

AN ISLAND IN THE SHADOW OF GREAT POWERS

THE CRETAN QUESTION IN BRITISH
AND OTTOMAN PUBLIC OPINION
(1897- 1913)

DR. İBRAHİM HAMALOĞLU

EDITOR: PROF. DR. CİHAN ÖZGÜN

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TO MY MOTHER!..

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EDITORIAL

This study titled *An Island in the Shadow of the Great Powers - The Cretan Question in British and Ottoman Public Opinion (1897-1913)* examines the Cretan Question, the most complex and tragic issue of the conflict and diplomatic traffic that the Ottoman state faced in the late 19th century and early 20th century, from a multidimensional perspective through the British and Ottoman press of the period.

This study, which is the product of a long-term academic journey, examines the conflicts experienced on the island of Crete in the late Ottoman world, the diplomatic traffic between the Ottoman government and the great powers, the interventionist attitudes of the European states and especially the trauma that emerged with the loss of the homeland where the Muslim population lived. Focusing on the rather difficult and distressing developments such as the rebellions, chaos and the forced migration of the Muslim population from the island of Crete, this study also devotes a special place to the issue of the damage to national honor that was frequently encountered in the Ottoman public opinion with the loss of Crete. Dr. İbrahim Hamaloğlu draws attention to the fact that the deep impact of the loss of Crete on the Ottoman state administration increased with the risk of the state disintegrating and even collapsing.

This study examines the violence and discrimination that the Muslim population living on the island was subjected to, their resistance and struggle for survival through the British and Ottoman press and Ottoman diplomatic correspondence of the period, and also presents the diplomacy and international negotiations carried out during the solution of the problem that emerged on the island in an impressive style with all its details.

I can say that this study, which examines the island of Crete, which is located in the most strategic position of the Mediterranean world, with its multinational and multi-religious structure, and which is at the center of the political balances and international relations of the period, by taking into account the British and Ottoman press, will provide great richness to the literature on the island of Crete in terms of both methodology and content.

On the other hand, I must state that this study will make significant contributions not only to the science of history, but also to the fields of political history, international relations, press, media and communication. This study does not only evaluate the Cretan Question within the series of historical developments, but also brings a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to

the subject by addressing it at the intersection of these disciplines that I have mentioned. It also shares in detail how international pressures shaped local politics, how the press influenced public opinion during this process, and what the political and social consequences of migration movements were. This study by Dr. İbrahim Hamaloğlu, whose meticulous and devoted work I have closely witnessed, will not only make a significant contribution to the in-depth understanding of the Cretan Question, but will also be a source of inspiration for new research on Cretan studies, nationalism studies, media history, and forced migration. I believe that the work will fill the gaps in the field of Cretan studies and provide a new and enlightening perspective on the subject to the academic world, researchers, and readers.

Editor

Prof. Dr. Cihan ÖZGÜN

PREFACE

This long-term work, which began with a question that arose in our minds after an academic event on Cretan research, is the product of an academic journey. Although this process, which took place from choosing a topic to reviewing sources, from examining archival documents to creating a theoretical framework, was challenging at times, each step provided us with a new perspective. The support I received was as important as the difficulties I encountered in the emergence of this study. I cannot help but express how effective academic guidance, critical contributions, and sometimes the encouragement given with just a sentence were in the formation of this study.

My advisor, Prof. Dr. Cihan Özgün, has had the greatest share in the emergence of this study. Beyond his academic guidance, he has approached me like a companion from the day we met. Without his patience, support, and meticulousness, my work would not have reached its current state. During this period of eight years, he taught me that it is not enough to just read historical documents, but that meticulous and very detailed research must also be carried out with patience and determination. This work is also a written expression of that patience and determination.

My family... My dear family, who stood by me at every stage of my life and made me feel their love unconditionally. First of all, I owe a lot to my late father Mehmet HAMALOĞLU, who said "If you study, study for yourself", my mother Elif YALÇIN HAMALOĞLU, and my dear brother Hızır Aydın HAMALOĞLU. You silently supported me during this long process, and held my hand whenever I stumbled. Without your patience, faith and love, it would have been much more difficult to complete this path. I thank you all from where you are, from the bottom of my heart. Also, when I was close to giving up, I found strength again with the presence and support of my life partner İzel ÇETİNKAYA. Sharing this process with you, who knows me better than I know myself and believes in me in every way, was perhaps the most valuable aspect of this study.

I would also like to express my endless gratitude to my lecturers Assoc. Prof. Dr. Murat Erdem and Assist. Prof. Özlem Gümüşçubuk through the minor program in the Department of American Culture and Literature, which I started in 2015. Thanks to their valuable contributions, I had the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge in important areas such as cartoons and visual reading. In addition, the chance to examine the backgrounds and the interlinear texts in foreign languages and to better understand their cultural contexts strengthened the theoretical basis of my research. This experience greatly contributed not

only to my academic development but also to the deepening of my cultural understanding. I would also like to express my warmest wishes to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, who played a major role in improving the quality of my work with his continuous support, new perspectives and guidance from the beginning of my studies. I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Nuri Karakaş, who always encouraged me with his patience, knowledge and guidance at every stage of my research. Similarly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Prof. Dr. Kemal Arı, who approached me not only academically but also with a compassionate guide. His guidance and constant support always kept me on the right track and guided my work. I would also like to sincerely thank Prof. Dr. Fevzi Çakmak, who never left me alone at every stage of my studies and constantly provided me with assistance. Their vast knowledge, patience and support have been the most important elements that have given me strength in this process. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to the staff at the Ottoman Archives Complex of the Presidency of the State Archives of the Republic of Turkey, the staff at the IMM Atatürk Library, the staff at the Ankara National Library, the staff at the İzmir National Library and finally the staff at the Ege University Library. I would also like to thank Yunus Çengel, the President of the Cretan Federation, who gave us the opportunity to introduce this work in his scientific events. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my doctoral friend Ahmet Çandır and Murat Kaya who has always supported me and made this work stronger with their valuable help.

During the process of creating this work, I have learned a lot not only academically but also humanly. Therefore, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Prof. Dr. Cihan ÖZGÜN and his mother Gülçin ÖZGÜN, who has never stopped praying for me. His wisdom, patience and devotion have been decisive in the formation of not only this thesis but also mine. My advisor's contribution to all my studies is very important. For this reason, he is much more than an advisor; sometimes a guide, sometimes a confidant, and sometimes more than a brother. Even the mere presence of my dear advisor, who gave me lessons on how to be a teacher, always made me feel that I was not alone.

İzmir, 2025

Dr. İbrahim Hamaloğlu

INTRODUCTION

Academic studies on Crete have been limited in quantity. This situation makes the island an original research area that still awaits in-depth examination. The fact that postgraduate theses, especially those on the island of Crete from a social science perspective, have increased in number in recent years and have become richer in terms of subject variety is considered a pleasing development. In this context, two pioneering studies stand out. The first of these is the master's thesis titled "Hikâyet-i Azimet-i Sefer-i Kandiye" prepared by Nuri Adıyeke. The other is the doctoral thesis titled "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Girit Bunalımı (1896–1908)" written by Ayşe Nühket Adıyeke. These two studies have a special place in the literature as they are the first master's and doctoral theses on Crete.¹

In addition to these pioneering studies, academic interests in Crete have diversified over time around different themes. Postgraduate theses on multifaceted topics such as migration, community structures, anthropology, architecture, dance, literature, folklore, sociology, music, the foundation system and food culture show that Crete has begun to be addressed not only with its political and diplomatic dimensions but also with its social and cultural dynamics.² This

1 Nuri Adıyeke, *Hikâyet-i Azimet-i Sefer-i Kandiye*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Ege University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 1988; Ayşe Nühket Adıyeke, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Girit Bunalımı (1896-1908)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Principles of Atatürk and Turkish Revolution History, İzmir, 1994.

2 Tuncay Ercan Sepetcioglu, *Girit'ten Anadolu'ya Gelen Göçmen Bir Topluluğun Etnotarihsel Analizi: Davutlar Örneği*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Ankara University Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara, 2011, (Davutlar); Tuncay Ercan Sepetcioglu, *Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Girit'ten Söke'ye Mübadele Öyküleri*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Adnan Menderes University Institute of Social Sciences, Aydın, 2007, (Söke); Metin Menekşe, *Girit Müslümanlarının Zorunlu Göçü: Sevk ve İskân (1897-1913)*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University Institute of Social Sciences, Muğla, 2018; Melike Kara, *Girit Kandiye'de Müslüman Azınlık Cemaati (1913-1923)*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Mersin University Institute of Social Sciences, Mersin, 2007; Melike Kara, *Girit Kandiye'de Müslüman Cemaati 1913-1923*, Kitap Press, İstanbul, 2008; Melike Kayam, *Azınlıktan Mübadillığa Girit Müslüman Cemaati (1913-1924)*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Mersin University Institute of Social Sciences, Mersin, 2022; Zeynep Işık, *Girit'teki Müslüman ve Gayrimüslim Cemaat İlişkilerine Osmanlı Millet Sistemi Çerçevesinden Bakmak*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2023; Arzu Öztok Akay, *Girit Kökenli Mübadil Kadınlar Üzerine Sosyal Antropolojik Bir Araştırma (Bursa/Tirkiye Örneği)*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Ankara University Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara, 2012; Melis Cankara, *Mübadelelin Sessiz Tanıkları: Lozan Antlaşması ile El Değiştiren Girit-Resmo Yapıları*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Yıldız Teknik University Institute of Science, İstanbul, 2016; Gülhan Aydoğan, *Mudanya Giritli Mahallesi Geleneksel Konutlarının Mimarlık Özellikleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Yıldız Teknik University Institute of Science, İstanbul, 1994; Andre Holzapfel, *Structure and Interaction in Cretan Leaping Dances: Connecting Ethnography and Computational Analysis*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), İstanbul Teknik University Institute of Social Sciences, İstanbul, 2018; Ayhan Aypak, *Türk Edebiyatının Girit Mübadelesini Anlatan Romanların Tema Bakımından İncelenmesi*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Manisa Celal Bayar University Institute of Social Sciences, Manisa, 2019; Fatma Çolak, *Hatay'da Girit Muhacirleri Ağzı*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Hatay Mustafa Kemal University Institute of Social Sciences, Hatay, 2021; Zeynep Demirdeler, *Mersin'de Giritli Olmak: Giritli Göçmenlerin Halk Kültürü Üzerine Bir Araştırma*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Ankara University Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara, 2019; Yasemin Akyar, *Giritli Göçmenlerin Sosyolojik Görünümü: Antalya İli Örneği*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Akdeniz University Institute of Social Sciences, Antalya, 2020; Özcan Abaylı, *İslam Tarihi ve Sanatları Alanında Müzik Ritimleri: Girit Bektaşılığı Örneği*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2021; Göktuğ İduğ, *Aydın İli Kuşadası İlçesinde*

thematic diversity provides an important basis for understanding how Crete found its place in post-Ottoman memory and cultural transmission; it also allows for the reinterpretation of historical narratives about the island through different disciplines. The pioneering contributions of Professor Doctor Ayşe Nühket and Assistant Professor Nuri Adıyeke in the formation of the literature on Crete are undeniable. Their studies have provided a methodological and content-based basis for research in this field; thus, there has been a noticeable increase in academic interest in Crete. Despite this increase, however, the majority of these studies have focused more on the political history or ethnic structure of the island; issues related to social, cultural and daily life have been addressed to a relatively limited extent.

The most important role in the Cretan issue's transition from being an internal affair of the Ottoman Empire to an international dimension was played by the major European powers of the period, namely England, France, Russia and Italy. These states, known as the "Düvel-i Hâmiye" (Great Powers), tried to shape the balance in the Eastern Mediterranean in line with their own interests, especially during the 19th century, and saw Crete as an important part of these policies. In this context, the Cretan issue was evaluated as an extension of the international intervention practices that developed under the name of the Eastern Question in the 19th century. During this process, England stood out with its continuous influence and diplomatic activity among the states involved in the issue; its policies were mostly shaped within the framework of a pragmatism that prioritized its own strategic and economic interests.³

What distinguishes this work from other studies is that, beyond evaluating the developments regarding the Cretan issue with a chronological approach, it deeply examines the Cretan Question within the structural transformation of the Ottoman state administration and the multi-layered interactions in this process. In addition to international interventions, it also investigates the reactions of the Ottoman and British public opinions, social perceptions and ideological frameworks by taking into account the written press of the period, revealing

Yaşayan Girit Göçmenlerinde Müzik Yoluyla Giritli Olmak, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Ege University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2022; Vassı Çilingir, *Girit Türklerinde Müzik Kültürü*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 1997; Sibel Alaeddinoğlu, *Girit'te Valide Sultan Vakıfları*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2020; Enis Kartal, *Girit'te Abdülkadir Geylani Vakıfları*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2020; Selma Atabey, *Girit Müfâğıının Türk Müfâk Kültüründeki Yeri ve Sürdürülebilirliği*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Aydın Adnan Menderes University Institute of Social Sciences, Aydın, 2022; Efpraxia Nerantzaki, *Symbolic cretanness in Mersin and Ayvalık: Assertion of distinctiveness and the veed for recognition*, (Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi), Orta Doğu Teknik University Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara, 2023; Sümeyra Hanyalı, *Cretan refugees in İzmir: Memory and identity*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Boğaziçi University Institute of Social Sciences, İstanbul, 2023; Uğur Avcı, *Girit Adası ekonomisi ve Girit gümrük gelirleri (1838-1913)*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Ege University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2023; Mahmut Köse, *Türkiye'nin Mavi Vatan Güvenliği açısından Yunanistan hakimiyeti altındaki Girit adasının stratejik önemi*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), İstinye University Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, İstanbul, 2023; Adem Horay, *Girit'in Elden Çıkış Sürecinde Osmanlı Devleti ve Büyük Güçler (1869-1897)*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Ege University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2023; Deniz Ece Kahveci, *Tunç Çağlarından Hellenistik Döneme kadar Girit Tarihi*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University Institute of Social Sciences, Muğla, 2024; Emre Kaymakçı, *Venedik hakimiyetinde Girit Adası (1204-1453)*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University Institute of Social Sciences, Niğde, 2024; Büşra Kumpas, *Girit Adası ve Minos kültürü (MÖ I. bin yılın sonuna kadar)*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Pamukkale University Institute of Social Sciences, Denizli, 2024.

3 Tasvir-i Efkar, 8 January 1867, 3; Gümüş, 2016, 28; Kerimoğlu, 2023, 176-177; Anderson, 2001, 178.

that this process was not only a political but also a cultural and psychological transformation.

Although it is claimed that the first scientific literature on the island of Crete began to take shape in Türkiye at the beginning of the 20th century, the first studies in this field were published in the 1930s and 1940s in platforms such as the Turkish History Congress and *Belleten Magazine*. However, a large part of the existing literature focuses on Crete during the Ottoman period. After the 1990s, important studies were conducted that examined not only the conquest of the island but also its socio-economic structure. In this respect, the literature in this field has become increasingly comprehensive and rich with original research at the doctoral dissertation level on Crete during the Ottoman period.⁴

The work titled “Kısa Girit Tarihi” (Short History of Crete) written by Professor Doctor Ayşe Nükhet and Assistant Professor Nuri Adıyeke and published by Türkiye İş Bankası in 2021 draws a general framework from the conquest of the island to the Siege of Candia, and from there to the rebellion and autonomy period in the 19th century, based on both Ottoman archive documents and Western sources. In addition to the narrative based on Ottoman, Venetian and Byzantine archive sources, the holistic approach that addresses the social transformation of Cretan Muslims, the phenomenon of conversion and the attitudes of the islanders towards modernization gives the work a unique position. With its extensive bibliography, visual supports and structure that does not neglect the social dimension of the historical narrative, the work is both a reliable reference source for academic research and a bridge that conveys historical awareness to a wider audience.⁵

Some studies that made significant contributions to the shaping of our work have increased the depth of our research and enabled us to develop new perspectives on the subject. The work titled “Ege Araştırmaları I: Batı Anadolu’da Giritliler” (Aegean Studies I: Cretans in Western Anatolia), edited by Professor Doctor Tuncay Ercan Sepetcioğlu and Associate Professor Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, helped us understand the social, cultural, and economic impact of the Cretans in Western Anatolia from a broad perspective; while the work titled “Ege Araştırmaları II: Girit Kültürü” (Aegean Studies II: Cretan Culture), edited by Professor Doctor Cihan Özgün, encouraged us to make a more in-depth examination of Cretan culture. These two works strengthened the theoretical infrastructure of our work and served as an important guide during the research process. Among these publications, Professor Doctor Cihan Özgün’s work titled “II. Meşrutiyetin ilk Yıllarında Türk Basınında Girit Diplomasisi Üzerine Bazı Tespitler” (Some Observations on Cretan Diplomacy in the Turkish Press during the Early Years of the Second Constitutional Era)

⁴ Turhan 2011: 204.

⁵ Adıyeke – Adıyeke, 2021.

inspired our work. The work also examines the approach of the Turkish press to the Cretan issue during the Second Constitutional Era. During this period, the Turkish press managed to create a strong awareness in the Turkish people by highlighting the devotion to the Cretan Muslims with a religious and cultural understanding of “patriotism”. Presenting the Cretan issue not only as a people’s struggle but also as a power struggle between the great powers created a sense of national belonging and defensive psychology in the Turkish public opinion, thus attempting to ensure social integrity. In addition, the fact that the Turkish press did not criticize the Cretan Greeks by generalizing them and avoided social polarization by showing “moderation” draws attention as an important feature of the political understanding of this period. For this reason, the article is of great importance in terms of addressing the Cretan Issue not only as a military or diplomatic crisis, but also with a multifaceted perspective that examines the deep changes in the Ottoman domestic and foreign policy, social dynamics and the formation of national identity. At the same time, it is possible to understand the approach of the Turkish press of the Second Constitutional Era to the Cretan issue and the place of this issue in the social memory, and to learn important information about the ideological and political structures of the period.⁶

The study titled “Osmanlı’nın Bitmeyen Sancısı Girit Problemi ve Dış Politika” (The Endless Pain of the Ottoman Empire: The Cretan Problem and Foreign Policy) published in previous years by Professor Doctor Cihan Özgün was included in the book titled “Tanzimat’tan Günümüze Olaylar ve Kişiler Ekseninde Türk Hariciyesi” (Turkish Foreign Affairs from the Tanzimat to the Present Axis of Events and People) by Kitabevi Publications. This study examines the Cretan Question in depth from a political perspective and provides an important source for understanding the foreign policy strategies and domestic political dynamics of the Ottoman Empire in its final period. The strategic geography of Crete is of critical importance not only for the Ottoman Empire but also for the Great Powers. In this context, the Cretan issue was not only a loss of territory or a struggle for sovereignty, but also a part of the power and sphere of influence war of the great powers. The Ottoman Empire, especially in its last century, tried to solve this strategic issue by resorting to not only military but also diplomatic means, and its political preferences in this process were shaped as a result of a search for a pragmatic balance rather than a decrease in its power. By providing an example of Ottoman foreign policy and strategic decisions, it has enabled us to understand the geopolitical dynamics of the period through the Cretan Question and to develop the perspective of our work. In addition to the strategic importance of Crete for the Ottoman Empire, it also reveals how it shaped relations with the Great Powers outside the region

6 Özgün, 2019a.

and how diplomatic strategies and military power were used together. In this respect, it not only analyzes the domestic and foreign policies of the Ottoman Empire, but also provides an in-depth look at how international relations evolved in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition, by examining the path followed by the Ottoman Empire in its foreign policy strategies, especially through the balance policy and alliances, it reveals how flexibility and solution-producing capacity were shaped not only in the military but also in the diplomatic field. This emphasizes that the loss of Crete should be evaluated not only as a territorial loss for the Ottoman Empire, but also as a strategic and diplomatic setback. In addition, it provides important inferences about how Abdülhamit II transformed foreign policy with his Pan-Islamism policy. The article is a very important study because it shows how the strategies followed by the Ottoman Empire in its relations with the great powers, the ruptures in domestic and foreign policy, alliances and diplomatic efforts were shaped together, rather than just the loss of an island. In addition, by providing a historical perspective in the analyses of today's international relations and balances of power, it enables important lessons to be drawn on how similar strategic issues should be addressed.⁷

While the scientific studies on the island of Crete diversified considerably in the 1990s, Professor Doctor Kemal Arı, with the studies he initiated under his leadership, contributed to our deep understanding of the social, cultural and human dimensions of the 1923 Turkish-Greek Population Exchange; he documented the traumas, identity problems and cultural adaptation processes experienced during the exchange process. He also meticulously examined the stories of the Turks who migrated from Crete to Anatolia, leading to the formation of both individual and social memory. Kemal Arı's studies are among the leading works that helped strengthen the identity awareness not only in academic circles but also among the grandchildren of the exchangees.⁸

With his comprehensive and original research on the press and humor press in the period extending from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic, Professor Doctor Fevzi Çakmak has brought new depth to the studies on the history of the Turkish press and humor press. Çakmak, who analyzes the political climate, social transformations and intellectual world of the period especially through humor publications, has made permanent contributions to the literature on press history with his extensive use of sources, subtext readings and analytical perspective; he has prepared a methodological and content basis for subsequent research.⁹

Associate Professor Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu is one of the researchers who stands out with his original studies that meticulously examine the social,

⁷ Özgün, 2019b.

⁸ Arı, 2003; Arı, 2007.

⁹ Çakmak, 2020; Çakmak - Kaya 2022.

economic and cultural structure of Western Anatolia during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic. She has documented the transformations that the region went through in detail by deeply examining issues such as banditry, tradesmen, cotton production, transportation networks and industrialization in İzmir and its surroundings. Her studies provide a very valuable background, especially in terms of understanding the place and contributions of the Cretan Turks who settled in Western Anatolia after the population exchange in the new social order. Her studies, which she wrote with an interdisciplinary approach based on archival documents, are indispensable sources for both Ottoman economic history and local history research.¹⁰

Professor Doctor Nuri Karakaş, who has made great contributions to the field with his works dealing with military-political developments from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic, has added depth to historiography in terms of international relations with his works published on different subjects such as the Turkish identity of the Aegean Islands, American policies and Turkish-American relations, and has shed light on researchers in this field by examining historical events in a wider geographical and cultural context.¹¹

The work titled “The Transformation of Ottoman Crete: Revolts, Politics and Identity in The Late Nineteenth Century” written by Associate Professor Pınar Şenışık Özdebak and published by Bloomsbury Publishing in 2011, examines the process of transformation of the island of Crete, which was part of the Ottoman Empire, into an “independent Crete”. It is argued that the Cretan rebellions of 1896 and 1897 significantly transformed the internal structure of the island and changed local administrative structures, paving the way for the establishment of autonomy in Ottoman Crete and the eventual separation of the island from the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the existing literature, the work argues that the tradition of multicultural life on the island and the violent incidents that led to the disruption of this tradition should be understood within the general context of the 19th century Ottoman Empire. In other words, the rebellions of 1896 and 1897 and the relations between communities in Ottoman Crete are examined in the work from a unifying perspective, taking into account not only local dynamics but also factors at the imperial level.¹²

The article titled “Girit Meselesi’nin Belirsizlik Yılları (1908–1913)” (The Uncertain Years of the Cretan Question (1908–1913)) written by Professor Doctor Melek Öksüz in 2010 examines the administrative gap and international power struggle in Crete from the declaration of the 1908 Constitutional Monarchy to the Tripoli and Balkan Wars. Öksüz examines how the Greek and Muslim communities on the island were included in the balance of power

10 Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, 2014; Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu – Özgün – Aksan, 2017.

11 Karakaş, 2013.

12 Şenışık, 2011; Şenışık, 2014.

between England, Italy, France and Russia during this period and how these relations shaped the political structure on the island.¹³

The article titled “Girit’te İsyân ve Büyük Güçler 1866–1869: Namık Kemal’den Tespit ve Tenkitler” (The Rebellion in Crete and the Great Powers 1866–1869: Determinations and Criticisms from Namık Kemal) written by Associate Professor Musa Gümüş in 2015 also examines the geopolitical calculations of England, Russia, France and the United States on the island in parallel with the weakness of the Ottoman Empire’s authority. It also conveys how the revolt that started in 1866 turned into an international crisis and the policies that Ottoman diplomacy followed to defend the island through the press.¹⁴

Professor Doctor Tuncay Ercan Sepetcioglu, who has made significant contributions to the field with his meticulous studies on the Cretan Turks and Ottoman-Cretan relations, has become one of the prominent academics in this field, both with his analytical approach based on archival documents and his skillful blending of oral history methods. Sepetcioglu’s approach to the social and cultural identity of the Cretan Turks, especially in a historical context, sheds light not only on the discipline of history but also on the fields of migration studies and identity sociology. His studies deeply analyze both the administrative structure of the Ottomans on the island and the transformations experienced by the Muslim population on the island.¹⁵

Associate Professor Metin Menekşe, one of the researchers who made significant contributions to the field with his qualified studies on the Cretan Turks, especially his works shaped around the themes of migration, identity and belonging, deeply examine the historical process extending from Crete to Anatolia in the context of both individual stories and collective memory. Menekşe’s method based on narratives is not limited to the chronological transfer of historical facts; it also narrates the cultural continuity, social transformations and identity struggles of the Cretan Turks. In this respect, his studies constitute an important reference point in understanding post-Ottoman migration movements.¹⁶

The “Uluslararası Geçmişten Günümüze Girit Sempozyumu: Tarih, Toplum, Kültür” (International Symposium on Crete from Past to Present: History, Society, Culture) held in the fall of 2015 and the “2. Girit Araştırmaları Sempozyumu” (2nd Symposium on Cretan Studies) held at the beginning of 2019 are two symposiums that have made significant contributions to our work. The organization of such events by the Cretan Culture, Friendship and Solidarity Association and finally by the valuable Cretan Federation played an

13 Öksüz, 2010.

14 Gümüş, 2016.

15 Sepetcioglu, 2007; Sepetcioglu, 2010; Sepetcioglu, 2011; Sepetcioglu, 2020.

16 Menekşe, 2018a; Menekşe, 2018b; Menekşe, 2019; Menekşe, 2020.

important role in deepening our research and revealing various perspectives. The discussions presented in the first symposium and the sharing made in the second symposium allowed us to consider the dimensions of our work in a broader context. These symposiums expanded the scope of our research, helped us develop original arguments and paved the way for the examination of the subject by experts from different academic disciplines.

In foreign literature, studies on this subject start from quite old times when compared to academic studies in Turkey. For example, in the article titled “Crete and the United States, 1866–1869” written by Arthur James May in 1944 and published in *The Journal of Modern History*, May examines the approach of American diplomacy to the Cretan civil war, criticizing American reactions from philanthropy (humanist approach) networks to public opinion; the wave of philhellenism and diplomatic boundaries.¹⁷

Another work titled “Histoire de la Crète”, written by Jean Tulard and published by Presses universitaires de France (Puf) in 1962, Tulard summarizes the history of Crete from ancient times to the end of the 19th century, despite its short volume. Tulard presents a comprehensive work that also covers the social and administrative transformations under Ottoman rule.¹⁸

Written by Doctor Uğur Zekeriya Peçe and published by Stanford University in 2024, the work titled “Island and Empire: How Civil War in Crete Mobilized the Ottoman World” examines the effects of the Cretan civil war that took place between 1895 and 1898 on the Ottoman Empire, both locally and internationally. How social displacement, protest movements and European intervention during this period deepened the civilian disaster on the island is conceptually evaluated from the perspective of a “civil war”.¹⁹

The article titled “An Islamic experiment? Ottoman land policy on Crete”, written by Professor Doctor Molly Greene in 1996 and published in the *Mediterranean Historical Review*, details the land regulations during the autonomous period, the transfer of real estate after the migration of the Muslim population, and the process of land acquisition by the Christian majority through loans. Greene also examines the socio-economic implications of the reforms using land registry records in the Ottoman Bank archives.²⁰

In addition to the research and analysis works of this kind and the outputs of academic activities, which are among the main references of our study, there are also many official documents or correspondences in the Ottoman archives among the primary sources related to the period. The diplomatic and political approach of England and the Ottoman Empire to the Cretan issue in the Otto-

17 May, 1944.

18 Tulard, 1962.

19 Peçe, 2024.

20 Greene, 1996.

man public opinion, which is the main subject of our study, has been followed from the archive documents in the catalogs such as the National Archive Foreign Office, Yıldız Esas Evrâkı, Hâriciye Nezâreti Tercüme Odası Belgeleri, Cevdet Bahriye, İrade-i Mümtaze Girit Katalogu, Hariciye Sefaret Evrakı.

In our study, official British and Ottoman publications related to the period were also analyzed. These include official printed publications such as *Düstûr*, *Tadilat Fermanı Alisi*, Parliament: House of Lords, *Rapport du directeur de la Banque de Crète*, Naval Historical Branch, UK Parliament Hansard, House of Commons Papers, which include the expectations, reactions and official interests of both states on the subject.

During our research, a large number of British and Ottoman press and periodicals were analyzed. The main sources of our study were the British and Ottoman public opinion; the *Morning Post*, *London Evening Standard*, *London Daily Chronicle*, *Daily News*, *The Examiner*, *Punch*, *Or The London Charivari*, *Ahenk*, *Sebiülreşad*, *İkdam*, *Mizan*, *Sada-yı Millet*, *Tanin*, which were the newspapers and magazines with high circulations of the period.

The data we have determined regarding the use of the term “Crete” in the British press between 1850 and 1913 allow us to make general assessments regarding the frequency of use of the word “Crete” in the British press between 1850 and 1913. In particular, these data indicate periodic fluctuations in the interest in the term “Crete”, which is directly related to the island’s position on the international agenda. Crete, which found limited coverage in British newspapers with a circulation of between 200 and 350 million per year, saw a remarkable increase in the press during the 1866-1869 rebellion, and reached its peak in the 1890s with the impact of developments such as the 1896 rebellion, the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, and the subsequent establishment of the Cretan autonomous government. In the tables we present, the linear line shows that news increased at a constant rate, while the logarithmic line represents that news initially increased considerably but this increase slowed down over time. The real line represents linear growth and decline. On the logarithmic axis, the period 1890–1899 represents by far the most intensive period with 184,000 uses. Although discussions on the political status of Crete continued in the following years, especially between 1900–1909, interest decreased significantly, and with the completion of the annexation of the island to Greece in 1913, the frequency of use also decreased significantly. This trend shows that the interest of the British public and media in the Cretan issue intensified during periods of crisis and rapidly decreased after the political solution. These numerical data are graphed in Table 1.

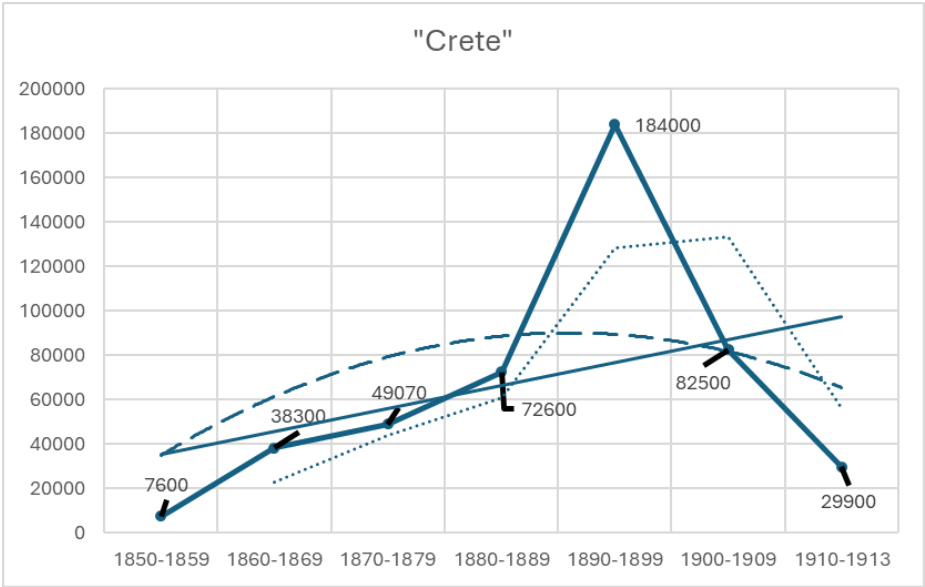


Table 1: Graph of the Density of News Regarding the Concept of “Crete” in the British Press by Year (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>)

The data we have determined regarding the frequency of use of the term “Cretan Question” in the British press between 1850 and 1913 show the frequency of use of the expression “Cretan Question” in the British press between 1850 and 1913 and reveal the extent to which the public approached this issue as a “problem” or political crisis. The concept of “Cretan Question”, which found limited space in British newspapers with annual circulations ranging between 200 and 350 million, experienced a significant increase especially during the Cretan Revolt of 1866–1869 (17,130), indicating an increase in news stories that addressed the issue in the context of internal unrest or international crisis. While the linear line shows that news stories increased at a constant rate, the logarithmic line indicates that news stories initially increased considerably but that this increase slowed down over time. The real line, on the other hand, represents linear growth and decline. The period between 1890 and 1899 represents the highest value with 43,280 uses, and this period witnessed both intense diplomatic negotiations regarding the status of Crete and developments such as the Ottoman-Greek War. On the other hand, there was a noticeable decrease in uses as we entered the 20th century; a decrease of approximately 80% was recorded in the period 1900-1909. In the period 1910-1913, with the completion of the annexation of Crete to Greece, the subject largely lost its place in the press as a “problem”. These data show that the expression “Cretan Problem” was particularly concentrated in periods of international intervention and conflict, and its frequency of use rapidly decreased with the completion of the solution process.

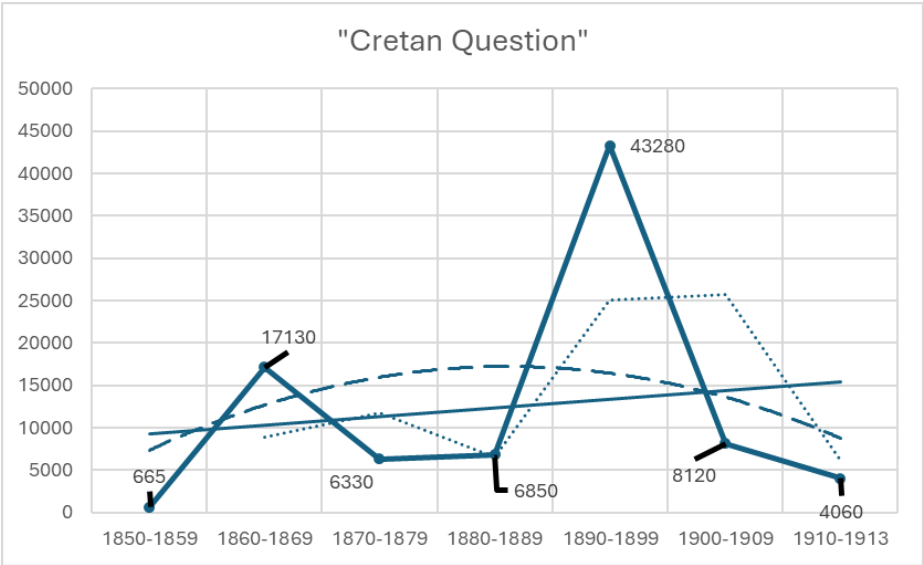


Table 2: Graph of the Density of News Regarding the Concept of “Cretan Question” in the British Press by Year (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>)

The data we have collected on the frequency of use of the word “Crete” or “Greek” in the Ottoman press between 1850 and 1913 reveal how interest in the island changed over time. With a circulation of 15-20 million per year, there is an increasing interest in the subject in Ottoman newspapers, and a significant increase in usage rates is particularly noticeable with the Cretan Revolt of 1866-1869 and the developments that followed. While the linear line shows that news increased at a constant rate, the logarithmic line represents that news initially increased considerably but this increase slowed down over time. The real line, on the other hand, represents linear growth and decline. The peak between 1890 and 1899 was 6697 uses, indicating that the 1896 revolt, the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War and diplomatic interventions on the island received extensive coverage in the Ottoman press. Although there was a slight decrease in the use of Cretan in the 20th century, it was still at a high level in the periods 1900–1909 and 1910–1913. The renewed attention, especially towards the annexation process in 1913, reveals the importance of Crete in the Ottoman public opinion and the fact that this issue remained on the agenda until it was resolved. These data reflect that the Ottoman press treated Crete not only as a moment of crisis but also as an ongoing issue.

