

Here, the recovery of Belgrade is openly associated with the efforts of Y. Mehmed Pasha. Although no negative comments are inserted for his successor, he gives his readers the notion that the new grand vizier inherited a campaign for which the necessary preparation of the army and supplies were completely ready. Indeed, the author cannot be blamed for favouring Y. Mehmed Pasha, for this was what had actually happened. But the choice of underlining this fact reflects his leaning towards one of the rival political factions.

But as he proceeds to the entry "Y. Mehmed Pasha", the author cannot help but reveal what he thinks about his deposition and later career. Here, although no conventional words of respect are omitted, İ. Mehmed Pasha is slightly accused as he is said to have a secret communication with the Habsburg Emperor. He is not present in name, but certainly meant to be involved in the group that is said to have prevented the recovery of Hungary as planned by Y. Mehmed Pasha.

297 "Sene-i atiyede feth ü teshiri musammem olan kal'a-i Belgrad'ın tetmim-i ma-lüzumuna ez dil ü can meşgul iken gamz-ı gammaz hasebiyle ... mühr-i hümayun azh ve ... Vidin seraskeri vezir-i mükerrem el-Hac Mehmed Paşa'ya isal buyuruldu." The publisher confused the addendums authored to Ahmed Taib Osmanzade. The addendum of Şehrizade Mehmed Said is given within the addendum of Dilaver Ağazade Ömer Vahid Efendi with a partition within the text but without supplying information about the author and the title. Thus, the related part of *Gül-i Ziba* of Şehrizade is found in the Ömer Vahid Efendi's addendum to the Ahmed Taib Osmanzade, *Hadikatü'l-Vüzerâ* (Istanbul: Ceride-i Havadis Matbaası, 1271), p.61. Pagination restarts after the original work with each addendum and this page is in the second pagination section.

Since there was no doubt that in the next year if, with the aim of the conquest of Belgrade, which was [indeed] the main purpose, the heroic enterprise of leading the banner to that direction was undertaken, not [only] Belgrade but [even] the throne and the crown [of the Habsburg Emperor] would be looted. When a strong enemy such as the Emperor, who among the unbelievers was famous for his heroic temper, before the march of his highness the summit of bravery and the glorious one [Y. Mehmed Pasha] from Constantinople, dispatched a secret letter to the general of Vidin his highness Mehmed Pasha and undertook to spare and yield Vidin, Budin, Timisoara and their many dependent territories as the condition of peace, because of the interception with the[ir] preventive sword by traitorous claws of the malicious statesmen of high posts who has long made it a habit to busy themselves with looting the state treasury, those allied friendly-appearing enemies, behind the secret curtain [like] the depictions of shadow, released disaccord and as written [above] with the news of his removal, the religion-hostiles had been rejoicing for many days. Those malicious ones, when it became seemingly obvious that he would be victorious and destroy the unrest of Nadir Shah that was the major disaster, feared that “it is of no doubt that after his return, by again occupying the post of grand vizierate, he will sacrifice us to his dispute-cutting blade” [and these circulated] at that side among the soldiers and after a certain time has been known to the opinions of the men of wisdom and knowledge by the statements of the men of speech that were freed [from the front].²⁹⁸

With the given examples, the stance of the Ottoman historiography after Subhi makes its side clear. The tone of the language and the accusations directed to İ. Mehmed Pasha is not at the same degree for each case but the notions of a Y. Mehmed Pasha, who would not stop before recovering Hungary and at minimum a

298 “Eğer sene-yi atiyede maksud-ı aslı olan feth-i Belgrad kasdıyla bu canibe rayetkeş-i azm-i kahramani buyurulsa, Belgrad değil, [Nemçe Çasarı] taht u tacının tarac olacağında şekk ü şübhe kalmadığından beynü'l-kefere celadetle şöret-şi'ar çasar gibi düşman-ı kavi, henüz ol şahbaz-ı uc-i şecaat hazretleri İstanbul'dan huruc etmeden Vidin seraskeri Mehmed Paşa hazretlerine nihani name irsal ve Vidin ve Budin ve Temeşvar ev tevabi'inden ma'dud nice memalik ve bika'yı bedel-i sulh teslim şartıyla talib-i ihsan olmuşiken rical-i devletden menasib-ı refi'ada bulunub ez-kadim tarac-ı beytü'l-mal ile iştilal mu'tadları olan bedhahların pençe-i diraz-hıyanetlerin şimşir-i mümana'atla kat' itmeleri hasebiyle ol düşman-ı dostnümalar bi'l-ittifak perde-i hafadan ... nifak bast itmeleriyle ber-vech-i muharrer peyam-ı azliyle e'adi-yi din nice günler şehri-ayin itmışlerdi. Ol bedhahan, suret-i zahirde mansur olacağı ve a'zam-ı beliyeye olan Nadir Şah fitnesini izale ideceği bedihi olmağla, 'ba'de'l-avdetuhu yine mesnednişin-i sadr olub cümlemizi ta'me-i tığ-ı kat'-iü'l-niza' ideceğine şübhe yokdur' havfından naşi ol havalide levendat derununda ve ba'de'l-müdde reha-yafte olan bazı sühan-aşiyân takrirlerinden karin-i ezhan-ı ehl-i hıred ü irfan olmuşdur.” Ibid., pp.63-64, second pagination section.