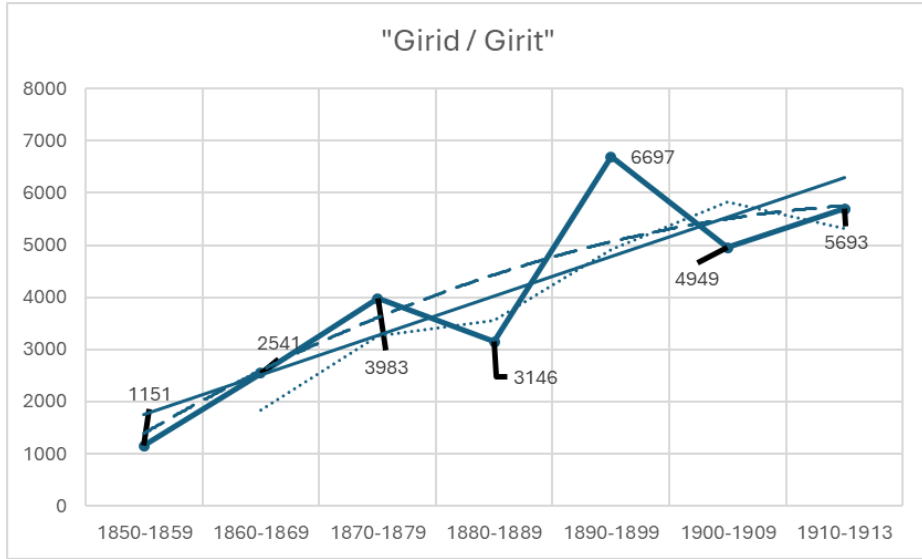


Table 3: Density Graph of News Regarding the Concept of “Girid / Girit” in the Ottoman Press by Year (Archives of Hakkı Tarık Us and Seyfettin Özege)

This study, which touches upon the reflections of the Cretan issue in the British and Ottoman public opinion, consists of an introduction, five main sections and a conclusion. In the introduction, the aim, scope and method of the research are explained; the difficulties encountered during the study are mentioned and the existing literature on the Cretan issue is evaluated and the position of the research in the field is presented.

The first section, titled “Efforts to Separate the Island of Crete from Ottoman Administration (1821-1869)” aims to establish a general political history infrastructure. The section examines the attempts to separate the Island of Crete from Ottoman administration throughout the 19th century within a historical context. The Cretan issue became an important issue not only in Ottoman domestic politics but also in international diplomacy. In this context, the first section is structured under two main headings. The first subheading, “A General View of the Cretan Issue”, begins with the effects of the nationalist movement on the Ottoman Empire and examines critical developments such as the 1821 Morea Revolt and the process of Greek independence. In addition, Mehmet Ali Pasha’s period as Governor of Crete and the effects of this period on the political structure on the island are evaluated. This section also includes ideological justifications for Crete through the concept of the Megali Idea, one of the fundamental foundations of the Greek national ideology. The second subheading, “The Issue Gaining an International Dimension: The Cretan Revolt of 1866,” shows that the rebellion that broke out in Crete was not limited to Ottoman-Greek relations but turned into a multilateral issue in which European

states intervened. In this context, diplomatic and military developments such as Sultan Abdülaziz's visit to Europe, the Cretan Province Regulation of 1867, and Hobart Pasha's role in the naval blockade are discussed in detail. The chapter reveals the dimension that the Cretan issue reached in the international community of the period with the Paris Conference of 1869.

The second part of our study, titled "A Battle of Public Opinion in the British Press: The Cretan Question," examines how the Cretan issue was discussed and directed through the press and public opinion in England in the last quarter of the 19th century. In this context, the discourses on the Cretan issue are addressed not only through diplomatic and political documents, but also through the perspective of public opinion formed and shaped in the British press. The first part of the chapter, "Power-Press Relations in England until the 19th Century," analyzes the historical development of the British press and its impact on public opinion. In this section, themes such as the formation of British public opinion as the 20th century approached, the transformation of journalism into a political actor, and the place of the Ottoman-Turkish image in British society provide a theoretical basis for understanding how the Cretan issue was handled through a media strategy. The second part, "A Battle of Public Opinion on the Cretan Question," examines how international developments regarding Crete were reflected in British newspapers and how public opinion was shaped through these news items. The Cretan Revolt of 1878 and the Edict of Halepa, the limitation of reforms in 1889, the regulations of 1896 (Renovation Plan) and the Greek revolts and gang activities of 1896–1897 are evaluated in this context; the international dimension of the crisis is reconstructed through the media together with the Ottoman–Greek War of 1897. This section analyzes how the process that would culminate in the autonomy regulation for Crete was received by the British public opinion from the perspective of a "public opinion war" waged through the media.

The third section of our study, titled "A Public Solidarity in the Ottoman Press: The Cretan Question," examines how the Cretan issue was perceived by the Ottoman public and how a "national solidarity" discourse was produced through the Ottoman press. In this section, the discourses of the press and publication organs regarding Crete's place within the Ottoman territorial integrity are evaluated together with the political atmosphere of the period. In this respect, the counter-discourses and public mobilization developed in the Ottoman press against the propaganda activities in the British press analyzed in the second section deepen the comparative analysis of the study. The first section, "Ottoman-Press Relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries," addresses the development process of the modern press in the Ottoman Empire and the transformation of the relationship between the state and the media. In addition,

in this section, the perceptions of England in the Ottoman public opinion provide an important framework for understanding the British influence on the Cretan issue. The second section, “A Public Solidarity: Cretan, the Homeland,” reveals how Crete was positioned as a “national issue” in the Ottoman press. The 1878 Cretan Revolt and the Halepa Edict, the limitation of the reforms in 1889, the regulations in 1896, the Greek revolts and gang movements, and finally the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War and the Istanbul Treaty are analyzed. The language used by Ottoman newspapers in response to these events was shaped by nationalist, religious and patriotic themes aimed at mobilizing public opinion. The chapter shows how a resisting style was maintained in the press even during the period when Ottoman sovereignty was formally weakened by the Autonomy Regulation of the Vilayet of Crete.

The fourth section of our study, titled “Two Presses, One Problem: Crete Towards the 20th Century”, comparatively examines the evolution of the Cretan problem into an international solution in the process approaching the 20th century and how this process was represented in both the British and Ottoman presses. The Cretan problem, which was no longer just a matter of “rebellion” or “reform”, gradually transformed into an international problem with multiple actors through the interventions of the great powers, and a period was entered in which Ottoman sovereignty over the island ended. Within this framework, how two different publics presented different readings of the same process and the impact of these readings on political decision-making processes are analyzed in detail. Under the title “A Process with an Uncertain Outcome: The Intervention of the Great Powers in Crete According to the British and Ottoman Presses”, fundamental developments such as the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from the island, the establishment of the Cretan Bank and the influence of foreign capital in this process, the establishment of the Island Gendarmerie, and the Cretan State established under the leadership of Prince George are comparatively addressed in the axis of the two presses.

In the fifth and final section of our study, titled “A Painful Process: Crete’s Emergence from Ottoman Domination,” the Theriso Rebellion, the Gudi Revolution in Greece and the conditions that led to it; the exclusion of Muslim deputies from the Cretan Assembly as a result of the 1910 elections, the issue of judges, and finally the de facto annexation of Crete by Greece are examined in terms of how these events resonated with both the Ottoman and British public opinion. While both press organs interpreted this process in line with their own national interests and political expectations, the impact of international pressures and local actors on the future of Crete becomes evident.

Some notable maps, caricatures and humorous news or visuals in the British and Ottoman press have also been provided and analyzed in the “Appendix”

section at the end of our study. In general, this study addresses the process of Crete's secession from Ottoman rule in the British and Ottoman press between 1897 and 1913 with a multi-layered structure in the context of both its internal dynamics and international interventions, revealing that the issue was not only a diplomatic crisis, but also a public opinion struggle shaped by the media-politics relations of the period. While the propaganda activities carried out through the British press show how Crete was positioned in the international arena and how these discourses shaped the political developments on the island, the public opinion solidarity shaped in the Ottoman press reveals that Crete was embraced not only as a piece of land, but also as an integral part of the homeland. In this framework, the Crete issue constitutes a meaningful example in terms of the political identity formations, feelings of national belonging and collective consciousness structures of the period; The media environment, where the same events are constructed with different narratives, attracts attention as a historical reality that reveals the influence of public opinion on foreign policy and sheds light on future studies.

CHAPTER 1

EFFORTS TO SEPARATE THE ISLAND OF CRETE FROM OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATION (1821-1869)

1.1. A General Overview of the Cretan Question

Crete Island is located in the east of the Mediterranean and is the second largest island in the region after Cyprus. Geographically located at the intersection of the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, Crete is located at the junction of the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean. The island is geographically close to the Peloponnese Peninsula in the northwest, the western and southwestern coasts of Anatolia in the east and northeast, and the northern coasts of Africa in the south.²¹

From the conquest of Candia (1669), when Ottoman rule was established, to the beginning of the 19th century, there was no significant unrest on the island of Crete for approximately 150 years. However, from the end of the 18th century onwards, especially during the reign of Tsar Peter I, nationalist ideas that gradually spread due to the increasing Russian influence and the French Revolution, combined with the weakening of the Ottoman central administration, led to the strengthening of separatist tendencies among the islanders. During this period, the propaganda activities carried out by Filiki Eteria, one of the Greek societies, paved the way for the disruption of the stable structure in Crete. The Ottoman Empire's preoccupation with the Tepedelenli Ali Pasha rebellion during the same period allowed the uprisings that emerged in the Peloponnese Peninsula and the Aegean Islands to expand.²² In July 1821, rebellions against Ottoman rule began in various regions of Crete, primarily among the non-Muslim population in the mountain villages of Apokoronas and Hanya districts of the Chania Sanjak. It has been stated that groups from the Isfakya region in particular played an active role in the rebellions during this process. In order to suppress the rebellion and restore order on the island, the Ottoman central administration assigned this task to the Governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Pasha. Upon the notification of Mahmud II's will through the Grand Vizier, Mehmed Ali Pasha stated in his response dated September 21, 1821 that he would mobilize all his resources for the sake of religion and state in order to protect Crete.²³ By the 1820s, the island of Crete had been under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for nearly a century and a half, and the islanders were obliged to pay taxes to the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul. The differences between the non-Muslim population, who made up the majority of the island, and the Muslims to whom the ruling Ottoman administration belonged played an important role in the social tensions in Crete. The Ottoman administration had an economic structure based on tax revenues rather than trade, and the heavy taxes, especially levied on non-Muslim subjects, caused serious economic difficulties for this segment. The War of Independence, which began

21 Girit'in Mazisi-Hali-İstikbali, Matba-i Ebuzziya, İstanbul 1328, 3; Mansel, 1988, 5.

22 Arıkan, 1987, 97; Banoğlu, 2005, 51-53; Karal, 2007, 76; Hanioglu, 2008, 79; Tükin, 1945, 206; Hatipoğlu, 1988b, 20; Sadi, 1941, 35.

23 Karal, 2007, 76; Hanioglu, 2008, 79; Tükin, 1945, 206; Hatipoğlu, 1988b, 20; Sadi, 1941, 35; Türkmen, 2002, 860; Uçarol, 1995, 225; Babaoğlu, 2021, 50-51; Tükin, 1996, 89.

in 1821 on the Greek mainland, also led to serious unrest in Crete; the Ottoman administration then took measures to suppress a possible uprising on the island. Although some of the islanders rebelled against the Ottoman administration, these attempts were suppressed by 1824. The success of the independence movement on the mainland was not reflected in Crete; in fact, a Greek force under the command of Hadzi Mihalıs Dalianis landed in Crete in 1828 and was completely thwarted by Ottoman forces.²⁴

The fact that the island of Crete was not included within the borders of the Kingdom of Greece, which was established by the Triple Alliance (England, France and Russia) in 1830 and recognized by the Ottoman Empire, led to a new wave of unrest among the non-Muslim population on the island. This situation led to a new rebellion movement against Ottoman rule on the island. During the same period, the Ottoman central administration suspected that the Governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Pasha, intended to establish an independent state by taking control of Syria. Therefore, in order to suppress the rebellion and remove Mehmed Ali Pasha from the center, the Sublime Porte offered the governorship of Crete instead of the governorship of Damascus, and this duty was conveyed to him through Pertev Efendi. Mehmed Ali Pasha, who managed to suppress the rebellion in Crete in 1831, relinquished his governorship of Crete and requested the governorship of Syria (Bilad al-Sham) again, claiming that the influence and incentives coming from Greece would continue on the island and that the administration of the island would be unstable in the long term. Although he went to Crete for a short time after the Kütahya Treaty signed in 1833, he lost his right to dispose of the island according to the London Treaty dated 15 July 1840. Thereupon, the province of Crete was given to Mustafa Pasha, who was Mehmed Ali Pasha's guard, with the rank of vizier, together with his annexes. However, unrest broke out on the island again shortly afterwards; this time, it was understood that the returned Greek refugees were encouraging the local non-Muslim population to rebel. In early 1841, the Ottoman Empire sent military support to the island in order to suppress the rebellion, and with this intervention, the rebellion was ended without any serious resistance. The rebels have appealed to major powers for help, expecting foreign intervention, but these calls have not yielded any results.²⁵

The transfer of the Seven Islands to Greece in 1864 paved the way for this state to revive the "Megali Idea" (Greater Greece) project. In line with this goal, the Greek government encouraged the Cretan people to revolt against Ottoman rule, and as a result of these incentives, a large-scale rebellion movement on an unprecedented scale emerged in Crete in 1866. In May 1866, Cretan Christians once again revolted against Ottoman rule. This time, the movement

²⁴ Moore, 2016, 17.

²⁵ Kurumahmut, 1998, 36; Türkmen, 2001, 223-226; Kocabaş, 1987, 87; Değirmenci, 2019, 42; Karabacak, 2022, 13-14; Tükin, 1996, 89.

initially developed peacefully and initially gave the impression that it had no clear intention of separating from Ottoman rule. The Cretan representatives submitted a petition to the Sublime Porte through the Governor of Crete at the time, Ismail Pasha. This petition expressed various complaints, especially the heavy tax burdens and the abuses and corruption of Ottoman officials towards the people. In response to these demands, the Ottoman central administration instructed Ismail Pasha to disperse the rebellion by force if necessary. Despite diplomatic interventions by major European powers such as England, France and Russia, the issue could not be resolved and by August, armed conflicts had begun between the Cretan Christian rebels and the Ottoman forces. During this period, the Cretan rebels declared the island united with the Kingdom of Greece, turning the process from an internal matter into an international crisis. Under these conditions, according to contemporary testimonies, travelers who came to Crete to investigate ancient settlements described the atmosphere on the island with the following expressions: “*The most popular field of knowledge in Crete at that time was the art of war itself.*”²⁶ It is certain that foreign policy was influential behind the scenes of this rebellion. Especially the great powers such as England, Italy, France and Russia - the “Great Powers” as they were called at the time - showed great interest in who would take control of Crete. So much so that, according to the testimonies of the period, it was claimed that the rebellion on the island was essentially shaped not by local but by international intervention and guidance, with the statement “*The heart and real dynamic elements of the rebellion should not be sought in Crete, but rather in external interventions.*”²⁷ The Cretan Christians demanded compliance with the provisions of the imperial edict, the reduction of tax burdens, the reorganization of educational institutions, the opening of ports and the establishment of an agricultural bank, thus creating the grounds for rebellion. Since it was not deemed possible for the government to meet all of the demands at the same time, the rebels formed a provisional government on their own initiative and declared the annexation of the island to Greece on September 2, 1866. Since England, France and Russia, who assumed the role of guarantor in the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece in 1830, proposed an administrative structure similar to the autonomous government model implemented on the island of Samos for Crete, the Cretans thought that these states had the authority to intervene in this rebellion. Russia and France in particular proposed to the Sublime Porte that Crete be transferred to Greece or at least given autonomy.²⁸ During this process, the Ottoman government sent a decree to Mustafa Naili Pasha, who was appointed governor of Crete, ordering that Muslim and Christian representatives be selected from each district of the island and sent

26 Skinner, 1868, 17; Moore, 2016, 17.

27 Miller, 1925-26, 108; Moore, 2016, 17.

28 Anderson, 2001, 178; Adıyeke, 2000, 17; Dakin, 1972, 133.

to Istanbul for talks. However, when the rebels rejected this proposal, the task of suppressing the rebellion was given to Ömer Pasha. While the military intervention was ongoing, the consuls—under the guidance of Greece—began to evacuate the Christian population that had taken refuge in the coastal areas of Crete to Greece with their own ships, using the Ottoman intervention as an excuse in order to support the rebels.²⁹ Although this initiative was presented to the public as humanitarian aid, it actually facilitated the transfer of volunteers and logistical support elements to the island. The Ottoman fleet was insufficient to prevent these activities of the Greek ships under the command of Hobart Pasha. The rebellion, which grew with the open support of Greece, opened the door to a new opportunity for the intervention of the great powers in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. In May 1867, France, which received the support of Russia, proposed that an international commission be sent to determine the complaints on the island. However, this proposal was rejected by both the Ottoman Empire, England and Austria. Upon this development, France revised its proposal to a commission to be sent by the Ottomans, and also proposed a declaration of armistice, and supported this new proposal together with Russia, Italy and Prussia, and forwarded it to the Sublime Porte. The Ottoman administration stated that it was open to a short-term armistice, but stated that it wanted to remain fully authorized and independent during the reform process on the island. Despite the harsh notes sent by four states on October 29, 1867 and the advice of Austria, he maintained this attitude. Sultan Abdülaziz sent Grand Vizier Âli Pasha to Crete on October 2, 1867, and had a regulation proclaimed on January 4, 1868, aiming to improve the situation of the Christian people on the island. At the same time, a general amnesty was declared and the rebels were asked to send their representatives to Chania. The demands of the representatives who gathered here in November 1868 were accepted; taxes were temporarily abolished, aid was promised to those who suffered, and Christians were exempted from military service. However, even these concessions did not end the instability in Crete. Greece was not content with these privileges granted by the Ottomans and began preparations for the annexation of the island through armed struggle. Following these developments, the Ottoman Empire sent a note to Greece in December 1868, demanding the disbandment of volunteer units and the disarmament of ships engaged in pirate activities. When the possibility of tensions turning into war emerged, the great powers held a conference in Paris at the beginning of 1869, with the initiative of Prussia, and wrote a harsh warning letter to Greece.³⁰

After the tension between the Ottoman Empire and Greece was resolved through diplomatic means, a comprehensive administrative arrangement was

²⁹ Tural, 2005, 67-98; Uçarol, 1995, 225; Tükin, 1996, 89.

³⁰ Adıyeke, 2000, 17; Dakin, 1972, 133; Tural, 2005, 67-98; Uçarol, 1995, 225; Tükin, 1996, 89; Türkmen, 2001, 229-235.

made for Crete and a special regulation dated 1868 was put into effect. With this regulation, the island was divided into five sanjaks (Chania, Sfakia, Resmo, Kandiye and Lasithi); the sanjaks were divided into districts and the districts into sub-districts. It was adopted that the governors of the Sfakia and Lasithi sanjaks would be appointed from among non-Muslims, while the governors of Resmo and Kandiye would be appointed from among Muslims. In the appointment of the district governors, the religious majority of the local population was taken as a basis. In addition to the governors and district governors, assistants from different religions were assigned to each administrative level, and administrative councils consisting of equal numbers of Muslim and non-Muslim members were established. The provincial administrative council, to be chaired by the island governor, would have ten members from each sanjak, one Muslim and one non-Muslim. The provincial council would consist of Muslim and non-Muslim representatives elected from each district and would have the authority to make and implement laws. Although this new administrative structure was based on the principle of protecting the mutual rights of the Muslim and Christian people, it did not end the unrest on the island. Various conflicts arose between the governor and the council and among popular groups. During this process, a group that took a more radical stance against the Ottoman administration and advocated the annexation of the island to Greece also increased its influence. In the meantime, the Ottoman administration could not understand the problems experienced in Crete or did not accept the existence of these problems. According to Ottoman authorities, the people of Crete had everything they needed. In 1878, an article written in Lippincott's Magazine by a British naval officer identified only as "E.S." included the following statement:

[The Cretans] had lentils, olive oil, flour, firewood, shelter, mats under their feet and old blankets on top. The Turkish officers asked the question: 'What more could a people want?'" However, the real demand of the Cretan people was the complete end of the Ottoman presence on the island. However, it was not possible to express this demand openly, because such an expression could be perceived as a personal insult by the addressees.³¹

Taking advantage of the power vacuum created during the 1877–1878 Ottoman-Russian War, the Cretan Christians revolted again. However, during the Berlin Congress, the great powers did not make a special decision regarding Crete, they only called on the Ottoman Empire to fully implement the 1868 regulations. Within this framework, Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, who was sent to Crete under pressure from the great powers, ensured that a contract was signed in Halepa on October 23, 1878, as a result of negotiations conducted under the supervision of the consuls. According to the Halepa Convention, it

31 Moore, 2016, 17.

was envisaged that the governor of Crete would be Christian and would be appointed by the Sublime Porte with the approval of the great powers for a five-year term. In addition, the governor's powers were expanded, and the general assembly was granted important legislative powers. This assembly would consist of 80 members, 49 Christians and 31 Muslims, and could change some provisions of the regulations regarding local affairs with a two-thirds majority, even without the approval of the Sublime Porte. Christians would also be accepted into the gendarmerie organization, and the revenues allocated to the island would be used for services such as education, health, and transportation. However, Cretan Christians were not satisfied with this arrangement for a long time. Following the unification of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885, a similar desire for unification arose in Crete, and a few years later a new uprising took place. Following this development, the Ottoman administration sent Şakir Pasha as a representative equipped with military authority to the island administration. Following the suppression of the uprising, some restrictions were imposed on the Halepa Convention with a decree published in 1889. Although the duties of governor and commander were separated, the possibility of combining them in the same person was also left open. The principle was that the governor and his deputy should have different religious identities. The number of Christian representatives in the general assembly was reduced from 49 to 35, and the number of Muslim representatives from 31 to 22. Local revenues were left to the provincial administration, while all customs revenues were transferred to the center. In addition, although a general amnesty was declared, this amnesty excluded convicted rebels and ringleaders. Despite these measures, the discontent of the Christian population on the island continued. This time, demands for the full implementation of the Halepa Convention were brought to the agenda again. When these demands were supported by the great powers, the Sublime Porte appointed Kara Teodori Pasha, a Christian administrator, as governor in May 1895.³² However, the Pasha could not ensure stability on the island. Turhan Pasha, who was appointed in his place, was similarly unsuccessful. During this period, the Cretan Christians, who wanted to take advantage of the troubles experienced in the Ottoman capital due to the Armenian issue, came to the scene with new demands. The long-standing hostility between the Muslim and Christian communities turned into armed conflict in Chania in April 1896 and quickly spread to the entire island. As the developments quickly got out of control, the great powers sent warships to Crete on May 26. Then, on June 24, they demanded from the Ottoman administration the appointment of a Christian governor, the re-enactment of the 1868 statute, the convocation of the general assembly and the declaration of a general amnesty. However, when the Sublime Porte did not respond to these

32 BOA, Y.PRK.EŞA.2-34

demands, the powers increased their diplomatic pressure by sending a new note on July 2 demanding that military operations be stopped immediately and that definite instructions be given to the commanders.³³

The Ottoman Empire, in line with the recommendations of the great powers, called the Cretan General Assembly to a meeting and made a commitment to implement the Halepa Convention. However, the efforts made with the Athens government against the rebellion movements in Crete were unsuccessful and the instability on the island continued. During this process, a text containing the principles of a new arrangement similar to the Halepa Convention was prepared between the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tevfik Pasha and the ambassadors of the six great powers and was signed on 25 August 1896. The ambassadors conveyed this text to the Christian members of the Cretan General Assembly through the consuls in Chania and when they learned that the solution in question was accepted unconditionally by these members, they requested that the same arrangement be declared by the Sublime Porte. Upon this request, the Ottoman government appointed Beroviç Pasha as the Governor of Crete for a period of five years and the island achieved peace, albeit for a short time. However, the rebel elements took action again to invalidate the reforms decided in Istanbul, and these activities were supported especially by the revolutionary committees based in Athens. Finally, on February 10, 1897, the Greek navy was sent to the coast of Crete, and the troops under the command of Prince George landed troops on the island on February 13. Then, General Vassos declared the annexation of the island on February 16, 1897 in the name of the Greek King. Following this development, the great powers intervened by landing troops in the Port of Chania. Following the diplomatic protests of the Ottoman government, the great powers sent a note to the government of Athens on March 2, 1897, stating that the annexation of Crete to Greece could not be accepted, that the island would remain under Ottoman sovereignty but would be governed autonomously, and that harsh measures would be taken if the Greek troops did not withdraw within six days. However, Greece stated that it found the proposal of autonomy insufficient in response to this note, that its own proposals should be taken into consideration, and that it would withdraw its fleet if the Ottoman forces were prevented from landing on the island. The great powers occupied Chania and warned Vassos to leave the island, and although the Greek warships withdrew, the troops that had landed were not taken back.³⁴ For this reason, on March 21, 1897, the six major powers decided to blockade Crete, and the blockade was applied to all ships flying the Greek flag. Although Greece claimed that the blockade could lead to a humanitarian crisis, the blockade was not lifted until December 5, 1898. However, the ban on bringing weapons and ammunition

33 Emir, 1931, 5-9; Türkmen, 2001, 237-243; Uçarol, 1995, 225; Tükin, 1996, 90; Adıyeke, 1991, 49-50.

34 Adıyeke, 1993a, 293-315; Adıyeke, 1993b, 335-346; Tükin, 1996, 91-92.

to the island continued. The major powers also submitted a memorandum to the Sublime Porte, stating that the delay in implementing the reforms decided on in 1896 on the island was no longer suitable for the current conditions, and declared that Crete should be granted autonomy. Accordingly, Crete would not be annexed to Greece; it would be governed by an administrative system determined by the states. In a memorandum submitted two days later in addition to this memorandum, it was stated that the Ottoman military presence had to be gradually reduced in order to implement administrative autonomy and that the Ottoman soldiers should also be withdrawn after the evacuation of the Greek troops. In its response on 6 March 1897, the Ottoman government accepted in principle the granting of administrative autonomy to Crete, but reserved the right to negotiate with the ambassadors in Istanbul on the form of the administrative model to be implemented. However, France, England, Italy and Russia argued that the presence of Ottoman soldiers on the island would not be compatible with the principles of full autonomy and demanded that all soldiers be withdrawn within a month, otherwise they would resort to coercive measures. These demands were conveyed to the Acting Governor of Crete, Ismail Pasha, by the French Admiral Pottier, and then the Ottoman administrators were asked to resign from their posts and names determined by the admirals be appointed in their places. The Ottoman government's attempt to send new soldiers to Crete was rejected on the grounds that there would be confusion. During this period, the great powers did not keep their promises despite the assurances they had given that they would respect the Ottoman sovereign rights.³⁵ After the Ottoman soldiers withdrew from Candia and Kisamo, the Turkish flag was not allowed to be raised in these regions. The political crisis caused by the rebellion that started in Crete in 1896 was shaped against the Ottoman Empire by the interventions of the great powers, especially England, France, Russia and Italy. Although the Ottoman-Greek War was won by the Ottomans on May 19, 1897, these four states declared on December 18, 1897 that Crete would have the status of a neutral and autonomous province under Ottoman rule. Germany and Austria did not agree with this decision. According to this new order, a governor appointed by the sultan with the approval of the great powers would be appointed to the province for a period of five years. As long as the security of the Muslim population was ensured, the Ottoman soldiers would withdraw from the island and a certain tax would be paid to the Ottoman treasury every year. Thus, the Cretan issue acquired a nature that would damage the territorial integrity and sovereign rights of the Ottoman Empire.³⁶

35 Adiyek, 1993b, 335-346; Tukin, 1996, 91-92.

36 Adiyek, 1993b, 335-346; Tukin, 1996, 91-92; Adiyek, 1991, 52.

1.1.1. The Emergence of Nationalism and Its Effects in the Ottoman Empire

The concept of “millet” used in the Ottoman Empire does not have a direct equivalent in Western languages. When the concept is identified with the term nation in the modern sense, it refers to communities living on a certain piece of land and having a common language and ethnic origin. However, in the Ottoman context, “millet” refers to communities defined according to religious affiliation rather than based on ethnic or linguistic unity. In this context, the Ottoman millet system defined individuals who were affiliated with the same religion or sect as a single community, despite living in different geographical regions and speaking different languages. Muslims, who were considered the primary element of society, were defined as the Millet-i İslamiye, and this status gave them more authority and responsibilities compared to non-Muslim subjects. While non-Muslims were subject to taxes such as haraç and jizya, Muslims, on the other hand, were exempt from these taxes but assumed responsibilities through obligations such as compulsory military service and zakat.³⁷

The ideas that emerged from the revolution that took place in France in 1789 influenced not only France but also many parts of the world, especially Europe. Movements such as liberalism, nationalism and socialism that spread during and after the revolution quickly became influential in a wide geography. In the century following the revolution, nationalist ideas paved the way for national uprisings and the emergence of independent states in various regions, especially in Europe, South America and the Ottoman Empire. The idea of socialism, on the other hand, attracted great attention in theory, and its most advanced stage, communism, came to power in Russia and reached its peak. In addition, liberalism was particularly influential in the economic field, while in later periods, movements such as fascism and anarchism were shaped in the light of the new ideas that emerged from the revolution and found a place for themselves both in theory and in practice. It is known that the idea of nationalism emerged with the developments brought about by the French Revolution. However, it is seen that it gained its real power in the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in Europe. As a result of the uprisings that took place in South America in the 1820s, Latin American countries gained their independence. In the revolutions of 1830, where liberalism and socialism were directly influential and nationalism indirectly influential, no state could gain independence. However, the period when nationalism truly gained strength was seen in the revolutions of 1848. During these revolutions, Belgium and Switzerland declared their independence, while Prussia and Italy also came

37 Eryılmaz, 1992, 12; Bozkurt, 1989, 9.

very close to independence. In fact, Italy gained independence in 1861, and Prussia gained independence under the name of Germany in 1871.³⁸

When the nationalist movement is considered in the Ottoman Empire, a different picture emerges from the other regions mentioned above. Before the idea of nationalism had spread in Europe, uprisings occurred in Serbia in 1804 and in Greece in 1821. While the uprising in Serbia targeted the administrative administration more, the uprising in Greece had a national and religious character. The Ottoman Empire, which had difficulty in suppressing the uprising under the leadership of Russia and the intervention of states such as England, France and Austria, was forced to recognize the independence of Greece with the Treaty of Edirne signed at the end of the 1828-29 Ottoman-Russian War. At this point, it should be noted that the Hellenism movement that emerged during the Greek uprising also played an important role in the development of Balkan nationalism in the following years.³⁹

1.1.2. The Mora Uprising of 1821

The Greek rebellion that began in 1821 was particularly effective in the Peloponnese Peninsula, and serious conflicts occurred in the region. In the first phase of the rebellion, the Muslim population in Tripolitania was largely massacred; immediately after the Greek rebels took control of the Peloponnese in October 1822, as noted by well-known observers of the period, including Dakin, Finley, McCarthy and Trikoupi, approximately 25,000 Muslims were killed. This number corresponds to more than half of the Muslim population of the Peloponnese. In response to this development, the Ottoman administration launched a harsh military intervention in April 1822 against the Christian population on the island of Chios, who were alleged to have supported the rebellion. When it became clear that the Ottomans could not suppress the rebellion in the Peloponnese with the available local forces, the central government requested assistance from the Governor of Egypt, Kavalali Mehmed Ali Pasha. Upon this call, Mehmed Ali Pasha sent the navy under the command of his son Ibrahim Pasha and a land force of approximately 70,000 to the region in February 1825. Ibrahim Pasha, who made Modon (Methoni) his headquarters, managed to suppress the rebellion harshly between 1825 and 1827. However, the events caused serious destruction in a large part of Mora and left a devastated region behind.⁴⁰

It is clear that the Morea rebellion, which began in 1821, quickly turned into a violent conflict, taking on religious and ethnic dimensions. At the end of this process, which lasted about ten years, an independent Greek state was

³⁸ Armaoğlu, 1997, 285-298.

³⁹ Çakır, 2022, 2-3; Özsüer, 2016, 342; Özsüer, 2018, 135.

⁴⁰ Karal, 2011, 18-19; Kerimoğlu, 2023, 175; Penn, 1938, 638; Demirhan, 2012, 41-64; Şahin, 2021, 119-120; Öreñç, 2009, 119-209; Kiel, 2012, 314-315; Gordon, 1844, 143-322; Persat, 1910, 50-122; Iorga, 2005, 215-260; Gürbüz and Turan, 2006, 9-42.

established in 1830 with the protection and intervention of the great powers of Europe. The borders and administrative structure of the new state were determined as a result of long negotiations between diplomats from England, France and Russia and Ottoman representatives. One of the important issues that draw attention in the negotiations and agreements is the frequent emphasis in diplomatic discourse on the belief that Greeks and Turks could not live together. In this context, pressure was exerted on the Turks to leave the Morea Peninsula completely. The elimination of the Turkish population from Morea was not limited to diplomatic demands alone, and systematic and massive acts of violence were carried out against the settled Turkish population throughout the 1821 rebellion. During this process, the city of Tripolitsa, the administrative center of the Morea Province, was the scene of a major massacre and a large portion of the Turkish population in the city was destroyed. These events, which took place in Mora and especially in Tripoli, have not found a sufficient place in the collective memory of the post-Ottoman period, despite the fact that they caused great loss of life. However, the same events had an important place in the construction of the national identity of Greece and in the narrative of independence, and the conflicts in Tripoli were even transferred to the national memory through some literary texts and national anthems.⁴¹

The success of the 1821 Morea Revolt and the establishment of an independent Greek state was largely possible thanks to the material and moral support provided by European states. The idea of independence for the Greeks under Ottoman rule emerged and took shape in Europe. The admiration for ancient Greek civilization in Europe and the Philhellenism movement, which gained influence especially from the late 18th century onwards, created positive public opinion towards the rebellion, which turned into political support. With the beginning of the rebellion, volunteers, officers and well-known figures in literary and political circles from various European countries, including Lord Byron, went to Morea and supported the rebels. These volunteers also took part in the siege of Tripolitsa at the end of 1821. One of the biggest supporters of the rebellion was Russia due to sectarian affiliation. The basic organization of the rebellion movement was carried out by Filiki Eteria, a secret society founded in Odessa (Hocabey) in Russia in 1814. Aleksandros Ipsilantis, who was in the leadership of this organization and the de facto leader of the rebellion, was a member of one of the deep-rooted Phanariot Greek families in Istanbul and also served as an aide-de-camp to the Russian Tsar. The increasing sympathy of European public opinion for the rebellion also increased the competition between England and Russia for influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. France soon joined this competitive process and began to play an active role in the

41 Öreñç, 2024, 3-4; Earle, 1927, 44-63; Howarth, 1976, 64-169; Günay, 263-287.

diplomatic and military processes related to the rebellion.⁴² During the 1821 Morea Revolt, the Ottoman administration made various strategic mistakes at both the civilian and military levels. One of the most important of these mistakes was the insistence on the military operation carried out simultaneously with the revolt against the Governor of Ioannina, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, and the keeping of a significant military force on this front. This situation paved the way for a decrease in the pressure on the rebel elements in Morea and an expansion of their mobility. The frequent changes of commanders during the suppression of the revolt led to a weakening of discipline within the army; the Ottoman army's significant reliance on Albanian mercenaries brought security weaknesses with it. The inability to establish naval dominance over the Sea of Islands and the logistical inadequacies in the Aegean also limited the effectiveness of the Ottoman forces. In addition, the dismissal and subsequent execution of the Greek Patriarch of Istanbul, Gregory V, had a great repercussion in European public opinion and reinforced the negative perception of the Ottoman administration. As a result of these and similar mistakes, while it was possible to suppress the revolt at first, the process could not be brought under control. This situation facilitated the diplomatic and military intervention of European states, especially England, France and Russia.⁴³

1.1.3. The Greek Independence Process and the Cretan Question

The balance achieved in Europe with the Congress of Vienna prepared the ground for the spread of nationalism outside Europe in the 19th century. These nationalist movements, which spread rapidly in the Balkans, the lands of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, led to rebellions and brought about separation from the Ottomans with the formation of ethnically based nations. One of the communities that wanted to separate from the Ottomans under the influence of this nationalist wave was the Greeks. Despite the measures taken by the Ottomans, it was not possible to prevent the Greeks from being influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution. As Bernard Lewis stated, *"The branch cut from the tree of liberty, the branch sprouting in the lands of Islam, will bear both bitter and sweet fruits."*⁴⁴

The Greek War of Independence began in 1821 with widespread participation from Crete. The Christian uprising was followed by the Ottomans executing several bishops who were seen as the cause of the rebellion. Sultan Mahmud II gave the administration of Crete to Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Pasha for his military support. Between 1821 and 1828, the unrest on the island continued, and Muslims were exiled to the towns in the north of the island, where 60%

42 Örenç, 2009, 27-97; Woodhouse, 1958, 42-155; Woodhouse, 1973, 218-283; Örenç, 2024, 5-6; Kütükoğlu, 1986, 133-161; Yavuz, 2017, 118-130.

43 Woodhouse, 1958, 42-155; Woodhouse, 1973, 218-283; Örenç, 2024, 5-6; Kütükoğlu, 1986, 133-161; Yavuz, 2017, 118-130.

44 Menekşe, 2020, 787.

of the Cretan Muslims died from epidemics and famine. Similarly, the Cretan Christians lost approximately 21% of their population by the 1830s.⁴⁵

Following the Treaty of Edirne, Russian influence in the Balkans gradually increased; the idea that Greece owed its independence largely to Russia's military support had become a widespread belief in the public. England, which had doubts about the continuity of the Ottoman Empire, took action out of concern that Russia was coming to the forefront in the Greek issue. In this context, it made an agreement with France and took steps towards the establishment of a completely independent Greek State. England's main aim was to increase its influence over the newly established state by separating the Greek issue from the context of the Treaty of Edirne. Lord Aberdeen, who was the British Foreign Secretary during the Treaty of Edirne, confessed in a speech he gave in the British Parliament in 1854 why England desired the establishment of an independent Greece and what kind of policy it was pursuing in this direction. The Treaty of Edirne was extremely detrimental to the survival of the Ottoman Empire and created serious anxiety and concern in European public opinion. For this reason, the Greek issue, as previously adopted by England, had now acquired a different character. Until then, it had not been considered to give Greece an independent government, and it had been assumed that it would be granted an autonomous government status similar to Wallachia and Moldavia, that is, an autonomous government that was subject to the Ottoman Empire and paid *jizya*. However, as soon as the news of the signing of the Treaty of Edirne arrived, the survival of the Ottoman Empire began to be seriously questioned, and therefore the administrative status to be given to Greece was re-evaluated. In an environment where the existence of the Ottoman Empire was no longer certain, it was no longer seen as a politically correct approach to make Greece a government subject to it. Lord Wellington also adopted this idea and for this reason, an agreement was reached with allied states such as France and Russia that Greece should be established as an independent state instead of a structure subject to the Ottoman Empire. This approach was a direct result of the concerns and worries that arose from the Treaty of Edirne. When England's proposal to grant Greece full independence was also welcomed by Russia, a new negotiation process was initiated on this issue. Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen on behalf of England, Polignac on behalf of France and Count Lieven on behalf of Russia attended the talks held in London. Important issues such as the relationship of the Greek state to be established with the Ottoman Empire, where its borders would pass and who would be given the throne were discussed during the talks. Ultimately, the three great powers signed three separate protocols in London on February 3, 1830. The first of these protocols consisted of a nine-article text

45 Krokidas and Gekas, 2007, 35-54; Kitromilides, 2021, 296-313.

and in its first article, it was decided that Greece would be recognized as a fully independent state with its own political, administrative and economic order.⁴⁶

The Cretan Question, a secondary part of the Eastern Question after the Greek Revolt, was indirectly linked to the broader policy of the Great Powers towards the Ottoman Empire. The Cretans' dreams of independence tended to clash with the interests of the Great Powers in the eastern Mediterranean. Britain, France and Russia, believing that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was imminent, each sought to hasten or delay its collapse in their own interests, while each sought to increase its influence in the Porte.⁴⁷

The Navarino Incident of 1827 not only led to the destruction of the Ottoman navy to a large extent, but also deprived the Ottoman Empire of its naval power, leaving it without a navy. This development also weakened the Ottoman military presence in Morea and allowed the rebels to gain the upper hand. The subsequent Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829 paved the way for the revival of rebellions in Morea. During this period, the Ottoman Empire was fighting against Russian forces on the Balkan and Caucasian fronts, as well as the Greek rebellion in Morea. Russia's military successes against the Ottomans in particular caused concern in European states, and these states made diplomatic efforts to speed up the peace process. In this context, representatives of England, France and Russia signed the London Protocol on March 22, 1829. The protocol foresaw the establishment of an independent Greek state encompassing the Morea and some surrounding islands. The protocol was notified to the Sublime Porte while the Ottoman-Russian War was ongoing, but was initially rejected. However, when Russian forces advanced as far as Edirne, the Ottoman Empire sought peace and the Treaty of Edirne was signed on September 14, 1829. In accordance with the tenth article of the treaty, the independence of Greece and the relevant protocols were officially accepted by the Ottoman Empire. Finally, with a new protocol signed on February 3, 1830, it was decided that Greece would be established as a fully independent state; this decision was conveyed to the Sublime Porte through the ambassadors in Istanbul on April 8, 1830 and officially approved by the Ottomans on April 24, 1830. Thus, the establishment of the Greek State became definite on international grounds.⁴⁸

With the London Protocol signed on February 3, 1830, a Greek State was established that included the Morea, Euboea, Sporades and Cyclades Islands, independent of Ottoman rule. Since Crete was excluded from these regions, as well as Thessaly, Epirus and Macedonia, the groundwork was prepared for the emergence of the Cretan Question. According to another protocol dated February 20, 1830, the three great powers of England, France and Russia

46 Uk Parliament Hansard, Volume 136: debated on Tuesday 12 December 1854, column 176; Bayrak, 1999, 222-223.

47 Özşüer, 2024, 158-160; Stavrinis, 1992, 49-250; Stavrinis, 1992, 249.

48 Özşüer, 2024, 160-162.

assumed the responsibility of improving the rights of the Greek population in Samos and Crete and protecting these peoples against the Turks. Thus, the three great powers secured their right to intervene in the Sublime Porte on behalf of Christian subjects. However, Ioannis Kapodistrias, who was the Russian Foreign Minister during the process of Greece's independence and the first governor of Greece after independence, proposed to Leopold I, who was planned to be the Greek king, to work towards expanding the borders of Greece to Samos, Ipsara and Crete after embracing Orthodoxy. Leopold Viscount Wellington, who requested funds from England to fix Greek finances and put them on a stable foundation, faced strong opposition from his government and resigned from the monarchy to become the king of Belgium.⁴⁹

However, in 1830, Lord Palmerston, the representative of the opposition in England, advocated the union of Crete with Greece. When a new government came to power in England at the end of the same year, he became Foreign Minister and accepted the proposal to extend Greece's borders to the Narda-Volos line in the north. Palmerston claimed on February 16, 1830 that Crete was indispensable for Greek shipping and trade. Despite these statements by Palmerston, England always attached importance to the possession of Crete by the Sublime Porte in order to protect the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and British interests in the Near East. With Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus, Crete provided England with both naval superiority in the Mediterranean and secured free lines of communication to England's Eastern Empire via the Suez Corridor. In a secret parliamentary session titled Candia and Cyprus, this situation was approached as follows. "Heraklion and Cyprus have been described many times as the key to Egypt. There is also no doubt that the naval power of a country hostile to England could, by using only these two islands, greatly impede our communication with our Eastern lands. Indeed, such a potential threat to England emerged in November 1831, immediately after the foundation of Greece, between Mahmud II and the Khedive of Egypt, Kavalali Muhammad Ali of Egypt."⁵⁰

With this defeat, the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire was in danger, while England's indifference to the Ottoman calls for help jeopardized its superiority among the Great Powers operating in the Near East. The Empire was saved only when the Russians responded positively to the Turkish calls, and moreover, the Russians gained the upper hand with the Treaty of Hunkar Iskelesi as a reward for supporting the Sultan.⁵¹

With this treaty, Palmerston aimed to increase British influence in Dersaadet. He gave instructions to the new British ambassador of Sublime Porte, Viscount

49 Özsüer, 2024, 158-160; Stavrinis, 1992, 49-250.

50 Uçarol, 1995, 147; Stavrinis, 1992, 250.

51 Stavrinis, 1992, 251.

Ponsonby (1770-1855), to deprive Kavalali Muhammad Ali Pasha of Syria, Adana and Crete and subsequently execute him. This aimed to prevent Russia from intervening in Sublime Porte again. In addition, Palmerston stated that the Ottomans urgently needed to make improvements in the army and navy in order to resist any Egyptian or Russian attacks. While Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Pasha was in control of Crete, Greece, which wanted to take advantage of the situation the Ottomans were in, sent a note to the three great powers on August 10, 1839, requesting that Crete be given to it. The rebellion that followed was also suppressed with difficulty. This attempt by Greece was also thwarted by England, which pursued a policy of balance in the region. Thereupon, Crete was given back to the Ottoman State in accordance with the London Treaty dated July 15, 1840. Towards the end of the 1830s, the main aim of the British governments was to reduce the power of Egypt, which was expanding towards the Persian Gulf, and to eliminate the Kütahya and Hünkâr İskelesi treaties.⁵²

1.1.4. Muhammad Ali Pasha's Governorship of Crete

When Kavalali came to the island to end the unrest in Crete, he declared a general amnesty and asked both sides to lay down their arms. His aim was not to discriminate between Muslims and Christians, as in previous administrations. However, according to Detorakis, the Cretans, accustomed to an environment of violence, remained indifferent to this optimistic call. As a result, some Muslims had to sell their assets and migrate to Anatolia, while some Christians had to migrate to Greece. During this period, a council known as the "Saurades" was formed in Candia, Chania, Rethymno and Sfakia. This council included one representative from each community.⁵³

Mustafa Naili Pasha's doctor, Monsieur Koparal, stated that these assemblies were called "Country Assemblies." While the assembly president was always appointed from Egypt, the assembly was responsible for handling all legal issues except inheritance cases. Decisions were made by majority vote, which meant that the assembly president had no voting rights different from the other members. Although the members were initially appointed for life, this practice was abandoned and a system was adopted in which they were elected by the people every two years.⁵⁴ Kavalali's assumption of power in Crete brought many positive developments for the island. For the first time since the Venetian period, streets, bridges and aqueducts were built, and ports were expanded. All churches were allowed to be repaired, Christians and Muslims were encouraged to work together, and various reforms were carried out in social and health areas. In addition, it was possible for an Ottoman and Greek newspaper to be published for the first time on the island.⁵⁵ These opportunities

⁵² Gemici, 2009, 282; Stavrinou, 1992, 251.

⁵³ Detorakis, 1997, 336-337; Yavuz, 2017, 132.

⁵⁴ Adıyeke and Adıyeke, 2006, 331-332.

⁵⁵ Detorakis, 1997, 337; Yavuz, 2017, 133.

were quite an innovative approach for Crete. No one had ever brought up such opportunities on the island before. Just as in Egypt, Kavalalı protected the people in Crete from the influence of oppressive landowners.⁵⁶ One of the important developments in Crete during the Kavalalı period was the arrival of Albanian gendarmes to the island. Kavalalı tried to ensure the security of the island through these gendarmes. However, the Albanian gendarmes took harsh measures to prevent the arbitrary attitudes of the Muslims on the island and their oppression of Christians. Muslims who resisted were either executed or sent to Granbosa prison. This situation led to two important consequences for the Cretan Muslims: First, over time, some Muslims changed their religion to Christianity (irtidad), and second, the migration of the Muslim population from rural areas to cities or the surrounding areas.⁵⁷ During this period, there was a significant decrease in the Muslim population on the island of Crete. The forced migration from rural areas to city centers and urban areas, especially due to security concerns, seriously negatively affected the agricultural production of the island. The increase in population density in the cities deepened the infrastructure problems and paved the way for problems such as the spread of epidemics, especially due to inadequate cleaning and health conditions. According to historian Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, this situation in Crete, especially the relatively advantageous position that emerged in favor of the Christian population, did not last long. After the Egyptian Governor Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Pasha established administrative dominance in Crete, the practices in Egypt began to be transferred to the island. The Kavalalı administration evaluated the lands and sources of income on the island as direct state property, and reduced the local population to the position of daily laborers working for low wages. This situation increased social unrest in a short time and caused the social structure in Crete to be reshaped.⁵⁸

Approximately 7,000 Cretan Christians, who wanted to express their dissatisfaction with the Egyptian administration, gathered in the Murné region, organized an unarmed protest and wrote a declaration containing their demands. However, this peaceful demonstration was harshly suppressed by the Egyptian administration; 41 people who led the protest were executed. During this process, some Muslims who sympathized with the Christian activists were also subjected to oppression and violence. Thus, social and economic pressures on both Muslim and Christian elements increased; the islanders were forced to endure harsh working conditions without raising their voices. All social segments living in Crete, except for a small privileged Muslim group, continued to suffer similarly in the face of tax burdens and administrative practices.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Karal, 1988, 18.

⁵⁷ Adıyeke and Adıyeke, 2000, 107-114; Kallivretakis, 2006, 12-13.

⁵⁸ Yavuz, 2017, 134-135.

⁵⁹ Deterakis, 1997, 337, 339; Yavuz, 2017, 135.

The rule of Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Pasha over Crete lasted for about ten years. During this period, priority was given to ensuring public order on the island; elements that disturbed public order were punished severely. During this period when Crete was under the control of Egypt, various arrangements were made not only in the field of security but also in the cultural and administrative fields. Mehmed Ali Pasha tried to apply the administrative model in Egypt to Crete; a newspaper was published within this scope. This newspaper, published in Turkish and Greek, included the decisions taken in the council meetings and news about the administration. At the same time, informative announcements were made to the public about various health problems and epidemics. The Turkish name of the newspaper was *Vekayi-i Giridiyye*, and its Greek name was *Kritiki Efiremis*. One of the important arrangements made during this period was the establishment of local administrative bodies called “*Memleket Meclisleri*” (Councils of the Homeland). In these councils, which were established in three regions throughout the island, namely Kandiye, Chania and Rethymno, members elected from the local population served; the chairmen of the councils were appointed by the Egyptian government. These councils, which convened under the presidency of the governor or district governor, were held responsible for resolving issues other than religious and inheritance issues between the Muslim and Christian communities and implementing relevant legal regulations. These mixed-structure councils were later reorganized by the Ottoman administration and continued their activities. In addition, during the reign of Mehmed Ali Pasha, there were some changes in the demographic structure of Crete. During this process, populations from North African regions such as Egypt and Libya were brought to the island, and these people mostly settled in Crete to work in the service of wealthy Muslim families. This new community, which also included black people of North African origin, was referred to by the local people as *Mavro/Mavrakis* or *Halikudes*, and created a new color in the social fabric of the island. The continuing negative developments in Crete led the Egyptian Governor, Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Pasha, to renounce his claim on the island. In accordance with the Treaty of London dated July 15, 1840, Mehmed Ali Pasha withdrew from Crete, thus returning the island to direct Ottoman rule.⁶⁰

1.1.5. Megali Idea

Greek nationalism, which emerged in 1830, achieved its first goal of establishing a state in the lands liberated from Ottoman rule. From this date until about a century later, Greek nationalism acquired a new state-based irredentist (taking back unrecovered lands) and expansionist character, and in this respect it was identified with the idea of Megali Idea (Great Idea). Megali

60 Özşüer, 2024, 159; Adıyeke and Adıyeke, 2021, 209-210; Yavuz, 2017, 130-137.

Idea means that the Greek mentality undertook the mission of reshaping the East. According to this idea, the destiny of Hellenism was to Hellenize a vast geography that was believed to belong to them as a natural right and was inhabited by communities that claimed to be largely of Hellenic origin, were Orthodox or Greek-speaking or Greek-speaking. This glorified understanding of pan-Hellenism is a way of thinking that resembles the ideas of “Manifest Destiny”, “the white man’s burden” or “Third Rome” in its Greek version. This understanding found its place in the works of the historians and educators of the period and became a part of the general opinion formed among the people about the role of the Greek nation-state in the civilized society.⁶¹ This Megali Idea-based nationalist spirit, which has survived for about a century, has undergone various changes over time depending on the course of the Eastern Question and developments in Balkan history. During the Crimean War, this ideal interestingly acquired a neutral character. At that time, some Greeks saw themselves as neither fully Western nor Eastern, but believed that they were part of both worlds. The following observation reflecting this dual identity of the Greeks in the mid-19th century is noteworthy: “*A Greek feels at home both in Paris and Moscow... A Greek never gives up his Orthodoxy and continues to see Russia as his brother; but at the same time he does not refrain from being a friend of freedom and Western sciences, and looks upon the West with admiration and love.*”⁶²

1.2. The Issue Gaining an International Dimension and the Cretan Revolt of 1866

On March 30, 1856, the Treaty of Paris put into effect the Hatt-ı Hümayun, which guaranteed civil and religious equality between Christians and Muslims. In the 19th century, Crete was at the very intersection of the complex systems between the Eastern and Western worlds. The island was strategically located between the European system, consisting of England, France, Germany, Austria, Russia and Italy, and the Asian system, dominated by England and Russia. In addition, it was at the very intersection of the Balkan system, consisting of Greece, Serbia, Romania, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, and ultimately the Middle Eastern system, which included the Ottoman Empire, Iran, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and indirectly England and France. This situation, which emerged with the island being at the intersection of four systems, caused the Ottoman Empire to experience a very difficult process in its foreign policy strategy regarding the island of Crete. The European and Asian systems, struggling to protect their interests, posed a direct threat to the Ottoman Empire’s security and independence.⁶³

61 Smith, 2000, 9; Xydis, 1963, 75; Aspreas, 1930, 63; Tuckerman, 1878, 120.

62 Smith, 2000, 9; Xydis, 1963, 75; Aspreas, 1930, 63; Tuckerman, 1878, 120; “The Greek Society,” *Le Spectateur d’Orient*, volume I 1853: 36-37.

63 Özgün, 2019a, 211; Beyhan, 2011, 148.

However, it is an indisputable fact that the state that determined the course of the Cretan Question was Russia. Russia, which did not want Greece to be under the influence of another state, has seen any Greek cause as a Russian cause for almost a century and has always evaluated the Cretan Question on the Muslim-Non-Muslim axis. In this way, while aiming to protect and expand its own interests, it also tried to unite other Western powers on this religious axis and weaken and isolate the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁴

After 1856, the non-Muslim population on the island of Crete began to acquire large properties, and the island's Greeks, with the instigation and support of the Russians, increased their actions to disrupt the peace. Other problems caused by the Russians during the same period included the increase in privileges in Wallachia and Boghan, the autonomy of the Lebanese Christians, and the independence efforts of Serbia and Montenegro. While such developments fed the Cretan Greeks' hopes for independence, they also caused them to become more rebellious. After that date, the situation on the island became an international problem that concerned the Great Powers, beyond maintaining domestic peace.⁶⁵

After the second half of the 19th century, England, the Ottoman Empire's reliable ally, caused the Ottoman Empire great distress over the Cretan Question. By giving the Seven Islands to Greece, England caused the Cretan Greeks to take action to annex the island to Greece. With this step, England wanted to strengthen its kinship with Greece while also planning to prevent Russia's influence over Greece. However, England, which followed a balance policy in the region, did not think that Crete could be given in addition to the Seven Islands.⁶⁶ In this regard, it was England's primary wish that Crete, which was located right on the route to the Suez corridor, should remain under Ottoman rule, against France, whose interests in the Mediterranean were changing day by day, and Russia, who wanted to reach the warm waters through the Straits.⁶⁷ The Cretan Revolt, which broke out in 1866, was a rebellion with a clearly defined target in terms of the supporting states such as Greece and the people who participated in the rebellion. The main aim of the rebellion was to unite the island with Greece. Indeed, while Ali Pasha was implementing the plan he would implement by going to Crete to ensure public order both in Istanbul, he clearly expressed that the main idea that guided the rebellion was the Megali Idea with the words "*the cause of the revolt of the Cretan peninsula is the annexation to an independent Greece*".⁶⁸

64 Öztürk, 2008, 373- 374; Özgün, 2019a, 212.

65 Toprak, 2012, 126; Özgün, 2019a, 160.

66 Karabulut, 2008, 80.

67 Özgün, 2019a, 161.

68 Pınar, 2022a, 217-218.

The Serbs, who took advantage of the Ottoman Empire's preoccupation with the rebellion in Crete, took action. They demanded that Belgrade and other fortresses be transferred to them, and they began preparations for an uprising in cooperation with Montenegro. The decree declared in 1858 promised Cretan Christians improvements in economic, social and political areas. However, the governors of Crete acted in direct opposition to this decree and deliberately avoided implementing its provisions. The Isfakians, who reacted to this situation, planned an uprising in 1863, but this attempt was quickly suppressed. In the summer months, however, there was renewed activity on the island. This unrest of the Isfakians can be considered as a preliminary preparation for the great uprising that would break out in 1866. The Christians, who gathered south of Chania, sent a petition to the Ottoman government stating that they demanded the rights supposedly granted in the 1858 Decree, but instead they were faced with new taxes, especially the taxes levied on salt and fish. However, the Ottoman government responded negatively to these demands after a few months. The Christians, whose demands were not accepted, dispersed, probably because they feared military intervention.⁶⁹ Although the Cretan Christians dispersed without incident when their demands were not met, a new unrest broke out in 1866 that spread throughout the island. This time, not only Christians but also Muslims were involved in this tense atmosphere. One of the most important reasons for both groups to unite in this discontent was the poor harvest period of two consecutive years.⁷⁰ Mahmud Celaledin Pasha explained this situation as follows: "*While most of the properties on the island of Crete were in the hands of Muslims, trade was also carried out through them. However, since no other ports were open except for Chania, Kandiye and Rethymno, products had to be brought to these three ports and sold there*". Such restrictions contradicted the Christians' desire for development in the field of trade, and some financial taxes were a heavy burden for them. In addition, the oppressive attitudes of the Governor of Crete Ismail Pasha towards Christians weakened the authority of the government and caused concern among Muslims. This situation caused the social balance to be disrupted and unrest to increase.⁷¹

Muslims were always afraid of Christians because they were worried that there might be unrest. For this reason, Christians, who were constantly watched by Muslims, could not freely engage in banditry. They also realized that Muslims were also upset and complaining about the government's practices and new taxes. Thereupon, they attracted influential and easily influenced people among Muslims to their side. They told them that they would request the removal of some of the current taxes and some reforms that would increase the island's trade and prosperity, and that this would be beneficial to all the islanders, both Muslims

69 Kalopothakes, 1897, 144; Yavuz, 2017, 149.

70 Yavuz, 2017, 149.

71 Beyhan, 2011, 148.

and Christians, and therefore they asked them not to oppose their initiatives in this direction. Thus, unfortunately, they deceived these naive people with various tricks and attracted them to their side.⁷² Because of these tensions were increasing in Crete. However, an uprising as a result of this tension could lead to serious problems that would be irreversible. The Ottoman Empire, aware of this situation, sent a memorandum to the Greek consul in Chania on April 16, 1866. The memorandum stated that an uprising that was thoughtlessly started in Crete under the conditions of that day would be perceived as a destructive attempt in Europe and the East. It was also emphasized that the Cretans should be protected from both misjudging the current situation in Europe and from the illogical advice of angry and impatient people in order to avoid being carried away by such a move. This statement showed that the Ottoman Empire had taken a diplomatic step by foreseeing the consequences of a possible uprising.⁷³

During a period of increasing social unrest in Crete, British Consul Dickson ensured that a warship belonging to the British fleet stationed in the Mediterranean would anchor off the coast of Crete at the beginning of May as a precaution against possible developments. In return, France decided to withdraw its warship from the Port of Suda in order to prevent a possible diplomatic crisis. During this process, Christian representatives from various regions of Crete prepared a petition on May 26, 1866 and submitted it first to the Governor of Crete and then to the consulates of the major powers on May 27. The demands expressed by the Cretan Christians were closely related to the socio-economic conditions of the period. First of all, they wanted “*the implementation of the tax rates determined by the decree declared in 1858.*” It was stated that the arbitrary and disproportionate tax policies implemented after this decree seriously victimized the people economically. However, it was requested that the region of Sfakia, which was quite unproductive in terms of agriculture, be exempted from taxation.⁷⁴ In the mid-19th century, American traveler Bayard Taylor noted that the number of travelers on Crete was extremely small, and that travelers who came to the island were therefore welcomed as privileged people. Towards the end of the century, British traveler Charles Edwardes was told the following: “*It is impossible to find accommodation here. No one comes here, so no preparations are made for travelers like you.*” The main reason for this situation is that the island is not safe.⁷⁵ As can be seen, the inadequacy of the transportation infrastructure within the island also emerged as a significant problem in the second half of the 19th century; poorly maintained roads and bridges were hindering the development of domestic trade. For this reason, it was emphasized that the transportation network needed to be rebuilt. Among

72 Beyhan, 2011, 150-151.

73 Detorakis, 1997, 347; Yavuz, 2017, 151.

74 BOA, A.}MKT.MVL. 8444 (1857)

75 Taylor, 1859, 138; Edwardes, 1887, 23-4; Moore, 2016, 18.

the economic demands was the establishment of a bank in Crete. Because the oil trade was monopolized by a group of usurer merchants, and this was causing serious damage to small producers. This monopoly could direct the market as it wished by increasing prices during periods of low production. The establishment of the bank aimed to prevent this monopolization and establish a more equitable economic order. Another fundamental demand that directly affected the Cretan economy was that trade should not be limited to the ports of Chania, Rethymno and Candia. The fact that the ports were closed in regions other than these three ports was considered an important factor hindering the development of foreign trade. Christian representatives demanded that this situation be corrected, and other ports be opened. These demands revealed the steps that needed to be taken to solve the economic and social problems in Crete. However, whether these demands are met is an important factor that will determine how the tensions in Crete will end.⁷⁶

The Cretan Christians were hoping for a response from the Ottoman Sultan. However, the Sultan was slow to give the expected response and, in the meantime, sent additional military forces to the island. Despite this, the Cretan Christians had begun to gather in the south. The only thing that could have dissuaded them from this move would have been a sign that the Sultan had accepted their demands. However, the expected response never came. The Sultan had sided with his own governor and stated that Crete was already a privileged region and was exempt from taxation. The new taxes were introduced in order to ensure financial harmony with the other regions of the state. This arrangement was deemed necessary to offset the decrease in export taxes. The Sultan accepted that their complaints about the roads and bridges were justified but stated that these demands should not be conveyed collectively but officially to the authorities on the island. He also added that time was needed for such projects to be implemented. This response was far from meeting the expectations of the Cretan Christians. The sultan's support for the governor and his defense of tax policies further increased the discontent of the Christians. No concrete solution was offered, saying that roads and bridges needed time to be built. This situation escalated the tension in Crete even more, opening the door to a possible conflict. The Christians' gathering actions and the sultan's response showed that a peaceful solution on the island was becoming increasingly difficult.⁷⁷

Following the rebellion that broke out in Crete, it was decided to send Mustafa Naili Pasha from Crete to the island again. As soon as Mustafa Naili Pasha arrived on the island, he called the rebels to peace and asked them to lay down their arms, but this offer was not accepted by the rebels. Thereupon, Naili

⁷⁶ Yavuz, 2017, 153.

⁷⁷ Yavuz, 2017, 157.

Pasha resorted to very strict and harsh methods. According to what Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha said, these methods were similar to the approaches Naili Pasha had used in the rebellions he had encountered during his governorship in Crete 20-30 years earlier. At that time, it was claimed that the Christians on the island were acting together in the rebellion, and in response to this situation, the Pasha suppressed them violently, set their villages on fire and forced them to obey.⁷⁸ Mustafa Naili Pasha closed all the ports of the island after the rebels did not respond to his demand to lay down their arms. The reason for this was that previously ships had been used to support the rebels, carrying both ammunition and French, British, American, Hungarian, Polish, German and Italian volunteers. With this move by Naili Pasha, the help coming to the rebels from the outside world was completely blocked. The Pasha had reduced the water level in order to catch the fish.⁷⁹ The Siege of Arkadi left wounds that would be difficult to heal between the two different communities living in Crete and created intense hostility. After this incident, nothing could continue in the old order. Because throughout history, even up until the period when the Arabs took over Crete, the Arkadi Monastery had never been harmed. One of the notable developments of this period was the arrival of Grand Vizier Ali Pasha in Crete. In accordance with the decree issued by Sultan Abdulaziz on September 30, 1867, the Pasha prepared a provincial regulation for Crete and granted the island a special administrative status. According to the *Girit Vilayet Nizamnamesi* (Cretan Provincial Regulation), the financial affairs of the island were to be carried out by *defterdars* in the provinces, *accountants* in the sanjaks and *merchandise managers* in the districts.⁸⁰ According to the regulation, a General Assembly would be established with the participation of two representatives elected by the people from each district. This assembly had responsibilities such as undertaking the maintenance of the roads and bridges on the island, establishing credit funds, developing trade, industry and agricultural activities, addressing education issues and ensuring that a portion of the island's income was allocated to the island for rehabilitation works.⁸¹ As clearly stated in the Cretan Provincial Regulations, the island had long been exempt from taxes paid by other provinces. The islanders were only liable to pay tithes, alcohol taxes, customs duties, and taxes on salt and tobacco.⁸² Unfortunately, the innovations brought by Ali Pasha with the statute could not be implemented in every region of the island, and could only be implemented in places where Ottoman forces were under strong control. Mehmed Salahi, who was sent to Crete by Abdulhamid II, stated that the reforms carried out by Ali Pasha in Crete were damaging the privileges of the Muslims while examining the reasons for

78 Beyhan, 2011, 151-152.

79 Yavuz, 2017, 163.

80 Salâhi, 1967, 13.

81 Salâhi, 1967, 14.

82 "Girit Vilayet Nizamnamesi", Düstûr, I. Tertip, Cilt I, 655; Tural, 2005, 74-97.

the unrest in 1889. According to Salahi, Ali Pasha had taken a hasty stance and followed a wrong path. Because the hostility between the two communities on the island had deepened even more. In such a tense atmosphere, granting new rights to Christians without thoroughly evaluating the consequences and taking sufficient measures could not provide a real solution to the problems. This approach could only make things seem to calm down for a short time.⁸³ Ziya Pasha's criticism focused on this very point. According to him, Ali Pasha realized that he could not solve the Cretan issue with military authority, so he sought a way out by granting new rights to Christians. These rights provided significant economic advantages to those who aimed to connect the island to Greece. Moreover, these privileges offered by Ali Pasha would also prepare the ground for events that would put the security of Muslims in Crete at risk.⁸⁴ Ziya Pasha wrote a poem criticizing Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha by comparing him to Koprulu and describing him as a "doorman" (Kapıcızade).⁸⁵

N. Adıyeke argues that the Crete Provincial Assembly, which was established based on the rules of the Crete Provincial Regulation, virtually transformed the island into a "*state within a state*." Aktepe and Karal, with a similar view, argued that Crete achieved a kind of "*autonomy*" with these regulations. Reinkowski, on the other hand, took a completely opposite view and claimed that the new rights granted to Crete by the Regulation actually aimed to further strengthen the sovereignty over the island.⁸⁶ Türkgeldi differed from Aktepe and Karal's views and argued that Crete was not granted autonomy or autonomy. According to him, with these regulations, only the administrative structure of the island was corrected, its administration was organized and thus peace was ensured on the island.⁸⁷ The rights granted to Christians by Ali Pasha were not a concession but rather the implementation of a principle of "*equality*" between the two communities in Crete, in line with the Reform Edict of 1856.⁸⁸ Because article 11 of the second part of the Crete Provincial Regulations stated that the executive authority belonged only to the governor. The governor would exercise this authority within the framework of the laws and regulations, through the administrators and councils of elders in the sanjaks, districts and villages.⁸⁹ This article clearly shows that there was no autonomy on the island; the administrative authority was still in the hands of the governor appointed by the sultan. A similar assessment was made in the journal "*Österreichische Monatsschrift für den Orient*" in 1897, stating that some conveniences were provided to Crete with the regulation, but these conveniences could not be put

83 Salâhi, 1967, 31.

84 Turan, 2012, 3189-3190.

85 Beydilli, 1989, 425; İnal, 1982, 24.

86 Yavuz, 2017, 195-196.

87 Türkgeldi, 1987, 29.

88 Türkgeldi, 1987, 160.

89 "Girit Vilayet Nizamnamesi", *Düstür*, I. Tertip, Volum I, 672.

into practice due to the pressure of the autocratic Muslim governors.⁹⁰ When the Regulation of the Province of Mount Lebanon, which is another example, is compared with the Crete Provincial Regulation, it is clearly understood that the boundaries of the regulation in Crete are quite narrow, while the one in Mount Lebanon has a structure more suitable for the definition of a “*state within a state*”.⁹¹ *İhtilal-i Kebir*, (The Great Revolt) that took place in Crete between 1866 and 1869 caused great financial and human losses for the Ottoman Empire. This revolt was a large-scale uprising launched by the Christian population of Crete against Ottoman rule and left deep scars on the island.

1.2.1. Sultan Abdülaziz’s European Tour in the Shadow of the Cretan Revolt

Sultan Abdülaziz’s European tour, which began on June 21, 1867, when he left Dolmabahçe Palace and ended on the morning of August 7, 1867, when he returned to Istanbul, has a special place in Ottoman history. This long tour, if we leave aside the previous sultans’ visits to Europe for the purpose of conquest, was the first and last diplomatic tour abroad that an Ottoman ruler participated in. Sultan Abdülaziz’s long tour coincided with a period when new powers were forming in Europe. These were the years when a nation state was born on the Italian peninsula in 1861, followed by the unification of Prussia with Germany in 1871. On the other hand, it was a temporary and relative relief period for the Ottoman Empire after the Crimean War, when Russia shifted its attention and priority from the Black Sea and the Balkans to Central Asia. It is also important that this trip took place right in the middle of the twenty-year period between the Crimean War of 1854-56 and the Ottoman-Russian Wars of 1876-78. Because this last twenty-year period of the Tanzimat Era between 1839-1876 was a colorful period in the Ottoman Empire, before the long tyranny of Abdulhamid II, when newspapers, theater, and literature expanded and politicized the public sphere. Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats were learning about European politics and society, art, and civilization; they were completely open to European-based intellectual movements. The Paris correspondent of the British newspaper *The Observer*, who went to London on May 31, 1867, included comments on the foreign emperors and kings who would visit the French capital for the 1867 Paris Fair. The correspondent, who drew attention to the widespread comments in the French press that Russian Tsar Alexander II had come to Paris for the purpose of renewing the 1856 agreement, stated that England and France would resist these demands. Alexander II had an important place among the rulers who visited the Paris International Fair. It was known that Russia had revisionist demands against the European order established in 1856 with the Paris Agreement after the Crimean War and especially against the

⁹⁰ Yavuz, 2017, 202.