group that opposed and ultimately removed him from power is common to these works. Thus, the change of perceptions that took place in the Ottoman Empire along with the ongoing war had eventually gave way to two rival political factions and the historians narrating the period used their choices specifically in the favour of the war party.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The Ottoman side of the Ottoman-Austrian-Russian War of 1736-1739 had not been the subject of a detailed historical analysis until the present study. The existing studies on the Ottoman side mainly narrated the course of the war in terms of military developments, but gave only cursory attention to the political and diplomatic ones. This thesis has attempted to fill this gap by examining the changing relations and perceptions between the Ottomans, Austrians and Russians from the years immediately preceding the war into the post-war years. Its main sources in this regard have been the Ottoman chronicles and political treatises, while only limited use has been made of Ottoman archival material.

By combining a study of the Ottoman chronicles and political treatises with the secondary literature on the Austrian and Russian sides, it has been shown that the Ottoman elite, following the defeat of 1716-1718, had adopted a reactive and timid policy in its relations with Austria and Russia. In particular, the political treatises authored in this period have revealed the alarmed mood of their authors before the risk of a foreign attack, especially one from Austria or Russia. This was probably a reflection of the mood present in the circle of Ottoman elites.

After the breakout of the War of Polish Succession in 1733, this tendency surfaced as the principal determinant in the Ottoman policy making and lasted as such until 1737. The major manifestations of this kind of policy making were the indifferent attitude, despite the French insistence, in the face of the Austrian-Russian intervention to the Polish issue and the reluctance to take the field against the same coalition when it was obvious that diplomacy and minor concessions would simply not work to stop the aggression. The pre-negotiation process and the first wave of Russian offensive, the unfruitful talks at Nemirov, the expectations of the Ottoman

government and the resulting communications with the border commanders of the Porte are all examples of misjudgement and hesitation on the part of Constantinople. But still, the question of how and why the Ottoman delegates at Nemirov, despite many other points of weaknesses, could carry on a hard and occasionally uncompromising negotiation awaits an answer.

The first military successes in later 1737 coupled with a change of government brought about the early signals of transformation for the Ottoman policies and perceptions which were dominant in their most obvious form from 1733 on. Otherwise, how can we explain why the Porte, doing almost anything including promising to tolerate the march of the Habsburg army on Ottoman soil in order to prevent an all-out war, did not approach for peace when it had recovered all the immediate Austrian conquests and denied Russian advance beyond the Crimean Peninsula in 1737? These conditions, for a possible peace, were more than what the previous government could hope. This changing policy was a result of the changing perceptions at Constantinople and it can be traced up to the Treaty of Belgrade in 1739. During this process, we witness the evolution of the Ottoman Empire from a state proposing unconventional ways to prevent war into one accusing the signatories of peace of not following the agenda which foresaw the reclamation of Ottoman interests in Hungary and Transylvania. The workings of the Russian withdrawal from Moldavia and some fortresses north of the Black Sea, and the Russian approach for peace are still problematic. This thesis has refuted the idea that Russia's standing alone against the Ottoman Empire after the Peace of Belgrade was the sole reason behind the Russian compromise. The Russian bids for peace went as far back as late 1737. Neither the absence of other countries alongside Russia in the war against the Ottomans nor the risk of war with Sweden alone suffices to explain the Russian

evacuation of their conquests. This issue, in my opinion, requires further research.

The change that occurred during the war did not evaporate, once peaceful relations were re-established. Instead of the reactionary and timid character of the Ottoman government during the 1720s and 1730s, after 1739 one witnesses a self-confident Porte with a tendency to intervene in issues whenever it perceived it to be necessary. The offer of mediation during the War of Austrian Succession, protesting Vienna for expelling the Jews of Prague and offering them sanctuary in the Ottoman lands, and the determined policies against the Russian activity along the borders verify the degree of change. These attempts could not have taken place if the Ottoman Empire had continued to perceive itself and its European counterparts in the way that it had done during the preceding decades. Especially the Ottoman declaration of war in reaction to the renewed Russian intervention in Poland during another succession crisis in the 1760s allows us to measure the change, since in the 1730s under relatively similar conditions the Porte had kept silent, although the intervention was against the conditions of peace with Russia. It should be kept in mind that despite its renewed self-confidence in the realm of foreign policy, the Porte chose to channel its effort towards a rapprochement with the European system of international relations. In this way, the military success of 1737-1739 gave way to the formation of different paths in terms of domestic and international policies. A point of further research is why the Ottoman Empire, despite the availability of attractive conditions for further territorial expansion during the War of Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War, chose to remain neutral, which contradicts with the political moves retold above, while it did not hesitate to declare war against its toughest foe Russia in 1768.