⁹¹ Reyhan, 2006a, 175-184.

disarmament of the Black Sea. The reporter, who wrote in the same news that the Ottoman Sultan did not eat when someone was with him and accompanied his guests to their meals in a cage-like structure when he had to, wrote that it was not known whether the Sultan would continue this habit in Paris and London. Here, it is a noteworthy detail that the tradition of the sultans eating their meals alone, which has continued since the time of Mehmet the Conqueror, is known in Europe. Before the trip, the governments of France and England had been pressuring for the removal of regulations that prevented their citizens from acquiring land within the Ottoman Empire for a long time. In addition, as Karal stated, they were also making efforts to reduce the lands held by the state and foundations and increase the more easily purchasable property held by private individuals. Just before Sultan Abdulaziz's European trip, on June 10, 1867, the law known as the Travel Law was issued, which gave foreigners the right to own property in Ottoman lands, except for the Hejaz.⁹² The right to own property was first granted to the French in 1868 with a protocol, followed by citizens of many countries including Sweden, England, Prussia/Germany, Russia and Greece. The aim of this change being made hastily before the European trip was to change the negative atmosphere in European public opinion about the Sultan and the Ottoman State due to the Cretan Revolt. Indeed, the primary reason for the visit was to restore the Ottoman Empire's reputation in European capitals, which had been shaken by the Cretan Revolt, and to prevent a possible French-Russian alliance in favor of the rebels in Crete. Since the Cretan revolt began in 1866, the general atmosphere in European public opinion and among statesmen had been in favor of the Greek rebels. For example, a long analysis of the Cretan Revolt was published in the *Guardian* newspaper on June 5, 1867, prior to Abdülaziz's trip. The anonymous analysis argued that the economic and intellectual development of Christian groups within the Empire was many times greater than that of the Muslim population, yet there was discrimination against Christians in the courts and religious life. Reflecting the prevailing ideas in Europe at the time, the article predicted that the Ottoman Empire, which was claimed to have a weak but tyrannical administration, could not be saved by reforms, and that all other Christian groups, especially Cretan, would eventually gain their independence.⁹³ The *Manchester Guardian* newspaper, dated June 20, 1867, reported that France, Russia, Prussia and Italy had sent a note requesting that the conflicts in Crete be ended and that the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire establish a joint commission to resolve the islanders' complaints.⁹⁴

92 *Pontypool Free Press*, 8 June 1867, 2; *The Queen*, 6 July 1867, 4; *Newcastle Journal*, 13 July 1867, 2; *Kendal Mercury*, 20 July 1867, 3; Yurtbilir, 2024, 135.

93 *Newcastle Journal*, 13 July 1867, 2; *Kendal Mercury*, 20 July 1867, 3; *Enniscorthy News*, 27 July 1867, 4.

94 *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 June 1867, 2; *Cambridge Independent Press*, 20 July 1867, 8; *Liverpool Daily Post*, 5 August 1867, 6; Yurtbilir, 2024, 129-160.

1.2.2. Crete Provincial Regulation

The most striking aspect of the Cretan rebellion of 1866 is the intense interest shown by the European public and the great powers in the incident and the direct involvement of these states in the process. Following the spread of news that a comprehensive massacre would take place on the island during the rebellion, civilians who had moved from the interior to the coastal areas were evacuated to Greece by ships belonging to the British, French and Russian navies. On the other hand, this rebellion was presented to the European public not only as a local uprising but also as a broader movement reflecting the dissatisfaction of all non-Muslim elements living in Ottoman lands. In this way, the issue was no longer addressed solely in the context of an internal Ottoman issue or Turkish-Greek relations; it was transformed into an international diplomatic issue. In the face of these developments, the Ottoman administration made promises of reform in order to prevent a possible military intervention by the European states and sent a commission to the island under the chairmanship of Grand Vizier Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha. This initiative aimed both to stabilize the situation in Crete and to prevent external intervention. During the Greek rebellion that began in 1821, the island of Crete was dragged into an unstable and anarchic period due to the propaganda of unification with Greece and the armament activities carried out in this direction. However, this situation was temporarily ended with the intervention of the Governor of Egypt, Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Pasha. Thanks to Mehmed Ali Pasha taking the island under his own administration as the governor, public order was largely maintained on the island from the 1830s to the 1840s. However, from the perspective of Russian Tsar Nicholas I, who was sympathetic to the Greek rebels, Mehmed Ali Pasha's gaining influence in Morea and Crete posed a serious threat to the "Greek-Greek Project", one of the fundamental goals of Russian foreign policy and which had been shaped since the reign of Catherine II. The aim of this project, which aimed to revive Byzantium, was to liberate the Slavic and Orthodox Greek elements under Ottoman rule. The first phase of the project envisaged Russia increasing its influence over the Black Sea and Crimea, then advancing through the Straits, Istanbul and the Aegean Islands to establish a "Hellenic State" under the administration of Constantine, the son of Catherine II. In this context, the withdrawal of Mehmed Ali Pasha from Crete as a result of the London Conference of 1840 led to the emergence of security problems and an atmosphere of unrest on the island. In order to end the long-standing instability in the region and to re-establish social peace, the Crete Province Regulation was prepared and put into effect. With this regulation, the internal administration of the island of Crete was largely left to the local people and the island was given a de facto autonomous structure. During this process, the Ottoman Empire's sovereignty over Crete was limited to certain topics, especially foreign relations

and military areas; many authorities regarding the internal administration of the island were transferred to local administrative bodies. As of 1866, the demographic structure in Crete consisted of approximately 150,000 Greeks and 50,000 Muslims.⁹⁵ Considering these ratios, Muslims constituted one-third of the total population and Christians two-thirds. With the Vilayet Regulation, an administrative model was adopted in Crete in which the ethnic majority actively participated in the administration and local elements had a say. Thus, an autonomy based on the principle of majority was established within a decentralized structure; this transformation took place in parallel with both the demands of local nationalist movements and the diplomatic pressures of the great powers. The tension between the efforts of the Ottoman Empire to protect its political sovereignty and the influence-increasing strategies of the great imperial powers is clearly seen in the administrative regulations prepared in the 19th century. In this context, the Regulation of the Province of Mount Lebanon of 1861 was one of the first major examples of weakening the central authority of the Ottoman Empire and granting extensive powers to local elements. The regulation in question was prepared under the direct intervention and control of European states; it paved the way for France to establish its influence in Lebanon through the Maronite community in particular. This model was evaluated as part of Europe's efforts to transform multi-ethnic regions under Ottoman rule. This experience in Mount Lebanon became the prototype of an "ideal" decentralized structure that the imperial powers wanted to see in Ottoman territory. Indeed, the Crete Vilayet Regulation of 1867, which was a continuation of this model, was part of a similar strategic initiative in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus, the Ottoman Empire's sphere of influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, just like in the Middle East, became open to direct intervention by the great powers. In this process, concepts such as "local administration" and "autonomy" served the function of creating new areas in Ottoman territory where the great powers could establish influence, rather than meeting local demands. In this respect, the Crete Provincial Regulation was not only an administrative reform but also an institutionalized tool for external interventions in the Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean.⁹⁶

1.2.3. Admiral Hobart Pasha, a Blockade Breaker

The British naval officer, whose full name was Hobart-Hampden Augustus Charles and referred to as Hobart Pasha in Ottoman sources, was born on April 1, 1822 in the Leicestershire region of England. The son of the Earl of Buckinghamshire, Hobart belonged to a noble family. At the age of 13, he joined the British Royal Navy in 1835 and began his naval career. He devoted

⁹⁵ Adıyeke and Adıyeke, 2021, 212; Dumont, 1995, 116.

⁹⁶ Adıyeke and Adıyeke, 2021, 212; Dumont, 1995, 116; Shaw and Shaw, 1983, 192; Ortaylı, 2000, 66-67; Adıyeke, 2000, 25; Reyhan, 2006b, 138-141; "Girit Vilâyet Nizamnamesi", *Düstur*, 1. Tertip, Volume 1, 652-687.

the rest of his life to this profession. After serving in various positions in the British navy, he was appointed commander of the warship Foxhound in 1861. After two years in this position, he rose to the rank of naval colonel (captain) and later retired from the British navy. However, due to his energetic nature and adventurous personality, he could not adapt to retirement life; he went to America in search of a new struggle. Here, he acted with the Confederate (Southern) forces during the American Civil War and achieved significant successes during this period. Hobart Pasha's naval career was not limited to the British Royal Navy, but in the following years he entered Ottoman service, this time taking on important roles in a different geography and political context. Hobart, who was motivated to embark on a new adventure after his experience of the civil war in America, turned his route to the Mediterranean in 1867. At that time, the Ottoman Empire was struggling with the Greek rebellion that broke out in Crete. The Greek population on the island was waging an armed resistance with the aim of annexing Crete to Greece. It is understood that Hobart's first intention in coming to this region was to fight against the Ottomans by acting together with the Cretan Greeks, according to Woods, a witness of the period and another Englishman in Ottoman service. Hobart, who first went to Athens for this purpose, planned to operate there, but his brother Lord Hobart, who was the country manager of the Ottoman Bank, which operated as a British bank in Istanbul, opposed this initiative. Lord Hobart, who did not want his brother to participate in a rebellion against the Ottomans, made efforts to have him join the Ottoman navy. As the rebellion in Crete deepened, Lord Hobart's initiatives in this direction yielded results and Hobart was offered a position in the Ottoman navy. This offer was conveyed by Fuad Pasha, one of the grand viziers of the period, in 1867. During the meeting, Fuad Pasha emphasized one point in particular: If Hobart accepted the position, the Ottoman Empire would not be held responsible for any responsibilities that might arise towards his own country due to this choice, in other words, any diplomatic consequences that would arise would be considered entirely Hobart's own personal decision.⁹⁷ Despite this diplomatic detail, Hobart agreed to serve in the Ottoman navy, and with this decision he became one of the interesting figures in both Ottoman and British history.⁹⁸

Hobart Pasha's entry into Ottoman service was quite unusual compared to the conventions of the time. Normally, when the Ottoman State requested an expert from any European state, this process was carried out through official

97 "There were about 250 colonels in the British Navy who wanted to serve; at that time, only about 40 colonels were actually on duty. In this context, I remembered that a British officer with the same rank as me had served as naval counselor in the Ottoman Navy for 24 years. This officer was Sir Adolphe Slade, and with his retirement the position in question had become vacant. It is possible to state that the conditions offered were extremely satisfactory. In short, I accepted the offer and was officially appointed to the service of the Ottoman State for a period of five years. However, during this period, I would continue to retain my rank and status as a British naval officer and my British citizenship". Hobart 1886, 186-188.

98 Stewart, 2009, 167; Akar, 2022, 52; Woods, 1976, 201; Woods, 1924, 150-151; Hobart 1886, 188.

correspondence; the requested person was assigned with the approval and permission of the sending state. Thus, the expert would be under certain obligations both to the state in which he served and to his own country. However, Hobart Pasha acted completely outside these conventions and joined the Ottoman navy on his own initiative. His independent character and adventurous nature led him to act without adhering to any state protocol. This unusual situation drew the reaction of the British government; Britain made various diplomatic efforts to prevent Hobart from entering Ottoman service. These efforts, which are also reflected in British archive documents, were unsuccessful and Hobart Pasha began to serve as a high-ranking sailor in the Ottoman State without “*official British authorization*.” This situation constituted an exception not only in the diplomatic relations between the two countries but also in the Ottoman bureaucratic practices. The appointment of Hobart Pasha also reveals the flexible attitude of the Ottoman Empire, shaped in line with the military reform quests and pragmatic needs of the period. Although the British Admiralty recalled Hobart Pasha from Ottoman service, he did not comply with this call and began his duty in the Ottoman Navy with the rank of “*liva*” (brigadier general) in 1867. When Hobart Pasha first accepted the offer from the Ottoman Empire, he disregarded the fact that as a British naval officer, he had to consult the British Admiralty before taking on such a duty. This was not only a personal decision, but also a matter directly concerning British foreign policy and maritime regulations. Especially after the retirement of Sir Adolphus Slade, who had previously served as a consultant in the Ottoman Navy, many applications were made to the British Admiralty for this position and the question of who would be given this position was taken up in a serious evaluation process. At this very stage, Hobart Pasha’s entry into Ottoman service on his own initiative, disregarding official processes and customs, caused serious discomfort and anger in some political circles in London, especially the British Admiralty. The British government considered this development as a form of disobedience and diplomatic disrespect and immediately recalled Hobart to the country.⁹⁹ However, Hobart Pasha took a tough stance against this threatening approach and openly stated that he did not share the same view as the British Admiralty. He stood by his own decision and clearly demonstrated his will to remain in Ottoman service. This attitude of the Pasha was an indication not only of his personal determination but also of his loyalty to the Ottoman State and his will to complete a military mission. This attitude indicates both his personal independence and his loyalty to the Ottoman State. Hobart Pasha, who served the Ottoman Navy for nineteen years after taking office, played important roles in this process, especially in the context of developments in Crete. One of the main tasks given to Hobart Pasha during the Cretan rebellion was to prevent the

99 NA. FO. 881 / 1635, No. 49: 9 December 1868; NA. FO. 881 / 1635, No. 167: 30 December 1868.

shipment of arms and ammunition from Greece to the island. Within the scope of naval activities, he took control of sea transportation routes in order to prevent the rebellion from growing with external support and implemented a naval blockade against illegal shipments. This critical mission was of great military and diplomatic importance in terms of both preserving Ottoman sovereignty on the island and controlling the rebellion. Hobart Pasha's determined stance and naval competence were closely observed not only by the Ottoman navy but also by the international community of the time. The role he played in this process also had symbolic importance in terms of the Ottoman efforts to modernize its naval power. Hobart Pasha began to play an important and influential role as soon as he began his duties in the Ottoman Navy. "*During this period when the Cretan issue was still heated, Grand Vizier Ali Pasha took Hobart with him and went directly to the coast of Crete,*" where he directly benefited from his experience in the diplomatic tests the Ottomans faced.¹⁰⁰ In this process, Hobart Pasha's diplomatic knowledge and guidance were decisive in stopping a French ship trying to break through the Ottoman siege and reach the island, and as a result, the French ship was forced to leave the region. Shortly after this incident, a Greek ship named "Enosis" opened fire on the Ottoman fleet in the Port of Suda, which further deepened the crisis. However, Hobart Pasha effectively used the diplomatic consequences of this attack, ensuring that "*not only the Enosis ship was neutralized, but also the Greek aid planned to reach Crete with this ship was prevented.*"¹⁰¹ Thus, the rebels were deprived of external support, the rebellion lost its effect within a few days and the movement largely came to an end. Following this success, Hobart was given the title of "Admiral" by a sultan's will, thus making his position in the navy official and permanent. The most striking aspect of Hobart Pasha's Ottoman service was not only his military successes, but also his knowledge and experience in international law and diplomacy, which complemented the deficiencies of the Ottoman pashas. Although Ottoman officials were often right legally, they could be disadvantaged in the face of pressure from foreign states due to their lack of knowledge of international rules. Hobart Pasha changed this situation, resolutely defended the rights of the Ottomans against foreign commanders and won diplomatic victories one after another. Greece's expectation of gaining the support of the great powers can be clearly observed, especially in its expectation of a possible change of duty in British foreign policy. This situation is a clear indication of the Greek political elite's habit of great power intervention. In addition, the fact that developments did not

¹⁰⁰ Morning Post, 12 January 1869, 5.

¹⁰¹ Morning Post, 4 February 1869, 4; It is necessary to request from the local government that the Enosis steamer be destroyed or kept under arrest until the trial is carried out in a manner that will not harm anyone... Although it is possible that the investigation is not valid and it is not possible to reach an agreement on the subject, I would like to inform both the people of the city and the commander of the Greek frigate that my real aim is the Enosis steamer and that I do not intend to harm the ship. BOA, İMTZ (01), 15/460 (1869).

progress as expected despite French and Russian support and that contribution was expected from England is another element that emphasizes the decisive position of England in 19th century international politics. However, a broader perspective is necessary to understand the social and intellectual ground on which the political mindset in Greece was shaped, apart from the intervention of the great powers. In this context, the observations of the British ambassador Erskine make an important contribution. The ambassador states that the public supported his government, openly expressed anti-Turkish feelings and called for unity against the common enemy of Hellenism, thus clearly describing the internal dynamics of Greece at the time. The determined and persistent attitude of Greece, which awaited the intervention of the great powers, led the Sublime Porte to take clearer and more definite steps. In this process, the British ambassador Erskine referred to a letter he received from Hobart Pasha, one of the leading figures in the Ottoman navy, in his report dated 30 December 1868, which he sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Clarendon. Hobart Pasha reported that he had captured and imprisoned approximately 1,000 volunteers during a period when he was managing and assisting the naval blockade between Morea and Crete, and that this development was an indication that the Cretan Rebellion had ended. Similar information was also conveyed by the British Ambassador in Paris, Lyons. According to information he obtained from the French Foreign Minister Moustier, Lyons reported that the French ambassador in Athens had informed him that Hobart Pasha had captured hundreds of volunteers on the Enosis ship and that this development had ended the rebellion. These diplomatic correspondences are noteworthy in terms of revealing the impact of naval operations that determined the course of the rebellion. Hobart Pasha, who returned to Istanbul after these successes in Crete, gradually increased his influence in the navy, made suggestions to the Sultan regarding the modernization and restructuring of the navy, and provided important ideas, especially on strategic issues such as reforms and ship purchases. In this respect, Hobart Pasha was not only a soldier but also an effective advisor and implementer in the reconstruction of the Ottoman naval power.¹⁰²

1.2.4. Paris Conference of 1869

The Cretan Revolt, which began in 1866, is considered a significant turning point in 19th century Ottoman history. The Megali Idea, which formed the basis of Greece's irredentist goals, was influential in the background of the revolt; in this context, Greece provided indirect and direct support to the revolt for over two years. The Ottoman government carried out military and administrative

¹⁰² NA. FO. 881 / 1635, No. 49: 9 December 1868; NA. FO. 881 / 1635, No. 167: 30 December 1868; NA. FO. 881 / 1635, No. 170: 1 January 1869; BOA, C.BH 227/10558; Woods, 1924, 151-152; Hobart, 1887, 189-193; Pinar, 2022b, 376-377; Akar, 2022, 53-54.

efforts for approximately two years in order to re-establish public order on the island; after the violence of the revolt was largely suppressed, the State turned its attention to Greece. During this period, it was thought that a political and military move against Greece would not only consolidate control over Crete, but would also re-establish Ottoman authority and prestige in both domestic and foreign public opinion. At the same time, the determination of the central government against the Greeks, Ottoman subjects who were affected by Greece's expansionist policies, would be demonstrated on this occasion. Throughout the 19th century, the Sublime Porte endeavored to develop a careful and multifaceted diplomacy by considering the strategic importance of the gains to be achieved in every diplomatic and military encounter with Greece. In this context, in response to the interventionist attitude of Greece during the Cretan Revolt, a harsh ultimatum was given towards the end of 1868, and this development triggered a new crisis in Ottoman-Greek relations. In a short time, this bilateral tension became the subject of European intervention, a familiar reality of 19th century Ottoman diplomacy. With the involvement of European states in the issue, Ottoman diplomacy took a careful and planned step by putting into effect the experience, principles and reflexes it had shaped over many years. Within this framework, it was decided to hold an international conference in Paris. Considering the concern that Ottoman statesmen generally felt about the transfer of issues to European platforms, the existence of a cautious approach towards conferences becomes understandable. However, the Paris Conference held at the beginning of 1869 departed from this general tendency and constituted an exception. Prior to the conference, the Sublime Porte displayed an extremely consistent and strategic stance; it both drew the boundaries of the agenda and determined the negotiation method. Limiting the discussions to the current crisis and determining the legal basis of the conference as the Paris Treaty of 1856, this meeting was largely placed on a procedural basis and a controlled international intervention process was constructed for the Ottomans. Thanks to the legal basis provided by the Paris Treaty, the Ottoman Empire was included in the Paris Conference as a fully authorized participant, while Greece was only able to take part in the status of an observer and was thus excluded from the decision-making processes at the very beginning of the negotiations. As a result of the conference being conducted in accordance with the agenda and method determined by the Ottomans, the Sublime Porte achieved a rapid and effortless success rarely seen in the history of 19th century diplomacy. From the perspective of Ottoman bureaucrats, this result was considered not only a diplomatic gain but also a reaffirmation of the state's prestige and effectiveness in the international arena; it was interpreted as both a material and spiritual "*muzafferiyet-i azîme*" (great victory). There are two main elements behind the importance that Ottoman statesmen attached

to the diplomatic success achieved at the Paris Conference. The first is that the Ottoman State, which became a part of European international law with the Paris Treaty of 1856, was in a more advantageous position compared to Greece, which remained outside this framework. The fact that the Ottoman diplomatic delegation highlighted the Paris Treaty as the legal basis of the conference also prevented England and France from objecting to Greece's limited participation. The second and more decisive element is the determination shown by the Sublime Porte from the beginning of the process and its insistence on retaining the diplomatic initiative. Indeed, the statements of the French Foreign Minister of the period, Lavalette, confirm this situation. In his assessment following the conference, Lavalette stated, "*The Sublime Porte was so determined from the very beginning that we had to listen to its demands. The Ottoman Empire was on the verge of war and the only way to convince it to attend the conference was to accept its terms. Furthermore, since the Sublime Porte did not abandon its stance based on the participation of those who signed the Paris Treaty, there was no other option left for Greece other than granting observer status.*" Thus, the assessments of French Foreign Minister Lavalette reveal that legal principles or diplomatic practices may be disregarded when necessary, but the determining factor in this process is the determination of the Sublime Porte.¹⁰³ Lavalette's statements clearly admit that the insistence shown by the Ottoman side has rendered the existing diplomatic balances ineffective. This situation not only reflects the experience and skill gained by the Ottoman diplomatic tradition throughout the 19th century, but also shows that the Ottoman State maintained its ability to play a decisive role in international politics.¹⁰⁴

On the other hand, the Paris Conference was undoubtedly a diplomatic victory for Clarendon and England, as it did not include any discussion of the Cretan Question. Furthermore, this conference did not lead to any change in the status of British-Ottoman relations and did not contain any specific declaration of obligations in international law that could serve as a precedent for the Alabama case, which was based on similar accusations of negligence between England and the United States in the future. The Alabama case was a diplomatic crisis between the United States and the United Kingdom during the American Civil War and was mainly shaped by the damage caused by ships such as the CSS Alabama, which were built in British shipyards and joined the Confederate Navy. The US government accused England of indirectly supporting the Confederacy by violating the principle of neutrality and demanded compensation for these damages after the war. This dispute was the subject of long-lasting diplomatic negotiations between the two countries and was finally resolved by the Geneva Arbitration in 1872, and the United Kingdom agreed to pay a significant amount

103 Pınar, 2012, 168-169; Robson, 1960, 42.

104 BOA. İ. MTZ. 01, 15 / 463, Ek 5, 5 Şevval 1285 / 19 January 1869; Pınar, 2012, 168-169; Robson, 1960, 42

of compensation to the United States. The Alabama Question was an important turning point in the development of international law and was accepted as a precedent for the implementation of the neutrality obligations of states in times of war. In this respect, it allowed England to maintain its position in a context similar to the accusations of negligence that the Ottomans brought against Greece.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Robson, 1960, 51-53; Tatsios, 1967, 39; Kouvaros, 2017; 223-224.

CHAPTER 2

A PUBLIC OPINION BATTLE IN THE BRITISH PRESS: THE CRETE ISSUE

2.1. Government-Press Relations in England Until the 19th Century

The 19th-century British press was a multilayered communication space where not only national public opinion but also various interest groups within the borders of the empire found a voice. British newspapers, which claimed to represent public opinion, were markedly polarized in terms of both content production and political orientation during this period. The partisan divide between the Conservatives and Liberals was directly reflected in the editorial line of the press; this difference became more visible especially in foreign policy and imperial issues. Beyond this partisan divide, a more obvious rupture on the issue of empire emerged with the tariff reform campaign launched by Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain in 1903. While this initiative aimed at economic integration between Britain and the Dominions, it also deepened the differences in the approaches of political parties to imperial issues. Consequently, imperial journalism varied in terms of content and tone not only between Conservative and Liberal newspapers, but also between publications affiliated with various factions affiliated with each party. Despite these differences, however, there were some structural transformations that had homogenizing effects on the British press of the period. The process of commercialization that became evident in the last quarter of the 19th century and the developments in communication technologies - especially the telegraph, submarine cables and printing technologies - radically changed the processes of newspaper production and distribution. This change not only limited editorial independence, but also transformed editorial approaches to what public opinion was and how it could be shaped.¹⁰⁶ In this context, editors began to show a tendency to use their power to direct or shape public opinion more openly rather than reflect it. This transformation occurred simultaneously with the traditional publication organs of the political elite entering into market competition with high-circulation newspapers that appealed to wider and more socially inclusive audiences. This competition led to standardization in content production in terms of the economic sustainability of the press and to the publication of certain news in the same format in more than one newspaper through syndication systems. This type of content sharing, especially for newspapers with limited resources, paved the way for the formation of a homogeneous discourse. This situation narrowed the capacity of newspapers to reflect the diverse views in the public opinion. Therefore, when evaluating the British press of the period, it is necessary to read not only political stances and editorial autonomy, but also these homogenizing structural dynamics. Indeed, British newspapers operated not only from a national perspective, but also as part of an imperial communication network. The flow of news established between England and the settler colonies

¹⁰⁶ Potter, 2004, 39- 41; McKenna, 2018, 9-10.

in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa was influential in shaping the British public opinion, and the press functioned both as a central source of information and as a space where the imperial imagination was reproduced. In this context, evaluating the British press solely with its internal dynamics would be methodologically inadequate, and limiting it to the national context would risk ignoring the imperial reality of the period. Therefore, a holistic approach that takes into account both structural homogenization tendencies and diversity within the empire is essential to understanding the press-public relations of the period.¹⁰⁷ In addition, in order to increase the analytical depth of these general evaluations on the political and structural transformation of the press, it would be appropriate to proceed with concrete examples based on the content of certain newspapers. For example, the discourses of publications with different political orientations such as *The Times*, *The Daily News* or *The Manchester Guardian* regarding the same event can be examined comparatively. Such comparisons are important in terms of revealing not only the function of the press to reflect public opinion but also its capacity to shape it. In addition, the evaluation of news, editorials or reader letters on specific developments such as the Cretan Rebellion, the Eastern Question or Joseph Chamberlain's tariff reform through discourse analysis will make the role played by the press in the construction of public opinion in a more concrete way. For most of the 19th century, British newspapers were largely dependent on traditional means of communication to convey news abroad. Letters, especially those delivered by sailing ships, or excerpts from the foreign press were the main sources of foreign news. The travel time for news during this period was quite long; for example, in the 1850s, it could take around three months for a news story to reach England from Australia. The introduction of steamships reduced this time, but by the late 1860s, journeys could still take up to 45 days. However, from the late 1840s onwards, the widespread use of telegraph technology radically transformed the circulation of news. With the construction of telegraph lines even in mountainous and rugged areas, information could be transmitted much faster and over longer distances than physical means of transport. The establishment of the first submarine telegraph line between England and France in 1851 significantly accelerated the circulation of news between continents and paved the way for the formation of global news networks. British newspapers quickly adopted the possibilities provided by telegraph technology and used this new means of communication as an effective marketing tool to attract readers. In 1857–1858, the *London Morning Post* discussed efforts to increase the amount of news overseas, but at the same time expressed the opinion that no newspaper would invest directly in telegraph infrastructure for the flow of information between continents. In contrast, *The Times*, which positioned itself

107 Potter, 2004, 39- 41; McKenna, 2018, 10.

as the “voice of the British nation,” emphasized the importance of telegraph networks that provided global reach and argued that news circulation should transcend geographical boundaries and take place worldwide. According to the newspaper, the distribution area of news should be the entire world and the impact of this dissemination is directly related to the development of civilization. The Times stated that it had a powerful news network that aimed to distribute fifty to sixty thousand copies worldwide within a few hours of sunrise. Similarly, the Daily Telegraph newspaper, founded in 1855 with telegraph news as its center, adopted this technology as the primary motivation for news provision and publication on a global scale, and fulfilled the expectations of its founders in this direction. However, in reality, the efforts of British newspapers in the mid-19th century to provide their readers with telegraph-based news were severely limited both by high costs and by the inadequacy of the existing cable infrastructure. Even the short-distance telegraph cables laid under the Mediterranean in the 1850s did not yield satisfactory results in terms of stability and reliability.¹⁰⁸ Long-distance cable projects aimed at establishing connections with British colonies in North America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific were still far from being feasible under the technical and financial conditions of the period. For this reason, despite the desire of newspapers to turn to the possibilities offered by the telegraph in terms of news provision, they largely remained dependent on traditional methods—that is, correspondents’ letters and copies of the overseas press delivered by ship. This had a direct impact on how and to what extent developments, especially in the geography of the empire, were conveyed to the British public. While the speed and access opportunities offered by telegraph technology theoretically increased the public’s expectation of more up-to-date and regular news, the failure to meet this expectation due to technical and logistical constraints limited the press’ effectiveness in conveying imperial news. The great rebellion that began in India in 1857 was covered extensively in the British press; news from India became the main agenda item in newspapers. However, since the news had to be transported from India by land and sea before reaching the European telegraph network, this flow of information caused serious losses of time. This situation caused delays in news reaching England, especially in the early stages of the rebellion; sometimes it took more than a month to transmit a single piece of news. These delays caused increasing public frustration, and the press’s credibility was questioned because of the inability to meet the demand for information about the process. One correspondent of the period emphasized the British public’s expectation of early information about events, and stated that the inadequacy of local staff in key communication centers such as Alexandria

108 Potter, 2004, 42; Pettegree, 2014, 362-372; *Leicester Journal*, 7 August 1857, 4; *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*, 22 August 1857, 6.

caused unnecessary delays in the flow of news. Furthermore, the irregularity and disjointed nature of incoming news forced editors to produce meaningful narratives from incomplete and scattered telegraphic messages, making it impossible for newspapers to provide a continuous and holistic presentation of news. As a result, such disruptions led to a significant decline in public interest in the daily flow of news from distant parts of the British Empire.¹⁰⁹

2.1.1. The Development of British Public Opinion at the Turn of the 20th Century

In the second half of the 19th century, the mass-scale approach to public opinion in England became evident in direct relation to the institutionalization process of industrial capitalism. The perception of public opinion as a whole during this period was closely linked not only to developments in communication technologies but also to the economic-political transformation of England. Especially with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, the country moved away from an agricultural-centered economic structure and towards a structure based on industrial production. This transformation caused a large population working in the agricultural sector to be directed to production centers, thus causing an intense internal migration from rural areas to cities. In the background of this migration movement, the ability to meet the nutritional needs of the urban population by providing food products imported from abroad at more affordable prices played an important role. Thus, both the increase in industrial production and the urban-centered social transformation strengthened the position of the press as a tool that appealed to the masses; the issues of shaping, directing and representing public opinion became more systematically discussed.¹¹⁰

In this context, the continuity and security of food imports were central to the economic-political priorities of late Victorian England. Within the framework of an economic order based on free trade principles, many industrial producers became dependent on low food prices in order to maintain their competitiveness in international markets. Affordable imported food not only reduced production costs, but also became a vital source of income for the working class. This situation, together with the increasing political weight of the working class within the expanding electoral base, led political actors to address issues directly related to food prices and the import regime as a more prioritized and vital agenda item. The industrial recession experienced especially after 1875 and the high unemployment rates that came with it triggered social unrest among the urban poor, which made food security a critical element not only in terms of economic but also social stability. As a result, the issue of keeping food prices

¹⁰⁹ Potter, 2004, 42; Pettegree, 2014, 362-372; *Leicester Journal*, 7 August 1857, 4; *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*, 22 August 1857, 6; *The Examiner*, 5 September 1857, 9-12; *Wells Journal*, 24 October 1857, 4-5.

¹¹⁰ Offer, 1989, 219

at reasonable levels became a decisive policy heading in terms of maintaining political legitimacy as well as the stability of the import system in England at the time.¹¹¹

Britain's dependence on overseas trade routes and food imports was considered a strategic security issue in political and military circles from the mid-1870s onwards. During this period, senior admirals, especially in the Royal Navy, systematically pressured the government to take additional measures to ensure the security of the country's "floating trade" and vital food shipments. These efforts demonstrate that the sustainability of trade and logistics networks across the empire was perceived not only as an economic but also a geopolitical imperative.¹¹²

From the early 1880s onwards, a considerable public debate developed between military and political circles and members of the press on the security of maritime trade and the continuity of the food supply in England. The basis of the debate was the concern that the peace and stability of the country depended largely on food imports from abroad and that these imports could easily be disrupted in the event of a war or crisis. Speaking in the House of Lords in June 1893, Lord Winchilsea drew attention to this fragile structure and recalled the increase in wheat prices that occurred in 1887 when the possibility of war with Russia came to the fore and the rise in bread prices during the Crimean War. According to Winchilsea, an increase in the price of bread to one shilling would impose an additional burden of approximately 110 million pounds on the public's annual food expenditure, and bread would become inaccessible to low-income groups due to the loss of profit margins, which would lead to the unemployment of workers and artisans. In this context, Winchilsea warned that a government that cannot contribute to the welfare of the people will lose its democratic legitimacy over time.¹¹³

Parallel to Lord Winchilsea's assessments, retired Captain Philip Columbus, one of the most prominent public commentators on the maritime scene at the time, voiced similar concerns. Columbus, who was a lecturer at the Royal Naval College, stated that if the sea trade routes were not kept open in both directions, food prices would rise and the value of labor would fall; therefore, he argued that it would not even be possible to determine a living wage. Columbus's assessment emphasized that within the framework of Britain's global trade dependency, maritime security had become a structural issue that directly affected not only a certain social class but also the broad masses. For this reason, in the press of the period, the security of sea trade routes was increasingly treated as a critical issue for the national economy and social stability; the issue

111 Owen, 2021, 401.

112 Portsmouth, *Naval Historical Branch*, T86957; Milne, 1874; Beeler, 1997, 210–36.

113 Parliament: *House of Lords*, Monday, June 19, *The Times*, 20 June 1893, 6.

in question went beyond being a “class” issue and was interpreted as a common threat concerning the interests of the whole society.¹¹⁴

These discussions gained a new dimension with the comprehensive work titled *Is War Now Impossible?* published by Ivan Bloch in 1899. Bloch argued that the effects of possible future wars on the living conditions and basic needs of the people should be evaluated as a basis, and he was invited to give lectures at various official institutions in England in 1901, drawing attention with this approach. Bloch’s theses also paved the way for some hesitations regarding the place of the concept of democracy in the British public opinion at the threshold of the 20th century and especially the patriotism of the working class. Although there were theoretical assumptions that any attack on British foreign trade could be balanced with national devotion on the part of both the employers and the working class, there is no indication that such a scenario could be managed successfully in practice. However, Lord Winchelsea insisted on his demands for the establishment of state-supported grain reserves against possible food supply disruptions during wartime. Indeed, in the event of a serious disruption in maritime trade, which segment of society would be most affected has become a matter of public debate: the business class, whose profit margins would fall, or the working class, who would face the threat of unemployment and food shortages?¹¹⁵

Hubert Llewellyn Smith, who served as assistant auditor of the Department of Trade, Labor and Statistics, argued that the cost increases and rising freight rates that would arise under war conditions would initially affect the employer class, while the working class would tolerate temporary price increases in basic consumer goods. Smith’s assessment coincides with the observations of Charles Booth, one of the leading social researchers of the period, regarding the living conditions of the working poor. Booth argued that a certain “flexibility” or up-and-down order already existed in the economic life of the working class, and that the lower classes had developed a kind of resistance to temporary economic fluctuations. These views reflect the intellectual atmosphere of the period regarding the possible repercussions of the economic effects of the war on different segments of society.¹¹⁶

2.1.2. The Most Dominant Actor in the Political Equation: “Media”

The involvement of the media in political processes is generally considered as a long-term transformation process that began with Johann Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press in 1440 and continues until today. In the early modern period, Europe was governed by centralized structures, monarchical

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, 17 November 1893, 8-9.

¹¹⁵ Ivan Bloch, *Is War Now Impossible?*, Doubleday & McClure Company, New York, 1899, 251-265.

¹¹⁶ *Dublin Daily Express*, 12 September 1889, 6; *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 4 February 1893, 5; *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 23 March 1895, 8; *Morning Mail (Dublin)*, 2 September 1910, 3; Owen, 2021, 403.

authorities, or feudal orders based on the legitimacy of the Pope. During this period, the role of the media was largely limited to the function of providing information and intelligence to the rulers. Especially after 1500, the flow of news in Western Europe began to be provided regularly through certain communication networks. In this context, Antwerp became the center of two important communication networks: One of these connected France, Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands; the other connected Italy, Spain, and Portugal. The news circulating through these networks generally focused on issues such as war, military movements, diplomatic developments, palace protocols, and political gossip. During this process, the media functioned as an extension of the information channels circulating among political elites rather than informing the public.¹¹⁷

From the 17th century onwards, official news bulletins began to be published in line with the efforts of national governments in Europe to control and direct the flow of information. Among the first examples of this effort was the first weekly English news publication, *A Current of General News*, published in England in 1622. This publication, printed in quarto format with a range of eight to twenty-four pages, was an important turning point in terms of the regular circulation of news. In the same century, in the political polarization created by the English Civil War, newspapers and pamphlets increasingly became political tools. Political parties had texts reflecting their views read aloud in coffeehouses and encouraged the circulation of these texts among the public, thus attempting to shape public opinion. On the other hand, in continental Europe, especially the Netherlands played a leading role in early journalism activities with news bulletins known as *Corantos*. From the 1620s onwards, nearly a thousand of these bulletins were also circulated in English territory. The first printing of *Corantos* in England was carried out by Thomas Archer of Pope's Head Alley in 1621. However, Archer was sentenced to prison the same year for carrying on this activity without an authorised licence. This incident demonstrates the importance of censorship and licensing mechanisms in the early English press.¹¹⁸

In 1641, the abolition of the High Commission Court and Star Chamber led to the virtual end of central control over the press in England. This development paved the way for individuals, such as Thomas Archer, who had previously been punished for their unlicensed publishing activities, to now freely publish in print. Thus, many entrepreneurs began to produce their own news pamphlets without the pressure of official censorship. However, most of these publications were only published in a few issues, and a stable publishing structure could not be developed. These news pamphlets published during the Civil War had

117 Arblaster, 2005, 21–36.

118 Frearson, 1914, 1–25.

a wide range of content on political, military and social developments, and appealed to various segments of society. The production of the pamphlets was often done by copying, and each copy was offered for sale for an average of one to two pence. The remarkable sales figures of some pamphlets, such as 1,500 copies during the most intense periods of the Civil War, clearly demonstrate the importance of such publications to the public and their potential to shape public opinion.¹¹⁹

The Licensing Order, enacted by the Stuart monarchy in 1643, reorganized the control of the press and at the same time created the impression in the public that censorship was relaxed. This regulation allowed writers and editors to criticize the government, albeit within certain limits. These developments reached their peak in 1694, when Parliament officially ended the control mechanisms over the press. Between 1694 and 1712, journalistic activities were restricted only to certain crimes such as treason, sedition and unauthorized publication of Parliamentary records. By the early 18th century, technological advances in industry and agriculture and the development of trade in England had brought the country to a more stable and prosperous position. This economic transformation brought about the emergence of a new upper class of property owners, consisting of merchants, entrepreneurs and bankers. This increasingly educated and politically conscious group began to actively participate in public debates, and there was a significant increase in the demand for journalism. In this context, writers became independent of their past aristocratic patronage relationships and turned to direct collaboration with newspapers and to building their own professional identities. The press and publication organs of the new period offered content that was particularly compatible with the values of the bourgeois middle class; themes such as property rights, religious tolerance and freedom of expression were highlighted, in contrast to the restrictive practices that continued in France and other European monarchies. Concrete examples of these developments include *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which began publication in 1731 and was considered the first general-content magazine in England. *The Scots Magazine*, which began publication in 1739, had a weak continuity due to a long interruption. In contrast, *Lloyd's List*, which began publication in Edward Lloyd's coffeehouse in London in 1734, continues to exist as a commercial newspaper published today. In the first half of the 18th century, journalism was shaped by the contributions of many important writers such as Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson. These writers both edited the newspapers and interacted directly with the public with their columns on current issues. The intense interest of the middle class transformed newspapers from being limited to the function of reporting news

119 Achinstein, 2001, 50-68.

to becoming media where entertaining and informative content was regularly published.¹²⁰

The increasing popularity of newspapers led publishers to publish more frequently, and in this direction, the daily newspaper format emerged. The first example in this field was *The Daily Courant*, which was published in London by Samuel Buckley in 1702. *The Daily Courant* adopted a publishing policy that aimed to include only news and verified information, and did not include commentary or columns. This editorial preference allowed the newspaper to stay out of political discussions and maintain its claim of impartiality. In addition, the newspaper earned income by selling advertising space in its columns; thanks to this commercial model, it managed to develop a sustainable publishing practice without being exposed to political interference.¹²¹

The increasing popularity and social influence of newspapers were perceived as a threat by the government of the time, and in order to increase control over the press, the Stamp Act was enacted in 1712. According to this act, newspapers, pamphlets, almanacs and advertisements were taxed at different rates. Initially, a stamp duty of half a penny was stipulated for publications of half a page or smaller, and one penny for publications from half a page to a full page. The taxation aimed to increase the financial pressure on the press and to limit the production of publications. However, despite this restrictive regulation, some magazines and newspapers of the period continued their publications, and an increase was observed in the total number of publications. By the mid-18th century, despite the tightening of the provisions and penalties of the Stamp Act, there was a significant increase in newspaper circulation. In 1753, the total number of newspapers sold in Britain was 7,411,757, this number reached 9,464,790 in 1760 and 11,300,980 in 1767. By 1776, the number of newspapers published in London alone had increased to 53, indicating an increase in public demand for information and literacy despite the law.¹²²

A series of structural and technological developments that occurred between 1850 and 1890 transformed the newspaper industry, which had previously operated on a limited scale, into a comprehensive and effective commercial sector. The period between 1860 and 1910 in particular has been described as the “golden age” of newspaper publishing. During this period, innovations in printing techniques, combined with advances in communication and distribution networks such as the telegraph and railway, increased the effectiveness of the press. At the same time, the institutionalization of journalism as a profession, the development of editorial standards, and the entry of new capitalists into the publishing sector were also decisive in this transformation. However, political

120 Bond, 1940, 85-100; Elliott, 1950, 189-196; McCusker, 1991, 427-431.

121 Anna M Pagan, “What’s The News; The Age Of Addison”, 4 October 2013, <http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/paganm/chap1.htm>. Access Time: 19 January 2020.

122 Barker, 1999, 256.

leaders tried to direct or influence the press in order to control this rising sphere of influence; this situation directed journalists' attention to the attitudes of political authorities rather than the institutional hierarchy. On the other hand, the removal of stamp duty and censorship practices applied to the press in the mid-19th century paved the way for advertising revenues to become a primary financial source for newspapers. However, this situation made newspapers more open to the influence of advertisers who pressured them in line with commercial interests.¹²³

Developments in press technology from the mid-19th century onwards radically transformed both the scale and accessibility of newspaper production. In particular, the rotary press developed by Richard March Hoe allowed tens of thousands of copies of newspapers to be printed per day at low cost, enabling journalism to become a mass production. The replacement of expensive materials in paper production with cheaper and more accessible wood pulp paper accelerated this process even further. Large paper rolls of three miles in length began to be used on rotary presses, thus making continuous and rapid printing possible. In addition, the introduction of the typesetting machine in the 1870s made typesetting text faster and more economical than manual methods. All these technical developments reduced the cost of newspapers and made it easier for them to reach a wider audience. During the same period, as the right to vote ceased to be limited to a small percentage of the male population and was gradually expanded, newspapers became an essential tool for increasing the public's political awareness and informing new voters.¹²⁴

The media's function of mediating information, which is the forerunner of the cultural form defined as journalism today, formed the basis of media practice in early modern Europe. Economic data on the prices of goods and services played a critical role in the effective functioning of markets; content on military information was important in the context of war, conflict and imperial administration. The "news books" or newspapers, which are considered the first printed publications of this period, presented this information as a commodity. These publications and the people who wrote them – referred to as "early reporters" because they mostly conveyed news content in the form of letters – did not dare to criticize the government or initiate public discussions about these structures in the face of the feudal administrative structures of the period. Considering that lords and masters had the power of life and death over their subjects as a right given by God within the framework of the social codes and feudal traditions of the Middle Ages, such a critical approach was unthinkable in the period in question.¹²⁵ Therefore, the information provided by the early

¹²³ Brighton, 2016, 63.

¹²⁴ Marr, 2004, 13.

¹²⁵ Baylen, 1972, 367-385.

modern media had a usage value to the extent that it served the establishment and maintenance of power for the absolute rulers of the period; the media essentially functioned as a tool for environmental control and surveillance. Sensational journalism emerged and developed significantly in the late 19th century with the Pall Mall Gazette edited by William Thomas Stead. In this approach to journalism, news was selected to attract the attention of a wide audience; events were presented with large-print headlines and an emotional and striking style. Instead of impartial information transmission, emphasis was placed on the emotional dimensions and biased narrations of events; within this framework, the content of the news was sometimes manipulated at various levels. This type of journalism encouraged the use of prejudiced and dramatic language in the transmission of events that had the power to shape public opinion, thus highlighting the sensational aspect of the news. As a result, this approach surpassed the traditional approach to journalism that appealed only to the elite classes and provided the opportunity to reach a wider and more popular audience.¹²⁶ In this context, William Thomas Stead, who is considered one of the pioneers of investigative journalism, also contributed significantly to the development of tabloid journalism, which is based on the production of sensational content in order to criticize political, ideological or personal agendas or simply to achieve commercial gain. Stead emphasized the capacity of the press to direct public opinion and indirectly put pressure on government policies, and in this direction defended the principle of “governance through the newspaper.” According to him, journalism should be considered a powerful tool that can make the editor or journalist a decisive actor in public debates and decision-making processes, rather than a profession that merely conveys information.¹²⁷ In 1880, Stead began working as an assistant editor at the liberal-leaning Pall Mall Gazette, and aimed to transform the editorial policy of the newspaper, which was published with the motto “*written by gentlemen for gentlemen*.” During his seven-year editorship, Stead pioneered various innovations in British journalism. He paved the way for visually supported journalism by adding visual elements such as maps and diagrams to a news text for the first time; he increased readability by dividing long news texts with striking subheadings. He also introduced the interview genre to the British press and introduced a new narrative form to journalism thanks to his interview with General Charles Gordon in 1884.¹²⁸

Stead, who preferred to use sensational headlines to influence public opinion, used the headline “It’s Too Late” in capital letters in The Pall Mall Gazette after the death of General Gordon in Khartoum in 1885, to powerfully bring

¹²⁶ Baylen, 1972, 367-385; Lee, 1976.

¹²⁷ Soderlund, 2013, 60-61.

¹²⁸ *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, 6 April 1885, 2; *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 27 November 1885, 2; *Kentish Mercury*, 21 October 1887, 4; Pearsell, 1969, 369.

the failure of the British relief forces to rescue Gordon, who was considered a national hero, to the public agenda. This headline not only provided an eye-catching example of language, but was also considered a striking strategy for creating public opinion, revealing the influence of the press on foreign policy and military interventions.¹²⁹ Stead also pioneered modern journalism with his technique of creating in-depth news, rather than just reporting the news, with the famous Eliza Armstrong case.¹³⁰

2.1.3. Reconstructing the Turkish Image in British Public Opinion

Two letters published in the British press on June 23 and July 8, 1876 had a wide repercussion in the public; the critical attitude towards the Ottoman Empire that dominated the press began to find a response among the public. The publications in question argued that the harsh interventions that the Ottoman Empire allegedly displayed during the Bulgarian rebellion could not be legitimized; they emphasized that no British government should support a state that was assumed to have such power and will. Within this framework, the issue was addressed by the public from a moral and humanitarian perspective, and these assessments, shaped by the principle of “humanity,” paved the way for pressure on the government to reconsider its pro-Ottoman policy. However, the British ambassador in Istanbul, Henry Elliot, approached the issue more from the perspective of Britain’s strategic interests; he argued that the negative “Turkish image” that had formed in the public opinion should not be allowed to lead to a change in Britain’s policy towards the East.¹³¹ The incidents of extreme violence reported during the suppression of the Bulgarian rebellion were met with serious backlash by the British public. While this situation deserves criticism from a moral perspective, it does not necessitate a sudden change in Britain’s foreign policy, which is concerned with its long-term interests. In British diplomatic discourse of the period, the Ottoman administration was occasionally described as “semi-civilized” and although the excessive violence it used under certain circumstances was acknowledged, it was emphasized that the public outrage caused by such developments should not be the determining factor in foreign policy. From this perspective, although the loss of thousands of lives is certainly worrying, this does not constitute sufficient justification for the abandonment of the policies that Britain pursued in order to maintain its political interests in the East. Because these policies are the most rational path that Britain can follow to maintain its influence in the Ottoman geography.¹³²

129 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 February 1885, 1; *Atherstone, Nuneaton and Warwickshire Times*, 14 February 1885, 2; *The Sunday Times (London)* 13 May 2012, 40-42.

130 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 August 1885, 8; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 September 1885, 11, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 November 1885, 11-12;

131 Thompson, 1886, 313.

132 *The Examiner*, 20 May 1876, 1-11; *The Examiner*, 10 June 1876, 1-11; *The Examiner*, 8 July 1876, 1-11; *The Examiner*, 15 July 1876, 1-11;

Elliot's approach, which was that Britain's Eastern policy should not be changed even at a time when criticism of the Ottoman Empire was intensifying, contradicted the reactions of the British public in the summer of 1876. In the same year, an article reflecting this changing atmosphere in the public opinion and acting as an indirect response to Elliot's thesis was published in the *Fortnightly Review*. Drawing attention to the tension between moral responsibility and strategic interests, this article took a stance that traditional British policy towards the Ottoman Empire should be re-evaluated.¹³³

In the article published in *Fortnightly Review*, it was stated that any intervention policy supporting the Ottoman Empire could damage the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the public in a country where the will of the voters was influential. The article emphasized that supporting a state that did not fulfill its financial obligations, harshly suppressed the people under its rule and continued its oppressive attitude especially towards Christian subjects could lead to a public reaction. In this context, in the eyes of large segments of society that appealed to the emotional reflexes of the people, such a foreign policy orientation was considered a choice that could cause intense discontent and even hatred. In particular, it was argued that if the allegations that Ottoman troops carried out a massacre in Bulgaria in May 1876 were proven to be true, no British minister would be able to take a pro-Ottoman stance.¹³⁴

2.2. The Civil War of British Public Opinion: "The Cretan Question"

Within the framework of the new Eastern Crisis that began in 1875, the British press addressed the issue not only as a regional instability but also in the context of the survival of the Ottoman Empire and the struggle for influence in the East between European states. During this period, the preservation of the integrity of Ottoman lands was evaluated as a counterbalance, especially against Russia's expansionist policies; England's interests in this direction received a wide coverage in the press. In its issue dated 27 May 1876, the *Saturday Review*, which supported the Disraeli government, evaluated England's sending of its Mediterranean fleet to Beşika Bay following the unrest in Istanbul and Thessaloniki, stating that "*the Eastern Question has always meant, in the eyes of British statesmen, preventing Russia from occupying Turkish territory*" and that the government continued its traditional policy in this direction. Similarly, *Vanity Fair* magazine, in its article titled "*Could We Defend Turkey by Land?*", argued that the land forces of England and the Ottoman Empire could be successful against Russia and put forward the view that the two countries would be in an advantageous position in a possible land war. On the other hand, the decision of England to mobilize its navy against

133 *Fortnightly Review*, 27 June 1876; Thompson, 1886, 313; Satir, 2018, 93-94.

134 *The Examiner*, 29 July 1876, 1-11; *The Examiner*, 12 August 1876, 1-11; *Sheffield Independent*, 7 September 1876, 6.

the Andrassy Note, which the Dreikaiserbund alliance wanted to impose on the Ottoman Empire, was welcomed by many English newspapers with different political tendencies and received public support.¹³⁵

The newspapers expressed their commitment to the spirit of the 1856 Treaty of Paris, and reflected the tendency in European public opinion that the Ottoman Empire should be supported against the Eastern policies of Russia and Germany. However, although public opinion in England seemed to be developing a national reaction against the activities of the Dreikaiserbund alliance, the sympathy for the Ottoman Empire that had existed during the Crimean War had significantly weakened. The moratorium declared by Mahmud Nedim Pasha on 6 October 1875 had a significant impact on this change. This decision led to serious dissatisfaction, especially among the British middle class bondholders who had invested in the Ottoman foreign debts; these financial arrangements made by the Sublime Porte in order to get rid of the burden of foreign debts shook the trust in the Ottoman Empire. In this economic crisis environment, the idea that the Ottoman Empire had lost its financial stability and that its future was becoming uncertain became widespread; As a result, the developments that broke out in the Balkans in 1875 caused a critical and distant attitude towards the Ottoman Empire, especially in the British public.¹³⁶

The perceptions of actors that take shape in the public sphere are not fixed and consistent, but rather vary depending on the parties' own domestic political debates and ideological orientations. In this context, for the British press, the images of Turks, Russians or Bulgarians are merely representations in which the conflicts in the domestic politics of the period are reproduced by being identified with foreign policy figures. The public's attitude towards foreign policy issues is largely shaped by domestic political positions; domestic political divisions gain meaning through actors in foreign policy. This situation can be observed in the Cretan issue, as in the process of Britain's involvement in the Crimean War. In both examples, public opinion took the place of the rational and strategic state mind and assumed a decisive role in foreign policy decisions. Therefore, following this process step by step within the framework of public opinion-politics relations is important in terms of revealing the influence of the British public opinion on decision-making processes; it also provides the opportunity to understand the nature of the Cretan issue in a more in-depth manner.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *Vanity Fair*, 1 January 1876, 3-4; *Vanity Fair*, 17 June 1876, 5-6; *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 1 June 1876, 5; *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 28 October 1876, 3; Berman, 2014, 41; Satir, 2018, 95.

¹³⁶ *London Evening Standard*, 02 October 1875, 1; *Stirling Observer*, 1 January 1876, 2; Otte, 2011, 100; Akyıldız, 2003, 162; Satir, 2018, 96.

¹³⁷ Satir, 2018, 33.

2.2.1. The Cretan Revolt of 1878 and the Pact of Halepa in British Public Opinion

Although the European states warned Greece to end its interventionist activities in Crete at the Paris Conference on January 9, 1869, Greece did not give up on its goal of annexing Crete in line with the Megali Idea and continued its attempts at annexation. During this process, Russia continued to use the Cretan Greeks as a foreign policy tool in order to increase its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean; this situation quickly brought the Cretan issue back onto the agenda of international diplomacy. After the conference in question, the subject of “*Pan-Slavism and Panhellenism in Turkey*” was discussed for weeks in the British press, and it was stated that “*Politicians, who think more about discovering ways to divide and disintegrate the Ottoman Empire for the good of humanity than about improving the conditions of the islanders, are constantly inventing new tools to create discord*”, and that the living conditions of the people on the island of Crete were intertwined with international factors. Another newspaper, which touched on the British games played on the island, revealed that “*Nationalism and Orthodoxy are being used too recklessly and recklessly to be used as a means of agitation at the moment*”. Other newspapers shared the news that “*Inciting society is a regular profession in the East*” was the reason for this, and it was emphasized that there were many options to direct public opinion in eastern societies. During the Ottoman-Russian War that began in 1877, rebellions broke out in Crete, Thessaly and Epirus, provoked by Greece. These rebellions and the attacks carried out by the islanders on each other were widely covered in the British press, and Russia, the winning side of the war, continued its stance towards ending Ottoman sovereignty in Crete and continued to cooperate with Greece in this direction. So much so that the news shared in the British press was that “*a national assembly was convened where the fall of the Ottoman Government was declared and the island was annexed to Greece*” and it was emphasized that Greece could not do this without Russia. Indeed, Article 15 of the Treaty of San Stefano signed at the end of the war on March 3, 1878, stipulated that the Ottoman Empire would expand the reforms it had put into effect since 1868 and consult with Russia on decisions regarding these reforms.¹³⁸ Through this article, Russia gained the opportunity to direct the developments in Crete in line with its own interests. However, with the Treaty of San Stefano, Russia expanded its sphere of influence not only in the Balkans but also in Crete, and this position posed a serious source of concern for England. The issue of Crete was taken up again at the Berlin Congress, which convened under the leadership of England in order to balance the power

¹³⁸ *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 8 January 1870, 9-11; *Morning Post*, 7 March 1870, 5; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 Mar 1870, 3; *Western Times*, 1 January 1878, 1; *Huddersfield and Holmfirth Examiner*, 1 January 1878, 4; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1 January 1878, 3; *Northern Whig*, 5 February 1878, 7; *Lowestoft Journal*, 9 February 1878, 2; Armaoğlu, 1997, 316; Urhan, 2006, 45-46.

Russia had gained. With Article 56 of the Berlin Treaty signed on July 13, 1878, the expansion of the reforms that had been put into effect in Crete since 1868 was decided by stating that “*Turkey shall put into effect the government plan of 1868 for the Island of Crete by introducing changes that will be considered fair on the island*”; however, this time, the implementation of the reforms was left to the control of not only Russia but also all European states, thus limiting Russian influence over Crete, as Urhan also mentioned. During the congress, Greece made diplomatic attempts to annex Epirus and Thessaly as well as Crete to its territory; However, England opposed Greece’s demands on the Crete issue. Reforms on the island were discussed for weeks under the control of the great powers, and without Russian support, with the help of European powers, “*the Governor of Crete went to the interior of the island and ensured that the officials who had been dismissed during the rebellions were reappointed.*”¹³⁹

The states participating in the Congress of Berlin, in order to prevent Greece’s expansionist demands, decided to make a border change in favor of Greece in Epirus and Thessaly with the 24th article of the treaty. Following the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, European states began to pressure the Ottoman Empire to implement the reforms that were promised to be carried out in Crete; in parallel, the Greek population in Crete complained that the arrangements made in 1868 did not meet their political and economic expectations. Following these developments, the Ottoman government sent Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha, whom it had given extensive authority to, to the island. Ahmet Muhtar Pasha held talks with Greek representatives in Halepa near Chania under the supervision of the consuls of the great powers, and as a result of these talks, an agreement was reached on a new reform program known as the “*Halepa Convention*” on October 25, 1878. Pasha’s maintenance of peace on the island did not escape the attention of the British press, who praised him by saying, “*The Christian and Muslim residents of the island, along with the Sublime Porte, presented their congratulations to Muhtar Pasha.*”¹⁴⁰ According to this agreement, it was decided that the Governor of Crete would be Christian and be appointed with the approval of the great powers, that Christians would be represented in the General Assembly with 49 members and Muslims with 31, that Christians would be the majority in civil service, that the tax-farming system would be reformed, that taxes would not be collected from the island for the Ottoman army, that half of the budget surplus would be allocated to the needs of the island, that the judicial and executive powers would be separated and that Greek would be used as the official language in both along with Turkish, and that Christian elements would be included in the gendarmerie organization. With this reform

139 *South Wales Daily News*, 31 May 1878, 3; *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 20 July 1878, 6; *Tewkesbury Register*, 26 October 1878, 2; Adıyeye, 2000, 27-29.

140 Cornishman, 31 October 1878, 3.

program, Crete's ties with the Ottoman center were significantly weakened; the Greek element in the local administration was provided a more advantageous position compared to the Muslims. These concessions were also discussed in the British public opinion; regarding the events experienced in the Russia-Ottoman-Greece axis, it was stated that "*Considering the negotiations that have been held regarding Greece and Crete, England is ashamed of the role it is in*". For this reason, England, who wanted to pull Greece away from Russia, took action with the criticism in the parliament that "*...it is petty for the British government to leave Greece to Russia on the Crete issue, since the people have the right to have a say in their own destiny*" and was able to impose Halepa on the Ottomans. After the signing of the Halepa Agreement, Photiyadis Pasha was appointed as the Governor of Crete for a period of five years in accordance with the provisions of the agreement.¹⁴¹

Following the implementation of administrative and social reforms undertaken by the Ottoman Empire on the island of Crete in accordance with Article 23 of the Berlin Treaty of 1878, the Greek government requested through diplomatic channels that a border arrangement be implemented in its favor in the regions of Epirus and Thessaly, in accordance with the provision in Article 24 of the same treaty. This development was evaluated as an effort to legitimize Greece's regional demands within the framework of international law, at a time when the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean began to reshape after the Berlin Treaty. For example, "*the Turkish army in Thessaly was requested to be reduced to 1,600 men,*" and this demand also led to a clearer emergence of Sultan Abdulhamid II's perspective on the Cretan Question. Sultan Abdulhamid II, who was absolutely opposed to the abandonment of Thessaly and Epirus to Greece, brought up the abandonment of Crete to Greece as an alternative solution in the face of the Greek government's demands. In this regard, the British press has been reporting for weeks that "*the Sultan pardoned the rebels in Crete on the condition that they lay down their arms and that he would give them better representation on the island.*"¹⁴² Sultan Abdulhamid II considered Crete a burden on the state due to its financial burden on the treasury and the weakening effect of the frequent rebellions on the island on the central authority. Accordingly, he requested the opinion of the *Heyet-i Vükela* (Council of Ministers) on the issue of disposing of Crete. After the Council of Ministers shared the sultan's assessments, a decision was made to use Crete as a bargaining chip in return for Greece's demands in Epirus and Thessaly. However, England strongly opposed this initiative. Moreover, the news in the

141 Birmingham Mail, 30 October 1878, 2; Reichl-Ham, 2013, 241; Hülal, 2001, 17; Adıyke, 2000, 28-29; Tukin, 1996, 90.

142 London Evening Standard, 31 May 1878, 5; Morning Post, 8 July 1878, 5; Northern Whig, 17 July 1878, 5; Leeds Times, 3 August 1878, 2; Bury and Norwich Post, 7 September 1880, 7; Pall Mall Gazette, 7 December 1880, 2-3; Vanity Fair, 18 December 1880, 3-4; Aberdeen Press and Journal 5 February 1886, 6; Abdülhamit, 1974, 77; Türkgeçidi, 1987, 415.

British press evaluated “*the Sublime Porte’s proposal to exchange Crete for a portion of the disputed lands on the mainland*” as a fatal mistake. Moreover, this situation was criticized as “*with this exchange proposal, the lands of Crete, which undoubtedly belonged to the Ottomans, were weakened by their rights over the property.*” In addition, it was reported in the public opinion that the Sultan was using Crete as a bluff, as “*the Sultan retained his sovereign rights in Crete and that Greece would not dare to annex a Crete that was populated by Greeks who had been tormenting Muslims since they gained privileges and Muslims who were in a miserable state.*”¹⁴³ England thought that the Ottoman Empire, which was defeated in the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War, could no longer show effective resistance against Russia, and through public opinion, they made the following assessment: “*The Russian forces in Lüleburgaz are forcing the Sublime Porte to make definite and irreversible decisions before they even sit at the table.*” In line with this assessment, it decided to ensure the security of the trade routes extending to the Far East directly on its own initiative and within this framework, it settled in Cyprus with the commitment to protect Ottoman lands against Russia. On this issue, the British press first conveyed the message that “*Türkiye should have taken Crete or Cyprus as collateral for its debt. As it can be seen, England should not have taken any role in the solution of the problem,*” and in fact, it seems that there was a choice between Crete or Cyprus for the Ottoman debts. However, in later times, this interest seems to have shifted towards Cyprus rather than a complex place like Crete.

*“England, in order to preserve the integrity of her Asian lands, has obtained from the Sublime Porte the right to occupy Cyprus by signing a defensive treaty with Turkey. Thus, Asia Minor will henceforth be under the direct protection of England in all respects. As far as Asia is concerned, England and Turkey will henceforth practically form a single power. The proximity of Cyprus to Antioch and Aleppo will give England absolute control over the Euphrates Valley, thus securing this route to India.”*¹⁴⁴

With the government formed under the leadership of Liberal Party leader William Gladstone in 1880, there was a significant change in England’s policies towards the Ottoman Empire. During this period, England began to withdraw its support for the Ottoman Empire. In fact, Gladstone’s statements regarding the need to reconsider relations with the Ottoman Empire had been echoing in the press for several years. Moreover, the future of relations with the Ottoman Empire was discussed for days in the British public opinion with his views that “*Russia would be unable to descend below Crete geographically, making it very difficult for Russia to have control over Egypt.*”¹⁴⁵ In fact, in 1882, England

¹⁴³ Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art, 26 March 1881, 5-6.

¹⁴⁴ Worcestershire Chronicle, 12 January 1878, 7; Fifeshire Journal, 11 July 1878, 2; Reading Mercury, 19 October 1878, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Newry Telegraph, 5 February 1878, 3.

invaded Egypt and established direct dominance in the region. However, the active involvement of other European states in the process regarding the Cretan issue prevented England from making a unilateral military intervention against the island. The British public, with the posts that “*Egypt was invaded, albeit reluctantly, in order to preserve the bilateral status quo in Crete and to renew confidence in the Sultan’s sovereign rights, as well as fearing that another country would invade Egypt*”, searched for a legitimate basis for the occupation of Egypt for weeks.¹⁴⁶ In addition, England’s lack of full trust in Greece regarding Crete caused it to approach the state’s demands regarding Crete with caution. Within this framework, England continued its policy of keeping the island under Ottoman rule for a while longer. The news shared by the British public regarding “*Turkey’s reputation in the region has completely disappeared, its treasury is completely empty and the citizens in its lands are not happy with this situation*” is important in terms of reflecting the state’s official interest. In addition, the threatening news stating that “*If the Sublime Porte does not listen to the great powers, it will find itself without an ally*” and the news attributed to Greece stating that “*They want the island promised to them by the great powers without relying on any state’s military assistance*” also show the state’s official interest. Thus, due to England’s opposition, Sultan Abdulhamid II could not implement his plan to leave Crete to Greece. As a result of the negotiations carried out under the mediation of European states, the Ottoman Empire agreed to cede a part of Thessaly and Narda in the Epirus region to Greece with the agreement signed on May 24, 1881. This situation was shared with the British public under the headlines “*After the rightful occupation of Greece, the occupation of the regions will now proceed in an orderly manner*” and Greece’s actions in the region were justified by saying “*Since the Berlin Conference, Greece has been gradually seizing the regions it deserves*”. With the entry into force of the Halepa Agreement, a relative freedom was established in Crete, and this situation prepared the ground for the political organization activities of the Greek population on the island. During this period, the Greeks began to take a more active role in Cretan politics by establishing various political parties. This development caused the political competition between the Greeks to become more evident, as well as the traditional Turkish-Greek tension on the island. The conservative wing, led by Minoa Isihakakis, who held the majority in the parliament, argued that the Halepa order should be preserved, while the liberal group, led by Konstantin Mitsotakis, who remained in the minority, adopted the idea of annexation with Greece and, in line with this, launched preparations for rebellion before the election process and launched attacks on the Muslim population. Rather than attacks on Muslims, the British public portrayed the Greeks as the legitimate owners of the island, and it was emphasized that “*from*

¹⁴⁶ Fifehire Journal, 27 July 1878, 6.

the Greek perspective, European peace continued on the island, and if they continued to ensure a plurality of voices in the parliament, their new demands would soon be generously taken into consideration in the next division of Turkish lands." These developments showed that the order sought to be established by the Halepa Agreement was insufficient to suppress annexation tendencies on the island. After the appointment of Fotiadi Pasha, who was of Christian origin, to the Governorship of Crete, increasing dissatisfaction among the Muslim communities led to the beginning of a new period of conflict between the two communities in 1884, together with the response to the attacks of Greek groups. In the British public opinion, this situation was conveyed as "*the governor who was disliked by the Greeks because he was loyal to the Sultan, despite being a Christian, and by the Muslims because he was a Christian.*" It was even shared in the same lines that the island's assembly was about to pass a decision to punish the governor by "*reducing his salary on the pretext that he did not fulfill his duty.*"¹⁴⁷

In early 1886, as the events, which were also provoked by Greece, grew bigger and the Ottoman administration had difficulty controlling these developments, the European states intervened, sent a "*European fleet of about 20 warships*" off the coast of Suda Harbour, warned Greece not to fuel the unrest in Crete and blockaded its ports. This situation was reflected in the British public opinion as "*those who study the small politics of Crete, which is specific to the island, see that when they look at the Christians on the island, they actually want a desire for local independence combined with a dislike for the Greeks of the continent*", and it was emphasized that the Greeks on the island wanted a separate structure independent of Greece.¹⁴⁸ When the instability on the island reached a level that would pave the way for international interventions again, the Ottoman government, with a decision taken on May 9, 1886, declared that the opening of the Cretan General Assembly, which could not be opened that year due to the events, was postponed and sent Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha to Crete to examine the situation on site. The reopening of the assembly in the summer of 1886 was announced to the British public under the headlines "*The blockade has been lifted*", and immediately after the blockade of Greek ports was lifted, it was reported that "*the obstacle to the plan of the Greeks in the Cretan Assembly to annex the island to Greece has also been lifted*".¹⁴⁹ Following Celaleddin Pasha's contacts with the Governor of Crete at the time, Kostaki Pasha, a decree was issued on July 24, 1887, and the scope of the reforms envisaged in the Halepa Convention was expanded a little further. Here, the statements

¹⁴⁷ *Birmingham Mail*, 4 May 1877, 2; *Bury and Norwich Post*, 7 September 1880, 7; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 December 1880, 2-3; *Vanity Fair*, 18 December 1880, 3-4; *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 26 March 1881, 6; *Bristol Mercury*, 29 March 1881, 5; *Carlisle Journal*, 1 April 1881, 4; *Evening Mail*, 15 April 1881, 6; Karal, 1988, 119-120; Palmer, 1995, 173; Fromkin, 1989, 17; Hülügü, 2001, 9; Adıyeke, 2000, 30-31.

¹⁴⁸ *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 26 March 1881, 6.

¹⁴⁹ *Manchester Courier*, 8 June 1886, 8; *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 14 July 1886, 3.

made by the British public opinion such as “...before the reforms were put into practice, the Greeks in the Cretan parliament stopped paying taxes, they will not let the governor collect taxes” also point to the economic crisis that was straining the Ottomans on the island.¹⁵⁰ According to the decisions shared in the press under the title of “Concessions in Cretan Demands”, it is planned that “1. Half of the island’s customs revenues will be transferred to the Ottoman Government. 2. The budget deficit in deficit years will be covered by budget surplus years. 3. The Istanbul Government will respond within three months of the adoption of the Cretan assembly decisions” and these decisions, which are in addition to the Halepa Agreement, give the Christian community more say in local government.¹⁵¹ Despite these new regulations, peace could not be achieved on the island, and the “environment of chaos that began in Crete with the resignation of the Governor” continued throughout 1888.¹⁵² In the same year, the Turkish delegation that came to the island to convey the complaints of Muslims in Crete to Istanbul stated that “anti-Muslim sentiment on the island has increased more than ever.”¹⁵³ Despite the reforms being in the public interest, the riots continued, and the British public was sharing that “20,000 soldiers are needed to suppress the riots on the island”.¹⁵⁴ Sultan Abdulhamid II decided to take more drastic measures and sent Şakir Pasha to Crete as the Extraordinary Commander and Acting Governor. Starting in August 1889, “a series of security measures were put into practice together with martial law to establish general public order” and a reinforcement force of approximately 40,000 people was sent to the island.¹⁵⁵ As a result of these measures, events in Crete were largely brought under control. However, following these developments, Greek groups in rebellion sent various representatives to convey their complaints to the European public opinion, claiming that the Halepa Convention had been violated. During the same period, Greek Prime Minister Harilaos Trikopis stated in statements to the British public opinion that “if the Turks on the island were to attack, no one would be able to keep the Greeks who remained calm.” However, he conveyed that the “solution to the Cretan problem depended primarily on England, and that England’s consent or refusal to consent to the annexation of Crete to Greece would probably determine the actions of the Sublime Porte in some way”. Ultimately, Trikopis requested the withdrawal of Ottoman military units from Crete from European states, but these demands were not welcomed by the European states.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Morning Post, 14 July 1887, 5.