It was not only Ottoman perceptions of themselves and their European

counterparts that were transformed. In many European states we come across similar observations being made about continuing Ottoman strength, although the reality was questionable. Immediately following the Peace of Belgrade, the new enemies of the Austrian-Russian coalition, Prussia and Sweden, placed trust in the Ottoman Empire in terms of both a possible cooperation in the field and the extent of the damage inflicted upon these powers, especially on Russia, by the Porte between 1737 and 1739. While Russia does not seem to confirm this general tendency, for one does not come across policies which document a Russian caution, Austria followed the trend and spent effort in order to prevent a future Ottoman war. England also seemed to be convinced of the argument which suggested that an early peace was signed on the side of the Porte. Various European historians who witnessed and wrote on this period confirm this picture. In their works, the notion of an Ottoman Empire who might have continued the war until Hungary was recovered manifests itself and an influential image of the Porte is drawn for the post-1739 international politics. However, the present study confined itself to some major English or translated works. Exploring further the contemporary European historiography is suggested.

Related with but apart from the change of perceptions mentioned above, the War created a discord among the Ottoman statesmen. Some commanders and statesmen, after observing that despite the swift recovery of losses in the late 1737 the grand vizier did not consider peace as a possible goal in near future, started to raise their voices. In less than a year, this opposition transformed itself into one which did not hesitate to speak to the French ambassador about the concerns over the warlike policy of the present government and made its side clear by expressing their discontent during the 1738 campaign. After this campaign, the peace party got the

upper hand in central politics in such degree that its supporters came to power by in a sense overthrowing the government which seemed eager to carry out the war for further years. But as a twist of fate, they were entrusted by the sultan with carrying out the immediate war plan and the peace party had to undertake the capture of Belgrade before concluding the following peace. After the reestablishment of peace, the supporters of the war party strived to undermine the position of the incumbent government. Within a year after the peace, they regained their former influence and took over the reins of government. The transfer of power to those who were dissatisfied with the conditions of peace made its influence felt in many spheres. The post-1739 negotiations with the signatories of the Peace of Belgrade were deliberately pushed into a deadlock and during the border demarcations, the shift of power at the centre quickly surfaced in the shape of harsher attitudes of the Ottoman delegates towards their counterparts. These successive changes of government also brought about change in some key posts. The appointments to some offices were directly related with a candidate's or an incumbent officer's support in favour of peace or war.

This conflict among the Ottoman statesmen has left its mark on the contemporary and immediate Ottoman historiography. Ottoman historians, with varying degrees but uniformity in reasoning, accused the peace party of preparing the fall of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha's government, ceasing the hostilities after the capture of Belgrade while Hungary was perceived as a realistic objective and concluding a peace the terms of which were not in accordance with the advantages recently gained. In this study, the rivalry between the peace and the war parties could be traced between 1737 and 1742. However, an examination of the pre-1737 posts, inclinations and acts of these statesmen would be a highly-welcomed contribution.

Similarly, as long as data is present, the post-1742 story of this rivalry would be equally interesting. For this end, biographical studies of major figures within these parties would be the best way to expand my findings. On the other hand, the validity of this case within a larger period needs a separate effort. A work structured on such tendencies centred on the wars fought after the Treaty of Karlowitz is what ought to follow this attempt. Apart from these, the relation between the rise of *kalemiye* and the peace party deserves a special focus. Keeping İvaz Mehmed Pasha and Esad Efendi aside, the most prominent figures of this camp were members of the *kalemiye* service. This calls for a preliminary consideration that suggests a coordination between the increasing importance of the scribal service and tendency of favouring negotiation over military measures, even at times that insistence would bear negative returns. However, an advance argument on this subject requires more specific focus.

In the light of these findings, how can this study be located among the existing literature? In terms of Ottoman diplomacy, the specifications of some eighteenth century cases, which suggest an ability to negotiate effectively and pursuing a foreign policy independent from France, were touched upon. These assessments are verified for the period that this thesis is concerned with. As shown in the cases of 1733-35 and post-1740 periods, during the years 1737-39, the Porte did not pursue its foreign policy objectives under French directives. The eventual common interests were a reality but it can easily be said that Villeneuve had a hard time in compromising the allies with the post-1737 demands of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, the materialization of mediation by a state which was at war in a severe political rivalry with the Austrian-Russian alliance just two years ago, and the allies' ultimate acceptance of France as the mediator following the Ottoman insistence, shows us that the battlefield realities possibly lead to this outcome. Pro-

Ottoman policies of France were surely not unknown to any statesmen of the period and the realization of French mediation is more important when considered in this respect. Shortly, an Ottoman Empire saved by French mediation and a government without means and ability to pursue an independent foreign policy, for the period in question, are at best inferences enabled by Euro-centric and anachronistic approaches.

The findings of this thesis may contribute to attempts to rewrite the Ottoman political history of the centuries which used to be regarded as the period of decline. Although the years covered here are limited; the field still needs minor contributions in order to enable the creation of a large-scale revised narrative.

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