¹⁵¹ Morning Post, 22 July 1887, 5.

¹⁵² South Wales Echo, 2 May 1888, 2.

¹⁵³ Morning Post, 9 April 1888, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Evening Mail, 9 August 1889, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Home News for India, China and the Colonies, 16 August 1889, 16.

¹⁵⁶ Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 28 January 1886, 5; Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 4 February 1886, 5; Gloucester Citizen, 4 February 1886, 3; Aberdeen Press and Journal, 6 February 1886, 7; Evening Mail, 9 August 1889, 1; Iorga, 2005, 500-501; Urhan, 2006, 48-50; Adıyke, 2000, 32-34; Tukin, 1996, 90.

2.2.2. The Restriction of the 1889 Pact of Halepa in British Public Opinion

According to reports in the British press, increasing internal unrest and sectarian conflicts in Crete caused “*all Christian deputies in the Cretan parliament to flee to the island of Syros*” and in response, Sultan Abdulhamid II, aiming to strengthen the central authority, resorted to administrative regulations as well as military measures.¹⁵⁷ At the same time, another news report in the British press underlined that the Turkish soldiers sent to the island got along quite well with the Cretan Muslims because they were from Anatolia, but the Christians, starting from the parliament to sue each other, even if unfounded, could not come to a common reaction against the Muslims.¹⁵⁸ In this context, the extensive privileges granted to Crete by the Pact of Halepa were significantly restricted by a decree published on October 26, 1889. According to the new regulations reported in the British press, the term of office of the Governor of Crete, which was previously determined to be five years, would be unlimited; thus, the central control over the appointment of governors was increased. In addition, the powers of the Cretan General Assembly were narrowed, and the representation ratios were changed so that “*the number of members was reduced from 80 to 57, 35 Christians and 22 Muslims, and each district would be represented by 5 people.*” While the previous regulation adopted the principle that the gendarmerie organization on the island would be formed only from the local population, the new regulation once again allowed personnel to be provided from other Ottoman provinces. In addition, it was stated that the income obtained from the tithe would be distributed to the islanders according to the average of the tithe incomes of six years.¹⁵⁹ Although the Halepa Edict included a provision that half of the customs revenues would remain on the island, the new regulation of 1889 decided that all customs revenues would be transferred directly to the Ottoman treasury. These reforms were considered a reflection of the centralist policies of the Ottoman administration, and news such as the announcement that the general amnesty to be declared would not apply to those who had been sentenced on the island up until that day, created discontent, especially among the Greek population on the island. However, according to the telegrams sent by the British authorities, the plans of the Greek families who had gone from Rethymno to Athens under the pretext of attending Prince George’s wedding to supply arms and ammunition to Crete were revealed. For this reason, these families, who were not allowed to leave the island, boarded the Greek ship *Acrator*, which docked at the port of Chania, when the siren sounded twice at night, and went to Athens with Yorgaki,

157 Hants and Sussex News, 30 October 1889, 2.

158 London Evening Standard, 6 November 1889, 5.

159 London Evening Standard, 11 December 1889, 5.

Lambropoulo and Dondo, Christian members of the Cretan assembly. According to the news, after the wedding, chaos will be created on the island and the islanders will be encouraged to revolt for international intervention, and it is also reported that some Greeks from Athens, dressed in a way that will make them look like Cretan natives, will be called to participate in the demonstrations during the organization and revolt process. For this reason, it was emphasized in the British press that this situation was mentioned at the very beginning of the valid reasons for the Istanbul government to have Turkish soldiers on the island until the first political criminals, second common law criminals and finally neutrals, that is, those who did not commit the above two crimes, are identified.¹⁶⁰ However, as reported in the same British press, the granting of 22 deputies to Muslims, who do not even represent a quarter of the island's population, the relegation of the islanders to the background in the gendarmerie duties, the closure of public institutions and schools until a later date, and finally the narrow scope of the general amnesty caused these regulations to be met with reactions not only at the local level but also at the international level; Russia and England in particular protested the provisions of the new decree at the diplomatic level.¹⁶¹ Following the military and administrative measures taken by the Ottoman administration in 1889, all armed gangs operating in Crete were disbanded by 1890. Among European states, only England and Russia reacted to the regulations limiting the provisions of the Halepa Agreement. The developments on the island also had political consequences in Greece and led to the fall of the current government. The issue was closely followed by the British public until 1895, when the Cretan rebel assembly demanded the dismissal of the governor, financial autonomy, a fixed tax on the Sublime Porte, and the veto of all decisions taken by the assembly under the rule of Muslim governors. By 1891, according to the British press, assassinations had become a daily routine in Crete, and it was stated that discontent and racial hatred towards the government were so strong that old conflicts could break out at any moment. It was noted that, despite the Christians on the island demanding privileges, *"while plans to bring Crete closer to the Ottomans were shared in the newspapers, there was no news of the island's privileges being expanded."*¹⁶² In 1892, the British press again discussed the plans for the new judicial package of the Sublime Porte on the island: it was stated that the peace of the island was being disturbed by the new judicial institutions of the Turkish state, which did not comply with the provisions of the Berlin Treaty, and which had not yet entered into force. The reaction of the islanders to this plan was conveyed as follows: The Cretans would regard this innovation with distrust, because the

¹⁶⁰ London Evening Standard, 6 November 1889, 5.

¹⁶¹ Eastern Morning News, 26 December 1889, 3; Daily News (London), 15 May 1890, 5; Evening Mail 28 May 1890, 5; Belfast News-Letter, 29 May 1890, 7; Evening Mail, 2 June 1890, 2; Evening Mail, 5 November 1890, 8; BOA, MD, Nr. 263, s. 242-243, (1889); BOA, MD., Nr. 263, s. 244, (1889); Adıyke, 2000, 36; BOA, HR.SFR.3...369 – 12 (1890).

¹⁶² Western Times, 1 September 1891, 8; Morning Post, 25 November 1891, 7.

Sublime Porte believed that the 1889 Edict, which abolished all privileges of the people, would bring the old order to the island. According to the news report, there was great doubt that this move by the Sublime Porte would once again awaken the passions of the Cretans and plunge the island into a state of disorder close to revolution. However, the issue, which was exaggerated to such an extent by the British public, was being respected by the new Governor Mahmud Pasha among the Cretans at the end of February 1892 with his moderation, prudence and polite thoughts. The judicial reforms initiated by the Sublime Porte were accepted by the Cretan assembly with almost no opposition. Some rebellions that broke out in the summer of 1892 ended towards the autumn months. Later that year, the British public also reported that some rebels arrested by the gendarmerie in Crete were rescued thanks to the armed resistance of their friends. However, the local people perceived this as the beginning of a new general rebellion.¹⁶³ Starting in 1893, the news in the British public opinion titled “The number of Christian governors to govern Crete in the Ottoman Empire is rapidly running out” created an opportunity for the public to evaluate new candidates for governor. Accordingly, while pashas such as Sartinski Pasha and Karatodori Pasha were among the suggestions, Karatodori Pasha, the governor of Samos and a good performer of his job, was the leading name for this position. It was stated that it was a great chance that the Sublime Porte still had non-Muslim governors with good administrative skills.¹⁶⁴ The governor election, which was postponed to the spring of 1893, was again covered in the same news. Accordingly, it was stated that as soon as the new governor was appointed, Italy would join the great powers who insisted that the Istanbul government adopt a friendly attitude towards the Cretans in order to increase the pressure on the Sublime Porte. The news reports in August after Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha was appointed as governor indicated that Governor Mahmud Celaleddin’s request for pardon from duty would be accepted due to his serious health problems, and that the Pasha would resign due to health reasons, and that his successor would probably be a Christian governor, who could be none other than Kostaki Antopulo Pasha or Karatodori Pasha. However, in the same news report, Kostaki Pasha’s candidacy was considered certain, considering that Karatodori Pasha’s appointment to Crete would be a loss of prestige for the Ottomans, as he was a signatory to the Berlin Treaty. In 1894, the British public was informed that a peaceful demonstration of 3,000 people had been held to appoint a Christian governor to the post vacated by Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha, that there was no unrest or anti-government movement in these demonstrations, but that the withdrawal of the 1889 reforms and the reform of the tax system

¹⁶³ London Evening Standard, 4 February 1892, 5; London Evening Standard, 19 February 1892, 5; London Evening Standard, 20 October 1892, 5; Evening Mail, 26 December 1892, 8.

¹⁶⁴ London Evening Standard, 27 February 1893, 3.

were also discussed in the same demonstration.¹⁶⁵ As can be seen, despite the reactions of England and Russia, Sultan Abdulhamid II continued his policy of strengthening the central authority in Crete. Following the decree dated 26 October 1889, a six-year period of Muslim governors began in Crete; during this period, Şakir Pasha, Cevad Pasha and Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha took over the governorship duties, respectively.¹⁶⁶ The limitation of the Pact of Halepa and the increase in the weight of Muslims in administrative positions created a new wave of discontent among the annexationist Greeks in Crete. In the clashes between the rebels on the island and the Turkish military at the end of 1895, there were many casualties on both sides, and it was stated that the Epitropia, or Revolutionary Society, on the island was quite effective in these rebellions. It was also shared that the Muslim population on the island followed the developments with concern and remained silent against the rebellions. It was stated that in the later stages of the rebellion, *“the Muslims who remained silent became targets and 50 Turks were massacred, and the following day, 160 more Muslims were killed, so the Sublime Porte would send reinforcements to the island.”*¹⁶⁷ This situation caused the emergence of more widespread and organized rebellions from 1895 onwards compared to previous periods, and as Cengiz also mentioned, these rebellions led to the actual weakening of Ottoman rule in Crete and the acceleration of attempts to annex the island to Greece. In order to regain the privileges they had gained with the Halepa Decree and to obtain the support of European states, the Greeks applied to foreign consulates on the island, and the Greek delegates who went to the Greek consul announced that they would not attend any of the parliamentary meetings until the Greek leader Hacımihalis arrived from Athens and a provisional government was declared in Crete.¹⁶⁸ It was also stated that the Sublime Porte changed its idea of opening the Cretan Assembly four times in one week, which caused things to get into a deadlock.¹⁶⁹ By June 1896, according to British newspapers, both the islanders and the great powers were dissatisfied with the situation, especially because there were 20,000 Turkish soldiers in Crete, Christian houses in Chania were marked with crosses throughout the night, and officers of the great powers were insulted while walking on the Chania docks.¹⁷⁰ On June 23, 1896, the European states sent a note to the Ottoman Empire requesting intervention in the situation in Crete. Following this note, the Ottoman administration convened the Cretan General Assembly in order to reactivate the political process on the island. Thanks to the security guarantee provided by the consuls, the members

165 Scottish Leader, 16 March 1893, 5; London Evening Standard, 25 August 1893, 5; Manchester Courier, 15 May 1894, 5

166 Evening Mail, 3 July 1899, 8; Daily Telegraph & Courier (London), 3 June 1890, 5; Morning Post, 6 June 1894, 5;

167 South Wales Echo, 16 December 1895, 3; South Wales Echo, 17 December 1895, 3; Dundee Advertiser, 20 December 1895, 6.

168 London Daily Chronicle, 7 July 1896, 5

169 Westminster Gazette, 15 June 1896, 4.

170 Daily Record, 23 June 1896, 5; Cengiz, 2018, 84.

of the Assembly came to Chania and met continuously from July 12, 1896.¹⁷¹ In these meetings, the reforms demanded by the members of the Assembly to be implemented on the island were presented to both the Ottoman administration and the representatives of the European states. During this period, the representatives in Crete, in order to gain the support of the European states, expressed their demands that the governor-general to be appointed to the island should be of Christian origin, that this appointment should be subject to the approval of the great powers and that his term of office should be limited to five years. In addition, it was requested that the Halepa Convention be updated and that the governor be given the right to veto decisions to be taken regarding the island. The proposals stated that all civil servants to serve on the island, except for the deputy governor, should be appointed by the governor's office, that the military forces should be directly subordinate to the governor and that the population structure of the island should be proportionally represented in both the Cretan General Assembly and the Administrative Council. Finally, it was requested that the gendarmerie organization be organized by officers to be sent from the European states and that the Turkish soldiers should be withdrawn from the island completely.¹⁷² The escalating events from the end of July 1896 onwards were closely followed by the British press. Accordingly, while Christians and Turks were attacking each other on the island, the Cretan rebels stated that they would escalate the events if the demands were not accepted within a week. In return, the Muslim deputies in the Cretan parliament emphasized that any concessions made to the Christians would permanently disrupt the peace on the island.¹⁷³ Thus, the political and social instability in Crete deepened in the last quarter of the 19th century. Especially after the major clashes between Turkish soldiers and rebels in the Selino and Kissamos regions, the Ottoman administration sent more military units to the region in order to maintain public order. However, the harsh practices of these units against some Christian leaders increased the tension on the island even more; this situation was interpreted by some European observers as the security policies of the Ottoman administration aimed at putting pressure on the local people. However, according to some news reflected in the British press, the great powers, who did not feel the need to prove the excesses of the Turkish soldiers on the island, easily blamed the Muslims, thus underlining the complete trust of the Sublime Porte in the Turkish soldiers on the island.¹⁷⁴ However, following the pressure from the great powers and the developments, the governor of Crete, Aleksandro Karatodori Pasha, submitted his resignation; however, this resignation was not accepted by the Sublime Porte at first. Because, as of August, news that most of

171 Daily Record, 22 July 1896, 5.

172 1896 [C. 8139] Turkey No. 7 (1896) Correspondence respecting the affairs of Crete. No.2. Biliotti to Earl of Kimberley, 3 March 1895; Karal, 1988, 122; Urhan, 2006, 50; Adıyke, 2000, 36-37.

173 York Herald, 27 July 1896, 5.

174 Daily Telegraph & Courier (London), 29 July 1896, 7.

the 1,500 Muslims had been killed by having their throats cut, that the houses of the Muslims who had fled their homes had been occupied by Christians, and that the villages of the Muslims who had not left their homes had been burned, occupied the agenda quite a bit.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, the Greek government continued to closely follow the developments on the island and made efforts to inform and guide the international public opinion by making new statements on the Cretan issue.¹⁷⁶

2.2.3. The 1896 Regulations in British Public Opinion: “The Rectification Bill”

Following the escalation of events in Crete, the Ottoman Empire decided to recall Abdullah Pasha, the commander of the military forces on the island, to the center. The Pasha’s return to Istanbul was seen as an opportunity by the Greek rebels, who carried out systematic attacks and acts of violence against the Muslim population living on the island. Following these tragic developments, the Ottoman government announced that it could gradually reduce its military presence in Crete and re-implement the provisions of the Pact of Halepa, provided that the great powers gave assurances and the rebels laid down their arms.¹⁷⁷ In this context, diplomatic talks were held between the ambassadors of the six major states residing in Istanbul and the Ottoman Foreign Minister Tevfik Pasha, and a “*Rectification Plan*” (Tadilat Layihası) containing the proposals of both parties was prepared on August 25, 1896.¹⁷⁸

According to the amendment draft signed by the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs Tevfik Pasha on August 25, 1896, which contained provisions similar to the Pact of Halepa of 1878, but also included some new regulations, it was envisaged that a Christian governor would be appointed to the governorship of Crete for a period of five years. The governor would have the authority to veto the decisions accepted by the Cretan General Assembly; he would also be able to request support from the Ottoman military in the event of a rebellion or a situation threatening public order on the island. Christians would be represented by two-thirds and Muslims by one-third in the bureaucratic structure, and the governor would have the authority to make direct appointments to secondary civil servants. Within the framework of economic regulations, the practice of leaving half of the customs revenues to the island budget, which had been put into effect with the decree of 1887, would be returned; in addition, all taxes obtained from tobacco imports would be allocated to the island. Mixed commissions would be established with European representatives to restructure the security

¹⁷⁵ Morning Post 4 August 1896, 5.

¹⁷⁶ Pall Mall Gazette, 29 February 1896, 8; Evening Mail, 2 March 1896, 1; Stamford Mercury, 6 March 1896, 3; Northern Guardian (Hartlepool), 3 July 1896, 3; York Herald, 27 July 1896, 5; Adıyeke, 2000, 33-34.

¹⁷⁷ Nantwich Guardian, 8 July 1896, 3.

¹⁷⁸ London Daily Chronicle, 17 August 1896, 4; Western Evening Herald, 17 August 1896, 2; Daily Record, 31 August 1896, 5; Western Times, 31 August 1896, 4; BOA, *Y.A.Hus.*, Nr:358/16, 13 Ağustos 1312-25 Ağustos 1896; Cengiz, 2018, 85.

and judicial organizations. In particular, the assignment of a commission to organize the gendarmerie, including European officers among its members, was clearly stated in the draft. However, the implementation of these regulations was subject to various administrative delays, and this situation, “differences between the reforms requested from the Sultan and the reforms implemented”, paved the way for renewed rebellions among the Greeks in Crete.¹⁷⁹

The new regulations that were put into effect granted the Greek community a series of political and administrative privileges that went beyond the rights granted by the Pact of Halepa. The most striking of these privileges was that the governor of Crete had direct authority over the military forces on the island. However, this transfer of authority caused serious doubts in some circles regarding the capacity of a governor of Christian origin to maintain public order, especially during the uprisings that occurred on the island. On the other hand, the two-thirds representation of the Greeks in the Cretan General Assembly enabled this community to gain a significant advantage in directing the work of the assembly and making decisions in line with their own demands.¹⁸⁰

2.2.4. Greek Rebellions and Gang Activities: The Events of 1896-1897

The Cretan issue became one of the most pressing problems for the Ottoman Empire in the international arena in the last quarter of the 19th century. Some European observers evaluated the developments in Crete in parallel with the Armenian issue, emphasizing the structural challenges that these two issues posed to the multinational structure of the state and the centralized administrative approach. In this context, the Ottoman administration became the focal point of tensions with the Christian population on the island, while Greece's demands for the island and its support for local rebellion movements in line with these demands were brought to the agenda of the international public. Although the Cretan issue did not seem to pose a direct threat to the survival of the Ottoman Empire, it turned into a crisis that could have important political and financial consequences for the state due to its strategic location and openness to external interventions. Considered a difficult region to govern due to its geographical conditions and ethnic structure, the control of Christian elements concentrated especially in mountainous areas posed a permanent challenge for the Ottoman military and administrative authority. During this process, the logistic and financial deficiencies faced by the Ottoman army further weakened the state's dominance over the island. On the other hand, Greece's insistence on its claims over Crete reveals that the issue has the potential to be a long-term crisis not

179 Birmingham Daily Gazette, 16 September 1896, 5; Tadilat Fermanı Alisi, İstanbul 1313; Türkgeldi, 1949, Ek 2-13; Adıyke, 2000, 156.

180 Retford, Gainsborough & Worksop Times, 4 September 1896, 5; Tablet, 12 September 1896, 7; Gloucester Journal, 19 September 1896, 5; The Scotsman, 26 September 1896, 7; Bristol Times and Mirror, 30 September 1896, 8; Westminster Gazette, 30 September 1896, 2-3; BOA, Y.A. Res., Nr. 84/77, 1 February 1897; Türkgeldi, 1987, 67; Cengiz, 2018, 85.

only in terms of Ottoman-Greek relations but also in terms of general stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁸¹

The new regulations put into effect in Crete, rather than reducing the tension on the island, brought about a series of structural problems. As a result of the conflicts, the Muslim population on the island was forced to take refuge in castles out of fear of their safety; many people were unable to return to their villages and properties for a long time. The serious destruction of Muslim settlements made the resettlement process difficult both economically and logistically. Serious difficulties were experienced, especially in the supply of timber, which was a basic need in construction activities. In order to meet these needs, the Ottoman administration initiated loan negotiations with the Public Debt Administration and some international banks, using customs revenues as collateral. However, no concrete results were obtained from these initiatives. A solution to the problem was found with the initiative of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Hanotaux; thanks to a loan of one hundred thousand Ottoman liras obtained through him from the French-Dutch Bank, the financing of the reconstruction activities was partially provided.¹⁸²

One of the important problems that emerged during the implementation of the new regulations was the establishment and restructuring of the gendarmerie organization that would establish security in Crete. In order to solve this problem, a commission was convened on January 3, 1897 with the participation of the representatives of the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers. During the negotiations, the representatives of the Great Powers requested that foreign nationals be included in the gendarmerie organization. However, the Ottoman representatives objected to this proposal and argued that the gendarmerie units should be composed only of Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian elements who were Ottoman citizens. In addition, it was emphasized that neither the Treaty of Halepa nor the subsequent regulations included any provision allowing foreign nationals to serve in the gendarmerie service. In response, the representatives of the Great Powers increased their pressure by stating that if their requests were rejected, they would withdraw from the commissions or directly establish the gendarmerie organization on their own initiative. In the face of this diplomatic pressure, the Ottoman Empire openly rejected the inclusion of only Greek nationals in the gendarmerie organization; However, on January 16, 1897, he preferred to temporarily calm the process by approving the foreign nationality of the gendarmerie commander and some officers. Thus, the crisis regarding the structure of the gendarmerie organization was resolved with a

¹⁸¹ St James's Gazette, 26 May 1896, 3; Daily News (London), 27 May 1896, 5; Leeds Mercury, 27 May 1896, 8.

¹⁸² Leeds Mercury, 5 October 1896, 7; London Evening Standard, 8 October 1896, 5; Liverpool Daily Post, 31 October 1896, 6; Western Times, 31 October 1896, 4; Morning Post, 10 November 1896, 3; London Evening Standard, 21 November 1896, 5; St James's Gazette, 21 November 1896, 14; Nantwich Guardian, 24 November 1896, 3; Londonderry Sentinel, 28 November 1896, 3; BOA, *Y.A. Res.*, Nr. 84/77, 28 Şaban 1314-1 Şubat 1897; Türkgeldi, 1987, 67; Cengiz, 2018, 86.

partial compromise in line with the demands of the great powers.¹⁸³ Despite all diplomatic and administrative arrangements, the Cretan Greeks rebelled once again in 1896 with the aim of annexing the island to Greece. Many Muslims lost their lives in this process, some were injured, and the violent incidents caused the Muslim population to leave the island. The rebellion process deeply affected not only the social structure on the island, but also the international diplomatic balances. During this period, major European powers, especially England, France, Russia and Italy, exerted intense diplomatic pressure to annex Crete to Greece. As a result of these efforts, Prince Georges, the son of the Greek King, was appointed governor of Crete. The fact that Prince Georges was sent to the island as governor shows that the Cretan Greeks achieved significant gains with the support of the major powers. This uprising in 1896 was the direct precursor of the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, known to the public as the “Wars of ’97.” Although the battlefield of the war was outside Crete, the underlying cause of the conflict was the issue of Crete. During the war, the Ottoman army gained an advantage over the Greek forces and the possibility of Athens falling was on the agenda, but the European states intervened and stopped the Ottoman advance. The Ottoman Empire, which gained military superiority, lost its political advantage as a result of the diplomatic agreements made after the war; thus, a situation arose in which military success did not find a response in the international arena.¹⁸⁴ Despite the Ottoman Empire’s military victory in the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, the diplomatic developments following the war were considered a defeat in the political arena. One of the most concrete indicators of this situation was the official request of the ambassadors of the great powers in Istanbul to the Ottoman government to recall Sadeddin Pasha, who was sent as a special representative to Crete, within forty-eight hours. It is understood that the determining factor in these demands of the ambassadors was the opinion that Sadeddin Pasha was interfering with the authority of the military governor of the island, Beroviç Pasha, and was limiting his practices. On the other hand, the foreign delegates serving on the Judicial Commission in Crete were instructed to continue the reform process in the courts without cooperating with the Ottoman representative, Nazım Bey, on the grounds that his status had not yet been recognized by the embassies. These developments clearly show that the Ottoman Empire lost authority in the administrative and judicial reform processes in Crete and that the great powers increased their intervention capacity on the island.¹⁸⁵ In the face of these developments, the

183 Voice of St. Lucia, 3 September 1896, 2; Western Daily Press, 26 December 1896, 5; Leicester Daily Post, 26 December 1896, 4; Türkgeldi, 1987, 68; BOA, *İ. Müm. Girit, Nr. 1168*, 21 Kanunuevvel 1312-2 January 1897; Cengiz, 2018, 86.

184 Evening News (London), 6 June 1896, 3; Lyttelton Times, 17 July 1896, 5; Shields Daily Gazette, 1 August 1896, 3; London Daily Chronicle, 6 February 1897, 6; Cork Daily Herald, 15 February 1897, 5; Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 1 March 1897, 3; Dundee Courier, 19 April 1897, 4; Coleraine Chronicle, 24 April 1897, 4; American Register, 24 April 1897, 1; Bristol Times and Mirror, 3 May 1897, 8; Freeman’s Journal, 21 May 1897, 5; Şenşık, 2014, 240-245; Cengiz, 2018, 87.

185 Hull Daily Mail, 14 December 1896, 2; London Evening Standard, 14 December 1896, 7; Northern Guardian (Hartlepool), 14 December 1896, 3.

Ottoman government proposed that Beroviç Pasha, who had de facto military authority in Crete, be allowed to choose one of Sadeddin Pasha or İbrahim Pasha as his deputy. This proposal aimed to prevent conflicts of authority in the island administration and to ensure administrative harmony. However, the proposal was not found appropriate and was rejected by the great powers in order to prevent Beroviç Pasha's authority and position from becoming controversial and to prevent his authority from being damaged. Following these developments, the Ottoman government decided to recall Konstantin Efendi, another important figure on duty on the island. This decision shows that the Ottoman State's room for maneuver against international pressure on its administrative staff in Crete was narrowing and that it was making efforts to restructure its control over the island.¹⁸⁶

2.2.5. The 1897 Ottoman-Greek War and the Treaty of Istanbul

The conflicts that began in 1897 when Greece declared war on the Ottoman Empire in order to ensure Crete's independence resulted in a decisive victory for the Ottoman army. This military success temporarily weakened the opinions about the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which had long been debated in European public opinion. Although the British public opinion strongly supported Greece and adopted a Philhellenist stance during this period, the British government avoided direct military intervention. However, after Greece's defeat, Britain increased its diplomatic pressure to grant Crete de facto autonomy. These developments deepened not only Ottoman-Greek relations but also the rivalry between the great powers of the period. While Russia continued its efforts to expand its influence in Central Asia during this process, Britain began to develop new strategies to counterbalance Russian expansionism. The official visit of German Emperor Wilhelm II to Istanbul in 1898 was considered a symbolic indicator of Germany's increasing interest in the Near East. This visit also heralded a new era in Ottoman-German relations and revealed that Germany had begun to pursue a more active foreign policy in the region.¹⁸⁷

The Cretan issue gradually went beyond the Ottoman-Greek borders and acquired an international character; it became increasingly complex and multidimensional as a result of the increasing interventions of the major powers. During this process, especially the attitude of Greece, which violated the sovereign rights of the Ottoman Empire, was openly criticized both in the Ottoman press and in the European public opinion. It was evaluated that the strict and uncompromising attitude of the Athenian government, despite the

¹⁸⁶ London Evening Standard, 16 December 1896, 5; Daily News (London), 24 April 1897, 3; London Daily Chronicle, 10 July 1897, 8.

¹⁸⁷ Globe, 19 May 1897, 4-5; Lake's Falmouth Packet and Cornwall Advertiser, 17 July 1897, 4; Totnes Weekly Times, 25 June 1898, 3; Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 18 October 1898, 3; Irish Times, 20 October 1898, 6; Edinburgh Evening News, 22 October 1897, 3; Mahajan, 2002, 116; Grenville, 1965, 89-95.

joint warnings of the major powers, posed a threat not only to regional peace but also to the security of Greece itself. This policy, which contradicted the “*in medio tutissimus ibis*” approach (reconciliation in everything) adopted as a deep-rooted principle by the Greek public opinion, was associated with the Greek government’s tendency to avoid responsibility in domestic politics. The European public opinion expressed views that Athens was aware of the mistakes in its Cretan policy but avoided revealing these mistakes to the domestic public opinion. It was emphasized that such timidity reflected the government’s desire to avoid political responsibility, but that such an approach was incompatible with neither national honor nor a common sense-based understanding of governance. The same circles, stating that insisting on a mistake would pave the way for more serious mistakes, invited the Greek administration to adopt a more conciliatory line. These assessments show that a common opinion has emerged that a peaceful and negotiable attitude is essential for both the welfare of the people and international stability. Another development that reveals that the developments in Crete are not limited to diplomatic levels but also include humanitarian and conscientious dimensions is based on a telegram dated March 13. This document reports that the Muslim community in England has decided to thank the British Consul in Chania, Monsieur Alfred Biliotti, for his efforts to ensure the security of the Muslims of Crete. This situation shows that the issue is also being followed within the framework of conscientious sensitivity in the international community. On the other hand, the Standard newspaper published in England criticized the attitude of some circles that remained indifferent to the declarations of the great powers regarding Crete. According to the newspaper, the withdrawal of Greek troops from the island will harm the general interests of Crete; therefore, there should be no need to even consult the public. It has been argued that the Greek military presence is a guarantee of order and security on the island, and that the efforts of the great powers to establish a privileged administration in Crete could deepen the current crisis and cause chaos that could have more serious consequences than the rebellion. These assessments clearly reflect the criticism and concerns of the European public regarding the Greek government’s Cretan policy.¹⁸⁸ In addition, the fact that there were twenty different governments in Greece between 1893 and 1910, and that fourteen foreign ministers changed during this period, seriously prevented the country from developing a stable and long-term foreign policy. Constantly changing political cadres made it difficult to determine a common strategy on sensitive issues such as the Cretan issue, and state policy became dependent on personal initiatives and short-term domestic political calculations.

¹⁸⁸ Dundee Advertiser, 3 March 1897, 3; Lancaster Observer and Morecambe Chronicle, 12 March 1897, 2; Cornishman, 25 March 1897, 5; Kent Messenger, 3 April 1897, 5; Daily News (London), 27 April 1897, 5; London Evening Standard, 8 April 1898, 5; London Daily Chronicle, 29 April 1898, 8; Leeds Mercury, 17 September 1898, 15; Northern Guardian (Hartlepool), 23 September 1898, 3; Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, 9 December 1898, 12.

This situation both damaged Greece's credibility in the international arena and created inconsistency and mistrust in diplomatic processes with major powers.¹⁸⁹

2.2.6. Regulations Concerning the Organization of the Autonomous Administration of the Province of Crete in British Public Opinion

According to the news of the Times newspaper's Chania correspondent, although the official guarantee regarding the granting of autonomy to Crete has finally been reached, the scope and principles of implementation of this autonomy have not been clarified. The news states that only the provision that the Ottoman State will not interfere in the internal affairs of the island has been finalized; however, the remaining elements remain unclear. This ambiguity has greatly limited the impact of the reforms to be implemented on the island and has led to the demand for clearer and more binding provisions by Cretan political leaders. In this context, it is stated that there are doubts about the extent to which the new regulations differ from past reform attempts. On the other hand, it is emphasized that a full atmosphere of trust cannot be established among the Christian people unless the Ottoman military units are completely withdrawn from the island and replaced by troops from the Great Powers. According to another news report in the Daily News, it was conveyed to Sir Alfred Biliotti that some doubts were expressed as to whether the Cretan people sufficiently understood the intentions of the Great Powers regarding autonomy. In this context, Biliotti's colleagues were instructed to prepare and widely distribute a non-detailed statement explaining the basic principles of the autonomy plan after receiving similar authorization from their own governments. The statement particularly emphasized that the basic principle of the plan was that the Ottoman Empire would not interfere in the internal affairs of Crete in any way. News from Athens on March 15 reported that, following the excesses committed by the Muslim population in Candia, the consuls requested the naval commanders to send troops to ensure security. The same news reported that King George I of Greece had sent a congratulatory telegram to King Umberto I of Italy on the occasion of his birthday, and that the Greek government had also offered its official congratulations through its ambassador in Rome.¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, the Greek government sent a statement to its foreign missions regarding the accusations that the warning from the Greek navy that a foreign navy could launch an attack on the rebels in Akrotiri on February 21 was deliberately not conveyed to Commodore Reineck. The statement stated that "*the Greek government denied the allegations and stated*

¹⁸⁹ Langer, 1968, 308-311.

¹⁹⁰ St James's Gazette, 15 March 1898, 9; London Daily Chronicle, 15 March 1898, 4.

in no uncertain terms that Commodore Reineck was in direct communication with the rebels.” In addition, various documents were published to support this statement; it was stated that the day after the bombardment, the rebel leaders sent a letter stating that Commodore Reineck had received an undertaking from them to comply with the demands of the Great Powers. Another document dated February 23 stated that Reineck referred to the undertakings given by the Great Powers to their naval commanders. According to the Daily Chronicle’s Greece correspondent Norman, a man briefly detained by Ottoman authorities near Ellassona on suspicion of espionage was released and allowed to return to Greece after proving the validity of his passport.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ St James’s Gazette, 15 March 1898, 9; London Daily Chronicle, 15 March 1898, 4; London Daily Chronicle, 8 September 1898, 4; Daily News (London), 8 September 1898, 4; Daily News (London), 8 September 1898, 5; Daily News (London), 24 September 1898, 5.

CHAPTER 3

A PUBLIC SOLIDARITY IN THE OTTOMAN PRESS: THE CRETE ISSUE

3.1. Government-Press Relations in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

The 19th and 20th centuries stand out as a period in which the political structure of the Ottoman Empire underwent a transformation and social modernization efforts gained momentum. In this transformation process, the press, beyond being a mere means of conveying information, assumed an important role in the legitimacy-producing practices of political power, in shaping public opinion, and in disseminating modernization ideals. The press activities, which began with the official publication organs of the state after the Tanzimat, diversified over time with the increase in private enterprises; it was subjected to intense censorship practices during the reign of Abdulhamid II; and with the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era, it acquired a pluralistic structure in an environment of relative freedom. In this context, the Ottoman press deserves to be examined as an area directly related to the political fractures, social demands, and intellectual movements of the period. After the Tanzimat, a new intellectual generation emerged, together with individuals who were educated in Europe and had the opportunity to get to know the West closely, in Western-style educational institutions established by the Ottoman State or under the guidance of Western governesses. This generation had direct contact with the intellectual movements of the period in Europe and developed a significant awareness of the Western world's attitudes and aims towards the Ottoman Empire. Although they could not completely free themselves from the influence of Divan literature, this new generation of intellectuals, who focused on the value of the individual and focused on analyzing human and social issues, also began to evaluate events with a critical approach by filtering them through reason and logic under the influence of the political thought literature in Europe. These intellectuals abandoned the traditional discourse of praise and loyalty towards state officials and grasped the necessity of "being understood by the people in order to serve the people." In line with this understanding, they adopted the press as a means of reaching large masses and being influential.¹⁹² The newspapers published during this period went beyond being mere publications that conveyed information and became platforms where the public expressed their thoughts; at the same time, the newspapers' administrative offices began to function as political discussion centers, almost like political clubs. Thus, the period in which the Ottoman Empire isolated itself from political and intellectual movements in Europe came to an end; the process of social awareness and awakening gained momentum. As a result of these developments, it was observed that the public began to display a more conscious and organized opposition to government policies.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Cöğçe, 2000, 333-334; Kendall, 2002, 338-340.

¹⁹³ Cöğçe, 2000, 334; Kendall, 2002, 338-340.

In the Ottoman Empire, the political power was the main authority determining the scope and limits of press freedom. When we look at the history of the Turkish press, we see that the area of freedom granted to the press was shaped by the relations between the press and the political power rather than the universal adoption of the principle of “freedom of the press” as a value. The fact that the first newspapers published in Ottoman Turkish were established by the state and that the state played a decisive role in the emergence of the press is also an important factor in the emergence of this situation. The Ottoman administration maintained its understanding of control over the press for a long time; however, it was not possible to completely abandon this understanding. Therefore, the relationship between the press and the political power showed constant change depending on the political and social conditions of the period. Newspapers were not only tools that conveyed information, but also considered as centers of power similar to political actors. The concept of press freedom gains meaning in the context of the relationship between these centers of power. Due to the nature of their profession, newspapers and journalists both cooperate with political and economic power centers and sometimes come face to face with these powers. Especially in times of crisis or important political developments, these centers may try to influence journalistic activities in line with their own interests. In this context, freedom, one of the most basic needs for the journalism profession, has often existed to the extent permitted by political conditions.¹⁹⁴ The Young Turk Movement, which played an important role in the transition to a constitutional order in the Ottoman Empire, also contributed to the development of freedom of the press. In the second half of the 19th century, especially in the 1860s, the concepts of freedom of expression and freedom of the press began to be brought to the public and defended by some intellectuals of the period. In this context, figures such as İbrahim Şinasi, Ziya Paşa, Ali Suavi and Namık Kemal criticized the absolute monarchy through the articles they wrote in the newspapers they published and expressed the need for constitutional reforms. These thinkers used the press as a platform of ideas, both questioning the limits of the existing political order and aiming to inform the public about constitutional rights and freedoms. These efforts encouraged the Ottoman public to take a closer interest in political issues and were influential in the social response of the idea of the Constitutional Monarchy in the following years. The relationship between the press and politics in the Ottoman Empire did not develop solely on the basis of freely conveying news to the public. On the contrary, freedom of the press was mostly shaped under the control of the political power; This situation formed the basis of a long-term process whose effects can also be observed in modern Turkey. With the declaration of the Constitution in 1876, freedom of the press was recognized as

194 Polat, 2001, 303; Salihpaşaoğlu, 2007, 188; Gönensin, 1997, 34; Öztürk, 2010, 44.

a constitutional right; thus, the relationship between the press and politics was placed within a legal framework. The expression “*The press is free within the framework of the law*” in Article 12 of the Constitution indicates that the press can operate within a legal framework rather than having unlimited freedom. This expression, in line with the administrative approach of the period, provides for the recognition of freedom of the press, while at the same time reflecting the state’s desire to control this freedom. During this period, the press became increasingly important not only for its function of providing news, but also for shaping public opinion and intervening in political developments. Indeed, the fact that the press found a place in constitutional texts during the transition to a constitutional order show that its role in social and political life was increasingly recognized. The closure of the Meclis-i Mebusan and the dysfunctionality of the Constitution paved the way for the establishment of an authoritarian administrative approach in the Ottoman Empire. During this period, serious restrictions were imposed, especially on the press, and freedom of the press was largely eliminated. The tyrannical rule of Abdulhamid II is also notable for the tense relationship he established with the press. The Ottoman central authority operated a strict censorship mechanism in order to prevent the free circulation of ideas during this period and tried to control intellectual production. These practices of control and intervention against the press deeply affected not only the political structure of the period, but also the formation of public opinion.¹⁹⁵

The reign of Abdulhamid II was an extremely difficult period for the Young Turks, who played an important role in the process of proclaiming the Constitutional Monarchy. Some journalists and intellectuals who had to escape the oppression of the autocratic regime took refuge in Europe and continued their oppositional publishing activities abroad. Although some figures were allowed to return to Ottoman territory in the following years, this did not eliminate the tension between the press and the political authority; on the contrary, it made the conflicting dynamics in this relationship more visible. The period in question stands out as a phase in which the power struggle between the press and the government sharpened. The failure of Ali Suavi’s attempt to dethrone Abdulhamid II in 1878 and his death during this rebellion, as well as the various punishments he received for other participants in his uprising, revealed how harsh an attitude the Abdulhamid administration would adopt towards opposition movements. This development also served as a kind of deterrent message for the press and intellectual circles trying to develop a discourse independent of the political power; has revealed the limits of the sanctions that the government could impose against opposition activities. The restriction of press freedom in the Ottoman Empire was not limited to the closure of newspapers or the

¹⁹⁵ Lewis, 1968, 232; Dönmezer, 1968, 130; Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2005, 17; Öztürk, 2010, 49-51.

exile of journalists; it also included the establishment of a controlled press to prevent criticism against the government before it even emerged. The intense censorship policies implemented during the reign of Abdulhamid II negatively affected the institutionalization and professional development of journalism in the long term. Newspapers trying to publish under the oppressive attitudes of the censors were forced to implement serious self-censorship in their content in order to continue their activities. By 1908, only four newspapers in Istanbul could continue their publication lives, and of these, *İkdam* and *Sabah* tried to survive with the impartial content they could censor; while *Tercüman-ı Ahvâl* and *Saadet* followed a pro-palace publishing line. This picture shows that the relations between the press and the political power directly affected not only freedom of expression, but also the sustainability and existence of journalism.¹⁹⁶

3.1.1. The Image of “Britain” in Ottoman Public Opinion

By the beginning of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire had been seriously weakened by nationalist movements, internal rebellions, external interventions, and a series of wars. While these developments threatened the political and territorial integrity of the state, the sustainability of the Ottoman Empire began to be questioned in the eyes of the great Western powers. This situation was expressed in diplomatic literature as the “Eastern Question”; the Ottoman Empire increasingly came to be known as the “Sick Man of Europe”. This expression reflected both the weakness of the Empire and the struggle of the great powers for interests over Ottoman lands. Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt between 1798 and 1801 clearly revealed that the Ottoman Empire was too weak to defend its distant provinces on its own. The Wahhabi-Saudi rebellion in Arabia between 1811 and 1818 could only be suppressed thanks to the army sent by the Governor of Egypt, Kavalali Mehmed Ali Pasha. During the same period, Russia was inciting the peoples in the Balkans against the Ottomans and causing various nationalist uprisings to break out in these regions. The Ottoman Empire was forced to once again resort to Mehmed Ali Pasha in order to suppress the Greek rebellion, which continued between 1821 and 1829 and received the open support of the Western great powers.¹⁹⁷ However, during this period, Mehmed Ali Pasha began to impose his own political goals against the central authority; first in 1829-1833, then in 1839, he directly rebelled against the Ottomans. These developments revealed that the Ottoman Empire was weakened not only against external powers, but also against powerful governors within its own structure. These developments revealed that the Ottoman Empire definitely needed one or more external supporters in order to continue its existence. During this period, England began to strongly advocate for the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire;

¹⁹⁶ Kabacalı, 1990, 79; İskit, 2000, 90; Öztürk, 2010, 52-54.

¹⁹⁷ Rogan, 1999, 2; Deringil, 2007, 23-135; Fortna, 2002, 84.

because the Ottoman Empire was seen as a strategic buffer zone that would prevent Russia from expanding towards the Middle East and India. England, together with France, intervened in the Crimean War of 1853-1856, preventing Russia from gaining any advantage over the Ottomans. However, this support came at a significant cost for the Ottomans. From this date onwards, the great powers began to increasingly interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, making their economic and political influence felt in every area of the state. Under these conditions, the Ottoman Empire felt threatened in a wide geography extending from Basra and Yemen in the south to the cities in the westernmost Balkans. Throughout the 19th century, the most important issue for Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals was to eliminate these threats and ensure the continuity of the state. Believing that the territorial integrity and existence of the state were in serious danger, these cadres argued that “enemies were increasingly able to act from within.” This expression meant that foreign states were encouraging various groups within the Ottoman borders to seek independence or autonomy. The change in British foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire coincided with the accession to the throne of Abdulhamid II. During this process, Britain transformed from a guarantor defending the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire to a directly anti-Ottoman actor. With the collapse of the Concert of Europe in the 1870s, Britain began to think that it no longer needed an Ottoman State that protected its territorial integrity. In addition, allegations of massacres of Christians in Bulgaria on the eve of the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War created an anti-Ottoman atmosphere in public opinion, which further weakened British support for the Ottomans. Britain realized that it was no longer in its interests to preserve the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. For example, British Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury did not consider it appropriate to cede the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits to Russia.¹⁹⁸ In fact, Salisbury argued that Britain had supported the wrong side since the Crimean War; in other words, the Ottoman Empire was no longer a barrier preventing Russia from expanding into the Near East. During this period, British statesmen began to think that Ottoman territorial integrity was no longer needed to maintain control over India and that Egypt alone would suffice for this purpose. This major change in British foreign policy became concrete with the signing of the Berlin Treaty in 1878. As a result of the treaty, the Ottoman Empire was forced to give up two-fifths of its territory and one-fifth of its population and was also obliged to carry out reforms in the eastern provinces towards the Armenians, and control of these reforms was given to Britain. However, the Ottoman Empire was forced to pay a heavy war indemnity to Russia. Immediately following the Berlin Treaty, Britain occupied Cyprus in 1878 and France captured Tunisia in 1881. The British occupation of

198 Fortna, 2002, 84; Çetinsaya, 2003, 194; Deringil, 2000, 9-10; Özcan, 1993, 111-117.

Egypt in 1882 completely eliminated any possibility of a recovery in relations between Britain and the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of Abdulhamid II's reign, the West's financial pressure on the Ottoman Empire also increased significantly. With the establishment of the Public Debt Administration in 1881, the bankruptcy of the Ottoman treasury was institutionalized and the financial administration was left to the control of foreign creditor states. During the same period, developments such as the British occupation of Cyprus and Egypt and the demands for reforms against the Armenians led to increased suspicions on the Ottoman side, especially towards Britain. Furthermore, Abdulhamid II suspected that Britain might have been behind the coup against Sultan Abdulaziz in 1876 and the Çırağan Raid against him led by Ali Suavi in 1878. Thus, a negative attitude towards Britain rapidly developed in the minds of Ottoman statesmen, intellectuals, and especially Abdulhamid II. Indeed, the sultan openly expressed this situation by saying, "*Britain is the one to be most wary of among the great powers.*" Even Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha, known for his pro-British stance, accepted that conditions had changed since the Crimean War and that Britain might show a tendency to support Armenian or Arab elements in Asia. Abdulhamid II and the administrators in his immediate circle believed that Britain establishing "*zones of influence*" in Ottoman lands could eventually lead to the disintegration of the state. Under these conditions, the Ottomans began to search for a new ally in order to both maintain their own existence and eliminate threats from Britain. In this context, a rapprochement process began between Germany and the Ottomans. In line with its colonial policy known as "*Drang nach Osten*" (Expansion to the East), Germany viewed the weakened Ottoman Empire as a market opening to the East. However, Germany aimed to realize these interests through peaceful means rather than armed intervention.¹⁹⁹

3.2. A Public Solidarity: Crete, the Homeland

The United Kingdom, one of the most trusted allies of the Ottoman Empire in foreign policy in the second half of the 19th century, put the Ottoman administration through a diplomatic challenge with its stance on the Cretan issue. The United Kingdom's transfer of the Seven Islands to Greece in 1864 strengthened the idea of union with Greece (enosis) among the Cretan Greeks. This decision reflected, on the one hand, London's desire to develop relations with Greece, and on the other hand, Russia's effort to balance its influence in the Balkans. However, it was not foreseen that the transfer in question would be perceived by the Greek public as Crete joining Greece in a similar manner in the future. This situation affected the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean, and also paved the way for demands for the territorial

¹⁹⁹ Rogan, 1999, 2; Deringil, 2007, 23-135; Fortna, 2002, 84; Çetinsaya, 2003, 194; Deringil, 2000, 9-10; Özcan, 1993, 111-117; Biral, 2023, 223-225.

integrity of the Ottoman Empire to resurface on the international agenda.²⁰⁰ The developments in Ottoman foreign policy during the period in question confirm Austrian Chancellor Metternich's assessment that "the Ottoman's foreign policy power depends on its internal stability." The attitude adopted by the United Kingdom towards the Crete issue has a strategic significance not only in the context of Ottoman-Greek relations but also in terms of the European balance of power. Britain's approach to this issue was shaped on the one hand by its doubts about France gaining influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, and on the other by its geopolitical concerns about Russia's possibility of reaching the Mediterranean via the Straits. In this context, it was of great importance for Britain that Crete, which had a strategic position on the sea routes leading to the Suez Canal, remain under Ottoman rule in terms of protecting its regional interests.²⁰¹

In the period after 1898, reactions and support movements regarding the Cretan issue developed in civil society rather than in official authorities or political circles. During this process, the Ottoman press largely avoided commentary or analysis on the content of the issue; instead, it generally confined itself to publishing telegrams received from foreign agencies. This situation led to a significant limitation in the reflection of the issue to the public, and especially due to the use of Western news agencies as sources, the information conveyed to the public was largely shaped by European-centered discourses. In the news published in European newspapers and the content reaching the Turkish public through telegrams from these newspapers, a framework generally prevailed in favor of the Ottoman State and against Greece. While some newspapers in the Ottoman press included assessments that the fanciful and ambitious ambitions that Greece had been nurturing for a long time were now clearly revealed, "*From now on, the most important aim of the people lies in the words 'autonomy under Ottoman rule', as they put it.*"²⁰² They emphasized that the European states had a parallel stance with the Ottoman Empire against these ambitions. In this context, messages that the European states had formed a common barrier against the efforts of Greece to trigger a major crisis despite being a small state, that the annexation of Crete would not be allowed, and that Greece, which cooperated with Greek elements, should be made to regret, found a place in some organs of the Turkish press. In this context, it is seen that a certain segment of the Ottoman press of the period maintained its trust in the European states and had the opinion that these states would protect the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. However, in various publications in the public opinion, the annexation of Crete to the Kingdom of Greece was only increasing

200 Özgün, 2019a, 161; Karabulut, 2008, 80; Gemici, 2009, 283

201 Özgün, 2019a, 161; Karabulut, 2008, 82-83; Gemici, 2009, 283; Işık, 2011, 230.

202 Girit Meselesi Nasıl Halledilmeli?, 1910: 3.

the power of the Greeks against Turkey. For this purpose, many difficulties and obstacles arose on the island and it was emphasized that the issue should never be removed from the agenda because it has not yet been resolved.²⁰³ On the other hand, Greece, taking advantage of the competitive environment between the great powers in the Mediterranean, attributed a regional mission to itself and in this direction, both encouraged and directly supported the Greek rebellions in Crete. In order to legitimize the developments in Crete in the eyes of the international public, the Greek administration adopted an effective propaganda strategy that presented the events not as a security issue but as a “*manifestation of a nationalist movement*.” This approach aimed to attract the attention of the European public in particular, and thus Greece tried to place the Cretan issue on an ideological basis that could be supported by Western states. However, the great European states did not want Greece to be directly involved in the solution of the Cretan issue and preferred to continue the diplomatic process under their own control. This situation caused the Cretan rebels to seek different external support. Indeed, the interest in American protection can also be evaluated in this context. Although the Ottoman Empire’s support for the North during the American Civil War is a reminder, the United States has adopted a neutral stance on the Cretan issue, avoiding direct intervention. This neutrality can be related to America’s traditional timidity in European politics, as well as the fact that the Cretan issue remains outside of its primary areas of interest.²⁰⁴

According to a report in the *Malumat* newspaper, the island of Crete came under Ottoman rule in 1669, and during this period, a portion of the population on the island converted to Islam. There was no serious unrest on the island for about a century; however, the first signs of unrest emerged in 1770. The report states that the situation was quickly brought under control with the strong intervention of the Ottoman military presence during this period. Similar incidents were seen again in Crete during the Greek Revolt of 1821-1830; then, various rebellion attempts were made between 1833-1840 and 1848-1858. With the lines “*That is why Greece is remembered as the naughty and foolish child of Europe*,” the newspaper states that these rebellions were suppressed each time with the harsh intervention of the state and that the rebels were disciplined.

“If the chaotic history that has emerged since the conquest of the peninsula of Girit and its annexation to the glorious lands is examined, it will be seen that the inhabitants of this peninsula have rebelled once every six or seven years and that they have suffered a great wound by putting the pimples that have appeared on their minds with an insolence that is capable of destroying and eliminating the great country, yet it will also be realized that this disastrous operation was

203 Sabah 2599: 21 February 1897, 2; Hamiyyet 23: 19 March 1897, 1; Girit Meselesi Nasıl Halledilmeli?, 1910: 3; Strauss, 1994, 2105-2106.

204 Özgün, 2019a, 161; Gümtüş, 2016, 33; Bourne, 1963, 256.

also perceived as the heroic actions of the victorious Ottoman Empire as a result of the same doomsday."²⁰⁵

The report claims that the rebellions in Crete were motivated by the rebels' "natural excesses" and provocations from external forces, rather than a rational justification. It emphasizes that the Ottoman administration granted the people living on the island extensive freedoms, kept tax liabilities relatively light compared to other provinces, and gave them a say in the administration through a local council. However, it is argued that all these practices, according to the story, had a "spoiling" effect on the people of the island.

"..on the other hand, the fact that the Ottoman state declared freedom to the Greek government and that it was forced to show respect and respect to an administrative body that had lost its law and justice should be an example of terror to the Cretans and while the military operations of the mixed foreign soldiers who attempted to restore the foundations in the name of the Great Powers in Cretan should be successful against one of the rebels.."

The news article states that the idea of independence that Greece and four of the major European powers (understood to mean England, France, Russia and Italy) tried to instill in the Cretan people and their propaganda for annexation to Greece caused an increase in separatist tendencies among the islanders. As Daş Tekin also mentioned, this situation is an example of an approach that reflected the anxiety felt towards foreign interventions and nationalist movements that was frequently encountered in the Ottoman press of the period.²⁰⁶

According to the *Malumat* Newspaper, signs of rebellion reappeared on the island of Crete in 1866 and this unrest continued for about two years. These developments led the *Düvel-i Muazzama* (The Great European Powers) to put the issue back on the agenda; some states presented the annexation of Crete to Greece as a solution proposal to the Ottoman Empire. However, England, which did not find this proposal appropriate in terms of its interests in the region, opposed it and prevented diplomatic initiatives in this direction. This situation caused the expectations of the Christian elements in Crete to join Greece to weaken. However, these desires for annexation did not completely disappear and separatist activities continued in different forms. Following these developments, the Ottoman administration aimed to improve living conditions on the island and re-establish social order with a privilege decree published in 1868. Within this scope, administrative reforms were made and the people of Crete were granted some social and administrative rights. However, according to the newspaper's assessment, "*...a significant portion of the Greek population on the island did not show a positive approach to this reform process and did*

²⁰⁵ *Ma'lumat*, 27 July 1897, 1-2.

²⁰⁶ *Ma'lumat*, 2 June 1897, 1-2; *Ma'lumat*, 27 July 1897, 1-2; Daş Tekin, 2022, 60.

not sufficiently appreciate the Ottoman efforts to improve. In fact, the Greeks of Crete preferred to envy the Greeks in Greece, who lived in more difficult conditions than they did, but were more committed to the ideal of national unity.” The news also drew attention to the fact that not all of the Christian population in Crete shared separatist tendencies. It stated that “*there were also Christian elements who did not participate in the rebellion, who maintained peaceful relations with the Ottoman administration and were happy with the existing order...*” However, according to Daş Tekin, this segment became ineffective over time due to the insecurity created by the rebel groups and the acts of violence. This situation reflects the official discourse dominant in the Ottoman press of the period, as well as the state’s efforts to legitimize its reform and security policies.²⁰⁷

The situation was covered in another dimension in the Hamiyet newspaper. Accordingly, it is known to everyone that the Cretan Christians received a lot of financial support in order to incite and encourage their fellow Muslims to commit various atrocities. It is a fact that we read in the European news that the Greek Palikaria (Greek volunteer) did not rise to the aforementioned encouragement and provocations and completely avoided coming under Greek rule, which upset the Greek press a lot. According to this news, it was understood that there was great resentment and reaction against the Cretan palikaria in the Greek press because they did not want to be annexed to Greece. The developments regarding the Cretan issue were covered in the Ottoman press of the period, especially through Greece’s attitude. According to the prominent comments in the press, the Greek government and public opinion tried to direct the developments on the island in line with their own political goals and transformed this process, which they described as a “national cause”, into a foreign policy tool. It was claimed that Greece displayed an attitude that pushed the boundaries and often contradicted traditional diplomatic practices during this process. The Ottoman press emphasized that the rebellion in Crete was essentially shaped by the direct provocations of Greece; In this context, he argued that the initiatives defined by the Greek side as “national passion” had led to instability to the extent that it threatened the European public opinion. In this context, it was stated that the major European powers—especially Germany, Russia and Austria—had to intervene as a balancing element in the Crete issue, and that these states even developed a common stance at one stage, realizing the uncontrolled nature of the policies pursued by Greece.

“Austria and Germany got tired of the situation and withdrew, declaring that they had no real interest in the Cretan issue. After that, France, England, Italy and Russia were left with the Cretan issue. Before going into the details of the

207 Malumat, 12 June 1897, 3; Daş Tekin, 2022, 59-60.

negotiation, it is necessary to look at the 3 stages of the events that developed. The first stage: The removal of the Ottoman soldiers from the island, the second stage: The appointment of Prince George as a commissioner on behalf of the Greek king and the last stage is the establishment of a constitution."²⁰⁸

The Ottoman press of the period also drew attention to the style of the Athens-based publications, arguing that these publications were far from diplomatic, and were shaped by expressions that included emotional reactions and harsh statements. In this context, it was evaluated that the harsh and threatening language used by some newspapers, especially towards the great powers, was far from convincing when compared to the international positions of these states. It was stated that the Greek press increasingly turned to a language of disappointment, agitation and anger in its publications on the Cretan issue, and that these publications took a propagandistic form aimed at calming the public opinion rather than serious diplomatic discussions. In this context, the Ottoman newspapers of the period also considered it a kind of necessity to give direct responses to the statements in the Greek press; they felt the need to respond to these statements in the public eye by summarizing or translating some statements. This method emerged as a press strategy in terms of both directing the Ottoman public opinion and defending the rightfulness of the state.²⁰⁹ According to reliable private sources and the evaluations in the political press of the period, Greece seems to have entered a new period of military conflict. In this context, it is understood that the Greek public preferred to leave its expectations regarding the occupation of Crete to the outcome of a possible secondary war. In other words, the general tendency of the public expects the issue to be shaped not by direct diplomatic negotiations but by actual developments on the ground. In previous political evaluations in the Ottoman press, it was stated that the great powers tried to include the Greek government in the general policies of Europe towards peace through pressure. As mentioned in the promises made to the sultan by the four great powers, they would do their best to protect the Ottoman flag that would fly on the most secure spot on the island of Crete.²¹⁰ In this way, it was aimed to prevent the emergence of a general atmosphere of instability in Europe. If it was desired for these political initiatives to be concluded in a truly peaceful framework, it was stated that, as expressed in the press of the period, the decisions to be taken by an impartial international arbitration board should be made binding. It was evaluated that such an application would constitute a modern and exceptional part in addition to the classical rules of international law and could set a precedent for the solution of similar problems in the future. On the other hand,

208 Hamiyet, 21 December 1896, 4; Hamiyet 25: 27 March 1897, 1; Girit Meselesi Nasıl Halledilmeli?, 1910: 15-16.

209 Hamiyet, 21 December 1896, 4; Hamiyet 25: 27 March 1897, 1; Daş Tekin, 2022, 60.

210 Girit Meselesi Nasıl Halledilmeli?, 1910: 21.

in a warning letter written jointly by the commanders of the allied fleets addressed to the officers of the military units sent to Crete by the European states, it was emphasized that military interventions against the local population should be carried out “*within humanitarian criteria and in an exemplary nature.*” It was stated that these interventions should not only serve to ensure public order in the region, but also to protect the “*military honor*” of the military personnel in the eyes of the states they were affiliated with. The artillery fire opened by the allied warships against the armed elements in Crete caused a great reaction, especially in Athens; these developments had a wide repercussion in the Greek public opinion. This situation shows that Greece’s approach to the Cretan issue has developed not only on a diplomatic level but also on a rhetorical level aimed at directing public opinion. The attitude adopted by England regarding the Cretan issue reflects a strategic approach that needs to be analyzed carefully rather than a direct criticism. England is of the opinion that the island of Crete does not have direct strategic importance for Russia and therefore adopts the assumption that Russia will not actively intervene in the island. Within the framework of this assessment, it is clear that the suppression of the rebellions in Crete will involve a certain level of violence; however, despite its sectarian affiliation, Russia, which is an Orthodox sect, is not expected to be directly involved in this process. Under these circumstances, the fact that England does not see any significant negativity in the face of these developments is in line with its general foreign policy priorities and this attitude is evaluated as a diplomatic stance that needs to be understood rather than being open to criticism in terms of its own interests. Indeed, one of the main reasons why the Cretan issue has not been resolved permanently to date is the international sensitivity to end the conflict without further bloodshed. During this period, Greece, especially in the last two months, has displayed a rather aggressive attitude, implying that it is “*looking for an opportunity to shed blood*”; in contrast, the Ottoman Empire has adopted a cautious approach and preferred to allow space for European diplomatic initiatives. At this point, it has been argued that if there is a more effective and constructive solution proposal, it should be brought to the agenda by Russian diplomacy within the framework of human values. On the other hand, in a telegram sent from Istanbul to some newspapers in England, the following information was conveyed regarding diplomatic developments regarding Crete: The last note sent to the Greek government by the great powers was met with a semi-official response by the Athens cabinet.²¹¹ This answer is based on the talks between Monsieur Cambon, the French ambassador in Istanbul, and Prince Mavrokordato, the Greek ambassador, following a speech by Monsieur Hatono in the French Assembly. In the meeting in question, Prince Mavrokordato stated that these statements reflected his

211 Emniyet 58: 4 April 1897, 1-3; Girit Meselesi Nasıl Halledilmeli?, 1910: 19-21.

personal views, but that the Greek cabinet would be prepared to accept the administrative reforms being implemented by the great powers in Crete under certain conditions. However, on an official level, the Greek government openly denied the allegations that it had made such a proposal to the great powers. The issues of Crete and Greece were the subject of long-term discussions in the press of the period; the evaluations and comments made on these issues eventually led to a kind of fatigue both in the public opinion and in the press members. Although some circles of the press published many articles under the titles of “*political evaluation*”, “*general view*” and “*opinion*” from the moment these issues were brought to the agenda, the public never hoped for a satisfactory and permanent solution. In fact, considering the course of developments, expectations that these issues would be resolved soon have gradually diminished. Because each new development creates new trends and uncertainties that will change the current situation and complicates diplomatic and political processes. This situation was also carefully followed and seriously addressed by the political press of the period. At the beginning of the attempts to annex Crete by Greece, the Greek government acted not only by considering the religious and ethnic ties on the island, but also the geopolitical balances. Within this framework, it tried to adopt a strategy of drawing the Ottoman Empire into a multi-front preoccupation in the Balkans, especially by relying on certain external support and promises of intervention. In line with this, Greece attempted to put pressure on the Ottoman Empire at different points through other elements in the region such as Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania. However, these efforts did not yield the desired results. The Bulgarians completely avoided participating in this process, while the Serbs, considering the negative consequences that the process could produce, displayed a cautious attitude. In particular, the determined stance of the major powers in the Balkans towards peace and preserving the current status quo has forced regional actors to act cautiously. For this reason, Greece’s provocative initiatives in this direction have not found a serious response from the states in question; in fact, they have been met with a sarcastic smile in some circles. These developments have led to Greece being left alone in its regional strategies and having difficulty in gaining international legitimacy for its claims over Crete.²¹² Following the privileges granted to Bulgaria in 1885, Greece, concerned about the deterioration of the balance of power in the Balkans, increased its military preparations and continued its initiatives to violate the Ottoman borders. The tolerant attitude of the European states towards the demands for the expansion of the borders in 1881 was effective in Greece’s aggressive attitude. In addition, the occupation of Tunisia by the French and Egypt by the British also encouraged Greece. From this period onwards, with the island gaining autonomy, Greece began to

212 Emniyet 58: 4 April 1897, 1-3; Hamiyet 30: 8 April 1897, 1.

intervene in the internal affairs of Crete and aimed to annex the island to its own territory as its ultimate goal. The activities carried out in this direction caused a new outbreak of chaos on the island. It can be said that both the Muslim and Christian communities bore equal responsibility for this chaos. However, the Christian Cretans tried to give the impression of a major conflict by presenting the events differently than they actually were.²¹³

The Mizan Newspaper, on the other hand, took a very serious approach to the issue. Accordingly, the public learned with great sorrow that “a new rebellion broke out on the island before the harmful agreements signed on Crete with the intervention of foreign ambassadors were implemented.” It was emphasized that the unrest on the island was largely caused by Christians, and information was given that rebels were constantly making great preparations in the region. According to the news in local newspapers and the impressions of their reporters, it was revealed that the reasons for the disruption of public order were largely caused by Christians. According to the news, leaving aside past events, there is no longer any acceptable excuse for these new provocations. This situation, which caused great harm to the state and government, took place by taking advantage of the weakness, negligence and lack of foresight of the Ottoman administration, and despite this, an attempt was made to rape the innocent Muslim people without taking any just steps to achieve the desired result. This also shows that behind these rebellions there was neither a complaint against the deficiencies of the administration nor any other criticism about the administration. It is clear that the aim is to harm the Muslims, who own a large part of the island, even though it has a small population, and to take it into their own hands. In addition, the island of Crete is one of the places that benefit the most from the weakness of the current administration. It is very difficult to find another place where so much tolerance is shown in terms of property. If the people living here focused on their development in peace and turned towards civilization, they would perhaps be the happiest, most fortunate and richest society in the world. However, the dream of passing to Greek administration and the desire to be under the influence of Greek culture, in addition to harming them, also negatively affected the Muslim people, preventing them from benefiting from the island’s natural resources, and problems such as poverty, chaos, ignorance and lack of knowledge emerged.²¹⁴

One of the main issues that Süleyman Nazif, one of the important intellectual figures of the period, focused on the issue of Crete was the decision of the Muslim population on the island to emigrate. Nazif emphasized that “*the*

²¹³ Kanuni Esasi, 12 January 1897, 8; Daş Tekin, 2022, 62; Turan and Sannav, 2019, 992-1000.

²¹⁴ Mizan, 25 January 1897, 4; “According to the first purpose, it was said that the island of Crete required a large autonomous administration. A disagreement could have occurred on this point, as it had for a long time. According to the second purpose, it was said that it was not enough for Crete to have an autonomous administration. Crete should be separated from the Ottoman and included among the Greece. At this point, a disagreement arose immediately and took a serious form.”, *Girit Meselesi Nasıl Halledilmeli?*, 1910, 14-15.

developments in Crete were not only a diplomatic or political crisis, but also pointed to a serious social trauma and humanitarian crisis." In particular, the tendency of the Muslim population on the island to emigrate was addressed with deep sadness and disappointment in his writings. Süleyman Nazif published seven separate articles on Crete in the *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* newspaper between August 1 and December 31, 1909. The first of these articles was titled "*Girit Muhacirleri*" (Emigrants of Crete) dated August 2, 1909. In the article in question, Nazif described the decision of the Cretan Muslims to leave the island as a heartbreaking development. Nazif drew attention to the resistance of the Muslims who had been subjected to various oppressions and acts of violence on the island for nearly fifty years, despite all these difficulties, but he stated that this resistance had now been broken. According to him, the decision of this community to migrate is not only a physical change of location; it also means a "*loss of homeland*". While emphasizing that migration is a historical loss for Muslims, Nazif refers to the example of Rumelia. He presents the fact that Muslims have not left a permanent mark or impact on the places they left in the migrations that took place from various regions of Rumelia as a warning in the context of Crete. In this context, he advises Cretan Muslims to be patient; he suggests that they stay on the island and not lose hope despite the difficult conditions they are in. Nazif develops a discourse that is both consoling and morale-boosting with the words, "*Those who cannot find a life in their homeland today should be a little more patient. The future will definitely be auspicious.*" These writings of Nazif show that the Cretan issue is not only an international crisis, but also a socio-political issue that can be read through concepts such as identity, belonging and migration. In his articles in the newspaper, he both displayed a critical approach to the attitude of the *Düvel-i Erbaa* (Western Powers) and aimed to create public awareness about the efforts of Cretan Muslims to protect their existence on the island.²¹⁵

In his articles on the Cretan issue, the issue that Süleyman Nazif focused on the most and affected him the most was the decision of the Muslim people living on the island to emigrate. According to him, this decision was not only an individual choice but also an indicator of a historical and social loss in terms of Ottoman sovereignty. Nazif, who argued that Western states—especially the four major states known as the "Western Powers" should intervene in the face of the increasingly provocative actions of Christian elements in Crete, tried to influence public opinion in this direction. In his article titled "*With War or Peace?*" published in the *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* newspaper on August 5, 1909, Nazif put forward his thoughts on whether the Cretan issue could be resolved through war or peaceful methods. According to him, the current situation on

215 *Tasvir-i Efkâr* 56; 26 July 1909; 1-5; Baycan, 2019, 13.

the island is fundamentally based on the clash of two opposing interests. Nazif summarizes this situation with the following words: *“Today, two opposing goals, one based on equity and the other on personal interests, are facing each other in Crete. The Ottoman Empire aims to establish a legitimate sovereignty based on its glorious conquest right that has lasted more than two and a half centuries and the request for help from the approximately one hundred thousand Muslim people living there. The Greeks, on the other hand, want to annex the island to their own territory. Only war can solve these two opposing goals in the world. If this is not the case, all diplomatic efforts will be fruitless.”* According to Nazif, it is not possible to resolve the Cretan issue peacefully under current conditions. Because the Ottoman Empire defends its legitimate sovereignty in a historical context; on the other hand, Greece’s demands reflect an attitude that can be explained more by emotional and expansionist motives. This unbalanced power and legitimacy relationship also lies at the root of the failure of diplomatic initiatives. For this reason, Nazif argues that war, if necessary, can be a legitimate solution to preserve the status quo on the island and ensure the security of Muslims.²¹⁶

In his article titled “Approaching the Apocalypse” published in the Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr newspaper on August 8, 1909, Süleyman Nazif continued his evaluations of the Cretan issue and specifically targeted the Athens press. In his article, Nazif criticized Greek newspapers for warmongering and stated that such discourses that belittled the military and financial capacity of the Ottoman Empire only served to escalate tensions. While calling on the Greek public to be more sensible, Nazif emphasized that in this process, they should not leave Prime Minister Monsieur Rallis’ peaceful discourses to mere words, but rather support these discourses with concrete political steps. In his opinion, this attitude would not only serve international peace, but would also directly serve Greece’s own interests. In the same article, Nazif also touched on the rallies held in Manastır in connection with the Cretan issue and stated that such civil actions were important in terms of reflecting the patriotic feelings of the people; However, he warned that this excitement should not be channeled in a way that would directly drag the Sublime Porte into a declaration of war. In this context, the following words of Nazif are noteworthy: *“While we congratulate our citizens in Monastir, we do not want to hear or hear that they have excited the Sublime Porte to the point of forcing a declaration of war.”* This article by Nazif was a balanced warning that he directed to both the Ottoman public and the Greek side. While approving the justified reactions and national feelings of the people on the one hand, he emphasized that moderation should be exercised in political decision-making processes on the other. At the same time, Süleyman

216 “We cannot know how benevolent the great powers will be to us, when they shake the hands of the Cretan rebels, who are rich in innocence, with words that will inspire hope and with fervor from the commanders of the great powers”, Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr 66: 5 August 1909, 1; Baycan, 2019, 13-14.

Nazif, who saw journalism not only as a means of informing the public but also as a platform contributing to conflict resolution, tried to keep alive the hope of a peaceful solution to the Cretan issue with this article.²¹⁷

In his article titled “*The Grave of the Greeks*” published in the *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* newspaper on August 12, 1909, Süleyman Nazif harshly criticized the Greek government’s stance on the Crete issue. In his article, he stated that Greece was trying to create an image of neutrality in the public opinion that it had no political aims towards Crete; however, he claimed that this claim did not correspond to the reality on the ground. According to Nazif, the Greek government was consciously avoiding presenting a clear and binding statement documenting its neutrality on the Crete issue, which was intended to conceal its actual intervention. Nazif emphasized that the actual situation in Crete invalidated such statements by Greece and listed the following examples: The command of rebel units organized under the name of militia forces by Greek officers; the flying of the Greek flag over military fortresses and official institutions on the island; Elements such as the fact that the administrative and legal institutions in Crete tried to make decisions on behalf of King George, which only included Greeks, clearly show that Greece was a directly involved actor. In this context, Nazif stated that “*In the context of Crete, there cannot be any other enemy or rival against the Sublime Porte; there is only Greece*” and indicated that the fundamental side in the matter had now become clear. Another striking aspect of the article is Nazif’s more general warning about the relationship between political ambition and public opinion. Nazif stated that states that act solely with political ambitions, ignoring the expectations of the people and national interests, ultimately lead themselves to disaster; he concretized this idea with the metaphor of “*societies that have graves outside their own countries*”. Within this framework, he warned that Crete would “turn into a grave” for Greece if these policies continued. Beyond being merely a journalistic reaction, this article by Süleyman Nazif interprets a crisis in international relations of the period, which was stuck between the dynamics of power, legitimacy and public opinion. While defending the rightness of the Ottoman side in the Crete issue, he tried to reveal the implicit expansionist policy of Greece; at the same time, he drew attention to the fact that states should not exceed the limits of legitimate political behavior.²¹⁸

In his article titled “Always Crete” published in the *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* newspaper on August 18, 1909, Süleyman Nazif heavily criticized the passive

217 “By the Muslim people of Crete, to the esteemed Committee of Union and Progress and the esteemed Chamber of Deputies: In our national homeland, the Island of Crete, which is one of the most important parts of Ottoman lands, the Greek war flag has been hoisted and is being waved in all official offices and fortresses, just as the Greek flag was hoisted after the European soldiers left their headquarters.”, *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* 69: 8 August 1909, 1-2; Baycan, 2019, 14.

218 “The Cretan rebels are the spoiled children of Europe. Greece, which tried to have Colonel Vasos invade Crete twelve years ago, has found it more prudent to keep its aims and provocative intentions secret since the day it paid the price for its open operation. However, there are many reasons and evidence that prevent us from considering the government of Monsieur Zaimis as neutral and innocent.”, *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* 73: 12 August 1909, 1-5; Baycan, 2019, 14.

attitude of the Ottoman government towards the developments in Crete. In particular, one of the main issues that Nazif drew attention to was the fact that the Sublime Porte did not show any diplomatic or military reaction to the Cretan rebels hoisting the Greek flag on various official institutions on the island. Emphasizing that this action was not only a de facto challenge but also a clear disregard for Ottoman sovereignty, Nazif evaluated the government's silence in the face of this situation as a lack of political will. Nazif did not limit himself to Crete in his article, but also referred to the unrest in Macedonia, questioning why approximately two hundred Greek officers operating there were not arrested and why the necessary legal procedures were not implemented against them. He stated that the impunity of such subversive activities not only revealed the existing security weakness, but also the state's lack of will to eliminate threats to its sovereignty. According to Nazif, this soft stance of the government was not only a security gap, but also a deeper political weakness. In this context, his statement, "The inability of politics results in a much greater defeat than the weakness of arms; this hesitant approach may eventually lead to the loss of our rights," was a strong warning criticizing the indecisiveness of the Ottoman administration of the period. Nazif emphasized that it was imperative for the state to defend its sovereignty on the grounds of international law and political legitimacy, and argued that this defense should be supported not only by diplomatic means but also by a deterrent force when necessary. This article reflects not only the emotional sensitivity in Süleyman Nazif's view of the Cretan issue, but also his call for responsibility towards the state. According to him, the silence of the Ottoman Empire would not only cause an existing problem to grow, but would also pave the way for irreparable losses of territory and reputation in the long run.²¹⁹

In his article titled "First Success" published in the *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* newspaper on August 20, 1909, Süleyman Nazif evaluated the removal of the Greek flag hung in Crete as a result of international pressure as an important diplomatic success for the Ottoman Empire. According to Nazif, this development not only meant the confirmation of the Ottomans' right to sovereignty, but also showed that the great powers acted with a reflex to protect their own prestige. Indeed, he interpreted this intervention with the expression, "*Rather than protecting our rights, they repelled an attack on their own honor*"; thus, he associated the actions of the states in question not only with a sense of justice but also with the motivation to protect their international prestige. In the same article, Nazif also referred to the evaluations regarding

219 "As soon as the soldiers of the Great Powers withdrew from Crete, the rebels in Crete raised the Greek flag on official places. The first and most publicized newspaper to bring this action to the agenda was *Tasvir-i Efkâr*. By covering up and commenting on the incident with important and contradictory news, they tried to reduce its intensity and importance and prepare the public – especially the Ottoman public – to accept the situation. Like the apparent abolition of Ottoman sovereignty, the Greek flag waving both in vital places in Crete and in official buildings in other places, announced to the whole world that our national rights were being violated and that they were being mourned under the encouraging gaze of Europe.", *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* 79: 18 August 1909; 1-5. Baycan, 2019, 14-15.

the Cretan flag issue in the August 10, 1909 issue of the *Le Temps* newspaper. The relatively impartial and sensible nature of the comments made regarding the Greek intervention in Crete was appreciated by Nazif. In this context, Nazif, who found the impartiality of the newspaper in question valuable when it did not write anything against them, did not neglect to thank them for their attitudes defending the truth. However, *Le Temps*'s failure to show sufficient sensitivity regarding the aggressive activities of Greek officers in Macedonia against the Muslim people could not escape Nazif's criticism. This attitude of the newspaper, which contradicted the impartiality it displayed on the Cretan issue, was described by Nazif as negligence and favoritism; this situation was evaluated as "*a manifestation of the double standards frequently encountered in the Western press*". At this point, Nazif emphasized that the international public opinion should approach not only symbolic events but also the reality on the ground and the actual violence that the victimized peoples were subjected to with the same sensitivity. The article in question can be evaluated as an example of Nazif's efforts to both inform the Ottoman public opinion and to have the attitudes of international actors questioned in the public conscience. This development, which marked an important turning point in terms of the future of Crete as well as the international legitimacy of the Ottomans, was recorded as his "*first success*".²²⁰

In his article titled *On Crete*, published on September 10, 1909, Süleyman Nazif harshly criticized Greece for ignoring its current political and social capacity and pursuing excessive goals. He emphasized that Greece, which had a history of independence for nearly eighty years and a state governed by a constitutional monarchy for more than half a century, needed to shape its dreams and ideals in proportion to its current borders in order to maintain its internal stability and maintain its political integrity. According to Nazif, only in this way could Greece continue its existence without being dragged into a new interregnum or social disintegration. In his article, Nazif also brought up a recent military uprising in Greece and evaluated this development as an indicator of the people's level of political consciousness. According to him, the uprising in question was clear evidence that the Greek public could not distinguish between long-term benefit and short-term harm. In this context, the recent military uprising in Athens, once again proving how incapable the people are of distinguishing their own interests and harms, has both drawn attention to the instability in domestic politics and revealed that the maximalist approach to

²²⁰ "This reckless courage shown by the rebels in Crete, immediately after the soldiers of the Great Powers left the island, is an open attack not only against us but also against the four states that have assumed the administration of Crete. Two months ago, the honorable Mamuret-ul-Aziz deputy Asım Bey, who brought this issue to the agenda with a parliamentary question, stated that the situation that has been going on in Crete for ten years – that is, the status quo – is within your (parliament or state) knowledge and reminded us of the necessity of returning to the form of administration before 1897. When the Islamic countries, relying on promises previously made to the rebels in Crete, left the general situation of the island and especially the oppressed fate of the Islamic world to the arbitrary disposal of these rebels, it was felt that our right to sovereignty was being trampled once again.", *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkar* 81: 20 August 1909, 1.

the Cretan issue is based on these weak foundations. Nazif's assessment shows that the Cretan issue is not only a foreign policy issue but also directly related to the internal dynamics of Greece. In addition to evaluating Ottoman-Greek relations in the context of Crete, the article also sheds light on the regional political fragilities of the period.²²¹

3.2.1. The Cretan Revolt of 1878 and the Pact of Halepa in Ottoman Public Opinion

The tense process between the Ottoman Empire and Greece in 1881 resulted in long-lasting diplomatic negotiations and an agreement mediated by the great powers. In line with the efforts to preserve territorial integrity in the Balkans, the Ottoman government considered the transfer of Crete to Greece as a relatively less harmful option in order to prevent more serious territorial losses. In this context, it was evaluated that the islands of Karpathos and Kasos, located to the east of Crete, could also be given to Greece if necessary in order to preserve the Ottoman presence on the continent.²²²

Although the Ottoman Empire made important diplomatic and military attempts to preserve its territorial integrity in Rumelia, these efforts ultimately failed. Although the loss of the Thessaly and Narda (Arta) regions was an undesirable situation for the Ottomans, it became inevitable in line with the balance of power in the region. On the other hand, the attitude of England, a decisive actor in international politics of the period, was effective in the continuation of Crete under Ottoman rule. England, by opposing the transfer of the island to Greece, ensured that these attempts were unsuccessful.²²³

Following the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War, the weakening of the Ottoman Empire was seen as an opportunity by elements in Crete that demanded annexation to Greece, and a section of the islanders attempted to rebel in this direction. As a result of the impact of these developments on international public opinion and external interventions, the Ottoman administration was forced to implement a series of reforms in Crete. However, the regulations that were put into effect fell far short of meeting the demands of the Christian subjects, and also caused serious unrest among the Muslims who had enjoyed political and social privileges within the island's population for many years. In particular, the new regulations that undermined the traditional status of the Muslim community significantly changed the balance of power on the island. In this context, a semi-autonomous administrative structure was granted to Crete with the Treaty of Halepa signed in 1878. According to the treaty, the assembly

²²¹ "King George, realizing that public order was somehow deteriorating, took the first opportunity to leave the country in order to preserve his honor and dignity. However, it is not yet clear whether this resignation will be a remedy for the end of the Greek crisis or a cure for the other ills that the king was suffering from.", *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr* 102: 10 September 1909, 1.6; Baycan, 2019, 15.

²²² Türkgeldi, 1987, 405-406, 415; Köksal, 2018, 240.

²²³ Dakin, 1972, 133; Adıyke, 2000, 28.

to be formed would include 46 Christian and 31 Muslim members, and this assembly would be authorized to prepare administrative regulations regarding the island. In addition to the acceptance of Greek as the official language, various administrative and financial privileges were granted to the island. In fact, in 1887, upon the request of the assembly, it was decided that no taxes would be collected from Crete and that the island's revenues would be used for local needs. However, despite all these reforms and privileges, the Christian elements in Crete did not give up their rebellious activities in the following years; thus, social unrest and political instability continued on the island.²²⁴

The *Tercüman* newspaper, in a similar vein to the *Malumat* newspaper, drew attention to the inadequacy of the administrative and political arrangements made for the Christian elements on the island of Crete. According to the evaluations in the newspaper, despite the extensive reforms that the Christian population benefited from, together with the legal privileges provided by the capitulations, these arrangements did not meet expectations and the social unrest on the island did not end. Thus, it can be seen that the dominant view on the Cretan issue in the Ottoman press contained a critical attitude not only towards the scope of the reforms but also towards their impact and consequences in practice.²²⁵

Following the Berlin Congress, European states increased their diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman Empire in order to ensure the implementation of previously promised reforms on the island of Crete. In this context, the Ottoman government, which wanted to both end the social unrest on the island and meet European demands, sent Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha and Salim Efendi, a member of the Court of Cassation, as special representatives to Crete on September 9, 1878. The two representatives reached an agreement with the Cretan Greeks in the Halepa region near Chania on October 23, 1878. This arrangement, known as the Halepa Agreement, was prepared to be implemented under the supervision of the consuls of European states and officially entered into force with a decree sent by the Sultan to the Governor of Crete, Aleksandr Pasha, on November 20, 1878.²²⁶

Within the framework of the Halepa Agreement, an administrative structure specific to the island of Crete was established and a large degree of autonomy was granted to the island. According to these arrangements, the governor of Crete would be appointed for a five-year term and his appointment would be carried out in accordance with the principles of the Cretan Regulation. The representative nature of administrative participation was also evident in the formation of the General Assembly; this assembly, consisting of a total of 80 members, would include 49 Christians and 31 Muslims. The assembly

224 *Malumat*, 12 June 1897; *Mizan*, 24 May 1897, 10; Özer, 2007, 181; Salahi, 1976, 16-17; Karal, 2007, 69,119; Daş Tekin, 2022, 61-62.

225 *Tercüman*, 10 May 1897, 65; Cengiz, 1999, 77-78.

226 Salahi, 1976, 16- 17; Cengiz, 2018, 78-79.

would meet for 40 days a year, and this period could be extended for another 20 days if necessary. The arrangements approved by the assembly would be submitted to the approval of the Ottoman central government; they would enter into force only if they did not conflict with existing Ottoman laws. The judicial and executive bodies were separated from each other, thus embracing a fundamental principle of separation of powers. An advisor would be assigned to the governor and the person in this position would be selected from the opposite sect (Muslim or Christian) according to the religious identity of the governor. The minutes of the assembly would be kept in both Ottoman and Greek, but since the majority of the population spoke Greek, the negotiations would be conducted primarily in Greek. In terms of security, gendarmerie forces would be selected from the local population; however, if the necessary personnel could not be provided, assignments could be made from the central Ottoman State. In the financial sphere, the island's revenues—taxes from items such as customs, salt, and tobacco—would be used primarily for local needs, with the remainder transferred to the center. In addition, the agreement allowed the establishment of a printing press in Crete and the free conduct of press activities, thus accepting the principle of freedom of the press on the island.²²⁷ The Halepa Agreement, which was approved by the Sultan and put into effect and consisted of 16 articles, was considered as a diplomatic initiative of the Ottoman administration to respond to the social and political demands in Crete. The provisions in the agreement included regulations that specifically addressed the demands of the Cretan Greek community. Within this framework, the possibility of appointing a person from the Greek population as governor and the fact that Christian members were in the majority in the General Assembly paved the way for the formation of the administrative structure on the island in favor of the Greeks. This situation enabled the Greek elements to become more influential on the administrative processes at the local level and the administrative system in Crete gained a status similar to autonomy in practice. Thus, the decree in question was interpreted by some of the islanders as a means of achieving political gains during a period when the central authority was relatively weak.²²⁸

The extensive privileges granted to the Cretan Greeks with the Halepa Edict paved the way for the formation of a *de facto* autonomous administrative structure on the island. These regulations increased the effectiveness of the Greek population in administrative processes, thus creating a form of government on the island in which the central authority was limited. While this situation provided the Greek community with relative comfort politically and economically, it brought about various grievances for the Muslim population. The Muslim population could not benefit from these privileges; this inequality

227 *Düstur*, I Tertip, 1299, 559-863.

228 Türkgeçidi, 1987, 178; Cengiz, 2018, 78-79.

created an imbalance in the social structure and deepened the tension between the two communities. In the literature, some researchers have described this privileged status granted to Crete as a “*state within a state*” or “*autonomy*”. These comments were made not only for the Halepa Agreement of 1878, but also for the previous regulations of 1868. Historians, especially Enver Ziya Karal and M. Cavid Baysun, have drawn attention to the fact that the Halepa Agreement granted extensive administrative and political authority to the Greek elements. Aktepe, on the other hand, stated that with this arrangement, the Greeks of Crete gained administrative freedom to the extent that they could be called “*autonomic*”. The Halepa regime presented a unique model in the internal functioning of Crete that was different from the Ottoman provincial administration; thus, the island became an administrative unit with a special status within the Ottoman State.²²⁹ While evaluating the effects of the Halepa Agreement on the administrative structure of Crete, Adıyeke argues that this arrangement significantly weakened the ties between the island and the central authority. According to her, the Halepa regime caused the island to follow a course that was different from other Ottoman provinces in both economic and social development thanks to the administrative autonomy granted to Crete. This interpretation reveals that Crete gained a more independent administration in its internal affairs and that this situation gave the island a special status different from the Ottoman provincial system. This evaluation of Adıyeke offers a different perspective, especially in understanding the long-term social and economic consequences of the Halepa Agreement; thus, it makes an important contribution to explaining Crete’s privileged position within the Ottoman administration.²³⁰ When the evaluations of Aktepe and Adıyeke are considered together, it can be argued that the interpretations that Crete was officially granted autonomous status in 1868 are devoid of historical basis. Because if such a status had been provided in 1868, there would have been no need for new regulations with similar content in the Halepa Convention of 1878. In this context, Türkgeldi’s views are noteworthy. According to him, the 1878 Halepa Convention is one of the most important stages that Crete has achieved in the process of autonomy. The administrative autonomy granted to the island with the Convention made Crete’s special status within the Ottoman administrative structure more visible and institutionalized. In this context, it can be said that, beyond the regulations of 1868, the real breaking point was experienced with the Halepa Convention and that this document played a fundamental role in Crete’s transformation towards autonomy.²³¹ With the new administrative structure that took shape after the Halepa Agreement, two influential political parties came to the fore in Crete. The first of these was the

229 Salahi, 1976, 19.

230 Adıyeke, 2000, 29.

231 Türkgeldi, 1987, 37.

Xipoliti Party, led by Mitsotaki and known for its liberal tendencies. In Ottoman sources, this group was described as “*efkâr-ı müfride*” (dissenting opinions) due to its ideas. The other party was the Karavanades Party, led by Isihaki and with a more conservative line; this party was described as “*efkâr-ı mutedile*” (moderate opinions) in Ottoman administrative documents. These two parties played decisive roles in both the political and social structure of Crete; they developed different approaches, especially in matters related to parliamentary activities and local administration. While the Xipoliti Party followed a more reformist and innovative line, the Karavanades Party adopted an attitude in favor of preserving the traditional order.²³²

Although the political parties operating in Crete were founded by Christian elements, they also found support within Muslim communities to a certain extent. The liberal Xipoliti Party, led by Mitsotaki in particular, represented an urban, educated, and reform-minded segment. This segment consisted of individuals engaged in trade and who adopted a more modernist approach to the traditional structure. Indeed, this social group created a new class structure that could be defined as the “*Cretan bourgeoisie*” within the context of the conditions of the period. Christian merchants, especially those active in soap production, began to voice their political demands in a more organized manner as they gained economic power; thus, a new economic elite class, known as the “*Greek bourgeoisie*”, was formed. As Mahmud Celaledin Pasha also noted, this new bourgeois class both transformed their lifestyles and assumed a significant role in the economic structure of the island. In this context, the Xipoliti Party became an effective actor in the modernization process of Crete by representing the interests of this class on the political level.²³³

The de facto unification of Eastern Rumelia with Bulgaria in 1885 led to the reemergence of similar demands from the Greek population in Crete. Following this development, the Greeks of Crete openly expressed their desire to unite with Greece and started a new wave of rebellions. In response to this situation, the Ottoman government sent Mahmud Celaledin Pasha and Ahmed Ratib Pasha to Crete in order to calm the tension on the island and create a new basis for compromise. As a result of the negotiations, a new decree was issued on July 24, 1887; the decree in question was announced to the public in both Turkish and Greek. With this regulation, the Cretan people were granted broader rights complementary to the Treaty of Halepa and the aim was for the island to have a more autonomous administration while maintaining its allegiance to the Ottoman State. However, despite these new regulations, the desire of the Greek population in Crete to unite with Greece did not completely disappear;

²³² Türkgeldi, 1987, 182-183.

²³³ Adıyeke, 2006, 174.

political instability and social tension continued in the following years.²³⁴ During Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha's mission in Crete in 1887, there were a total of 597 civil servant positions on the island. 251 of these positions were held by Muslim and 346 by Christian personnel. This distribution reveals that Christian elements had a significant weight in the administrative structure of Crete. This situation reflects not only their representation in the administrative mechanisms but also the balance of power between ethnic and religious groups on the island. The higher representation of the Christian population in administrative cadres can be considered as one of the important indicators showing the impact of the autonomy process in Crete on the social structure.²³⁵ Following the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, the island of Crete became one of the focal points of the struggle for influence between England and Russia. According to Article 15 of the Treaty of San Stefano signed on March 3, 1878, the Ottoman Empire was granted the right to expand its administrative arrangements in Crete, but it was stipulated that Russia be consulted before such initiatives. This article enabled Russia to increase its influence over Crete, and this situation was viewed with discomfort by England. England made diplomatic efforts to eliminate this provision; as a result, this article of the Treaty of San Stefano was rendered invalid by the Treaty of Berlin signed on July 13, 1878. The Treaty of Berlin stipulated the implementation of the administrative arrangements envisaged in Crete in 1868 and imposed an obligation on the Ottoman Empire to inform European states about any administrative reforms it would implement. Following these developments, England settled in Cyprus in order to balance the increasing influence of Russia; and similarly, it made attempts to increase its influence on Crete. In this direction, while supporting the Greek elements on the island, it adopted an attitude against the annexation of Crete to Greece.²³⁶

3.2.2. The Restrictions of the Halepa Pact in Ottoman Public Opinion in 1889

Despite the administrative privileges granted to Crete by the Edict of Halepa in 1878, the Cretan Greeks, who maintained the rights they had acquired with the 1868 regulations, took advantage of the instability created by the Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Bulgarian rebellions in the Balkans and launched a new rebellion movement with the support of Greece. During the same period, while the Ottoman Empire was busy with the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, Greece sought to increase its influence in Ottoman lands; it provided logistical and political support to the rebellions in regions such as Epirus, Thessaly and Crete. However, these initiatives were limited within the framework of international

²³⁴ Salahi, 1976, 22-23.

²³⁵ Türkgeldi, 1987, 193.

²³⁶ Koçu, 1934, 216; Erim, 1953, 413; Armaoğlu 1975, 316; Cengiz, 2018, 78.

balances. Because Russia considered the Pan-Hellenist policies adopted by Greece as a threat to its own Pan-Slavist strategy; England and France did not support such expansionist tendencies. This situation prevented Greece from achieving its goals on Crete.²³⁷

The 1880s were a very difficult period for the island of Crete, both economically and infrastructurally. Due to the financial bottleneck experienced during these years, even the salaries of civil servants became unpayable. Although the transportation network was largely built on roads dating back to the Venetian period, these roads became unusable as a result of long-term neglect. Frequent uprisings, especially during the 19th century, caused serious damage to the roads and bridges. A similar situation applies to the port infrastructure. Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha reported that no investment had been made in the ports since the island came under Ottoman rule during his term of office, and that the people frequently complained about this.²³⁸ The fact that the use of ports other than Chania, Rethymno and Heraklion is not permitted on the island has severely limited the island's maritime transportation and trade opportunities. This practice has disrupted maritime transportation and economic activities in the regions outside of these three ports, and has negatively affected the island's overall commercial potential.²³⁹ The adverse infrastructure conditions and economic difficulties on the island seriously disrupted Crete's agricultural and commercial activities. The inability to transport agricultural products produced in the interior regions to the city centers prevented producers from offering their goods to the market, which led to a significant portion of the products being wasted before they could be consumed. Inadequate storage facilities further exacerbated this situation. The liberal Xipoliti Party argued that the basic condition for economic development was to improve the transportation infrastructure and waged an effective opposition in this direction. In contrast, the conservative Karavanades Party, supported by the Ottoman central government, adopted a stance in favor of preserving the existing order and distanced itself from structural reforms. This political division directly affected the socio-economic development of the island. The elections held in 1888 were a significant turning point in Cretan politics. The Xipoliti Party won the majority in these elections, which were accompanied by intense debate and chaos. The conservatives objected to the election results, and the General Assembly subjected this objection to a lengthy evaluation process. During this period, the Xipoliti Party began to implement administrative and economic reforms on the island with initiatives such as the organization of the municipality, the organization of the gendarmerie and the establishment of a bank. The Assembly also adopted the principle of universal and secret ballot for the first time in

²³⁷ Hülagu, 2000, 325-326; Cengiz, 2018, 78.

²³⁸ BOA, Y.PRK.TKM. / 15 – 33 (1889); Adıyeke, 2000, 118.

²³⁹ Beyhan, 2011, 148.

Crete history with a new regulation regarding the electoral system. In the re-elections held on April 2, 1889, the Karavanades Party suffered a heavy defeat. The election results were again contested, but the Xipoliti Party, which came to power, forced the opposition to accept these results, and in this process, political instability was experienced again on the island.²⁴⁰ In order to resolve the political instability that emerged on the island following the elections of 1888 and 1889 and to manage the resolution process, the Ottoman government sent a special delegation to Crete under the presidency of Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha. The delegation included the Pasha's aide-de-camp, Bahriye Feriki Ahmed Râtib Efendi, and Ali Galip Bey, a member of the Sabıka. This initiative reflected the deep polarization in local politics and the efforts to re-establish the effectiveness of the central authority. After the delegation arrived on the island, the conservative wing presented Mahmud Celaleddin Pasha with a comprehensive list of demands. The demands included the removal of Sartinski Pasha from office for allegedly collaborating with the liberal movement on the island, the retention of customs revenues on the island, the granting of the authority to print money to enable the establishment of a bank, the invalidation of the decisions taken by the Island Assembly, the removal of certain civil servants from office, the postponement of existing debts, and the establishment of an impartial judicial system. In addition, an indirect statement was made that if these demands were met, their demands for unification with Greece could be abandoned, which was reflected in the negotiations as an element of political pressure. These developments further deepened the existing tension on the island and complicated the solution process.²⁴¹ Following the demands of the conservative wing, the liberal wing also applied to the administration with similar demands, and this led to an increase in political pressure on the island. In the face of these developments, the Governor of Crete was forced to make some concessions in order to maintain local balances. In this context, he sent a letter to the Sublime Porte, requesting a 20,000 lira allocation from the center to cover the budget deficit on the island, and also suggested that the Ziraat Bank be established in Crete by granting authority to issue banknotes. The Governor clearly stated that he could not assume responsibility for possible unrest that might arise on the island if these demands were not met. This warning not only pointed to the seriousness of the current situation, but also emphasized that the central administration should intervene more effectively in the crises on the island.²⁴²

Following the increasing social and political tensions in Crete, Şakir Pasha was appointed governor of the island. Thanks to the disciplined and authoritarian administration he implemented, relative stability was achieved

²⁴⁰ Türkgeldi, 1987, 42; Yavuz, 2017, 241-242.

²⁴¹ Yavuz, 2017, 241-242.

²⁴² Türkgeldi, 1987, 45.

throughout the island in a short time. In the decree dated 26 October 1889, an instruction was conveyed that if there was any excess income left in the Cretan treasury after the expenses, this resource should be used primarily in the areas of infrastructure and education, instead of being transferred to the central treasury. As in previous regulations, it was reaffirmed that the expenses of the security forces on the island should be covered by customs revenues and that these revenues should be transferred directly to the Cretan treasury. In addition, considering the low yield of olives, the main agricultural product of the island, every two years, it was deemed appropriate to calculate the tithe tax over a six-year average and to collect the tax from the people accordingly.²⁴³ In September 1892, a new rebellion attempt was made by the Isfakian group, but this attempt failed. In the following months, in February 1893, the same group set up a secret brotherhood organization and began preparing for a new rebellion in order to re-enact the suspended provisions of the Halepa Edict of 1878. During this process, they tried to include some politicians and revolutionary leaders in their ranks in order to expand the structure of the organization. However, this attempt did not have the expected effect and failed before the planned actions could be implemented.²⁴⁴

3.2.3. The 1896 Regulations in Ottoman Public Opinion: “The Rectification Bill”

In 1889, restrictions on some provisions of the Halepa Decree caused a reaction from the Cretan Greeks, which triggered a new uprising. The Greeks, who aimed to regain their old rights, made various complaints to the foreign consulates on the island in order to gain the support of the European public opinion and to put pressure on the Ottoman administration. Following these developments, the European states intervened in the situation on the island by presenting a note to the Sublime Porte on 23 June 1896. Following the note, the Ottoman government made an attempt to reconvene the Cretan General Assembly. In this context, representatives from various districts who would serve in the assembly began to reach the center. During this process, the Epitropi Society became active; it carried out activities either to prevent the assembly from convening or to ensure that decisions were made in line with their own political demands. On the other hand, the ambassadors of the major European states in Istanbul, who received assurances from the Ottoman State that the necessary arrangements would be made, sent certain instructions to their representatives on the island based on these assurances.

1- The measures to be implemented by the Sublime Porte on the island are the program of the great powers. If the Cretans do not accept these conditions, they will lose the sympathy of Europe.

²⁴³ Türkgedi, 1987, 211.

²⁴⁴ Detorakis, 375; Yavuz, 2017, 261.

- 2- *Although the Sublime Porte accepted the renewal of Halepa without the approval of the Cretan General Assembly, it would be in the interests of the Cretans if the members of the General Assembly also accepted this.*
- 3- *Military forces have been given the necessary orders to be in a defensive position. Convince the Cretans to stay away from rebellion as much as possible.*

The great powers made diplomatic efforts to make the rebels in Crete accept the arrangements to be made with the Ottoman State and to ensure that the Epitropi Society would participate in the activities of the assembly with the permission of the Sublime Porte. In this context, it was intended to pave the way for the members of the Cretan General Assembly in Greece to return to the island and participate in the activities of the assembly, and various initiatives were made with the Greek government in this direction. In line with the assurances given by the consuls, the members of the Cretan General Assembly gradually arrived in Chania and the Assembly convened on July 12, 1896. The first action of the Assembly was to forward a list of reforms requested to be implemented on the island to the Sublime Porte and the consulates on the island. These reform demands were listed as follows:

1. *The appointment of a Christian governor for five years with the approval of the great powers,*
2. *The amendments to the Edict of Halepa would be subject only to the approval of the Sultan, and the governor would be given the right of veto on all other matters,*
3. *All civil servants except the counselor would be appointed by the governor,*
4. *The military forces on the island would be under the authority of the governor,*
5. *The representation of Muslim and Christian elements in the General Assembly and the Administrative Board according to their population ratios,*
6. *The withdrawal of Ottoman military units from the island after the reorganization of the gendarmerie organization by European officers.*

When these demands are evaluated as a whole, it is seen that the aim was to provide Crete with a large-scale autonomy. In particular, the demand that the military forces be attached to the governor was found unacceptable by the Ottoman administration, as it would mean that the military control on the island would pass into the hands of Greek elements if the governor to be appointed was Christian. This development had the potential to seriously shake the existing balances on the island.

Following these demands, the ambassadors of the major states in Istanbul came together and prepared a new draft regulation. The main regulations included in the draft are as follows:

1. *As stated in previously published decrees, tax revenues should be returned to the island,*
2. *Tobacco tax revenues that are being collected in violation of the treaties should be transferred to the Cretan administration,*
3. *A 3% increase in customs duties on all goods coming to the island should be made in order to pay compensation to those who suffered losses during the events.*
4. *A military commission including European officers should be established to organize the gendarmerie and a regulation should be prepared,*
5. *A draft should be prepared by a commission including European judges to organize the courthouse.*

Following the developments on the island, Abdullah Pasha, the commander of the military forces, was summoned to the center. The Greek rebels, who took Abdullah Pasha's return to Istanbul as an opportunity, launched attacks on the Muslim population on the island and committed various acts of violence and massacres. In the evaluations made on these developments in the Council of Ministers, it was decided to reduce the Ottoman military presence on the island and to re-implement the provisions of the Halepa Decree, subject to the rebels laying down their arms and surrendering within the framework of the initiatives and guarantees given by the great powers. The Ottoman administration foresaw that the expansion of these rebel movements in Crete could pave the way for similar unrest in other regions, especially in Macedonia, and considered that such a development should be prevented. In this context, it was decided to make efforts to draw the attention of the great powers to the issue both through foreign embassies in Istanbul and through the diplomatic representations of the Ottoman State in Europe. In order to establish order in Crete, the ambassadors of the great powers in Istanbul presented their proposals to the Sublime Porte, which included new regulations regarding the island. These proposals included demands such as the re-implementation of the Halepa Decree, the appointment of a Christian governor to the island, the election of this governor with the approval of the great powers, and the limitation of the area of movement of the military forces on the island. The Sublime Porte evaluated these proposals and concluded that the conditions put forward by the great powers were quite harsh. In addition, it was concluded that these states had acted in accordance with the demands of the Christian population on the island from the beginning of the Cretan issue. Although the Ottoman administration had accepted many demands

of the great powers and the Cretan Christians in the past, it considered that these steps did not provide permanent stability on the island and furthered the process towards the annexation of Crete to Greece. In order to find a solution to the Cretan issue, a regulation was prepared that took into account the demands of both parties as a result of the negotiations held between the ambassadors of the great powers in Istanbul and the Ottoman State. This regulation, called the “*Tadilat Layihası*” (The Rectification Bill), was signed by the ambassadors of the six great powers in Istanbul and the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Pasha, on August 25, 1896:

- 1- *The governor of Crete should be Christian and be appointed for five years,*
- 2- *The governor should have the right to reject the articles accepted by the General Assembly,*
- 3- *The governor should be able to use Ottoman soldiers in case of rebellion on the island,*
- 4- *One third of the civil servants should be Muslim and two thirds Christian,*
- 5- *The governor should be able to make direct appointments to the second degree civil servant positions,*
- 6- *The provision regarding the abandonment of half of the island's customs revenues to the island according to the 1887 decree should be re-enacted and all tobacco import taxes should belong to the island,*
- 7- *Efforts should be made to organize the gendarmerie and the courthouse on the island by commissions that include Europeans among their members.*²⁴⁵

The arrangements, which were shaped with the approval of the ambassadors and the acceptance of the Sublime Porte, were conveyed to the Governorate of Crete. Within this framework, it was decided that Berovic Pasha would continue his duty as governor for a period of five years. However, due to increasing reactions in the domestic public opinion, the Sublime Porte was forced to publicly declare that the arrangements were an updated version of the Halepa Decree and did not contain any provision foreseeing the annexation or independence of Crete to Greece. The implementation of these decisions taken in Crete brought about new problems. Due to the conflicts, the Muslim population on the island was forced to take refuge in castles for security reasons. In order to ensure public order, these people had to return to their villages. However, an amount of approximately one hundred thousand liras and construction materials, especially timber, had to be provided for the reconstruction of the settlements that were burned and destroyed during the rebellions. In order to provide the necessary financing, customs revenues were presented as collateral

245 Tadilat fermanı alisi, İstanbul 1896; 3-16.

and applications were made to the Ottoman Public Debt Administration and various banks, but no positive results were obtained. Ultimately, this problem was temporarily solved with a loan of one hundred thousand liras obtained from the French-Flemish Bank, on the initiative of the French Foreign Minister M. Hanotaux.²⁴⁶

3.2.4. Greek Rebellions and Gang Activities: The Events of 1896-1897

The Christian population living in Crete was not satisfied with the recent arrangements made by the Ottoman administration and began to demand the full implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Halepa. These demands were supported by external actors, primarily the Great Powers. In the face of international pressure, the Ottoman government declared that it would abide by the provisions of the Treaty of Halepa and decided to appoint a Christian governor-general to the island based on the relevant article of the treaty. Accordingly, Kara Todori Pasha was appointed governor of Crete in May 1895. However, this appointment did not have the expected effect on the Cretan Christians and the social unrest on the island deepened even more. Kara Todori Pasha reported that the island was currently unmanageable and that there were not even security forces left to carry out his orders, and stated that he could not assume responsibility for any incidents that might occur under these conditions. He also stated that he thought that the central administration's trust in him had been damaged and asked to be relieved of his duties and submitted his resignation.²⁴⁷ Following the resignation of Kara Todori Pasha, Turhan Pasha was appointed to the vacant governorship of Crete. However, Turhan Pasha was also unsuccessful in establishing security and order on the island. During this period, with the influence of the Armenian incidents in Ottoman lands, the Cretan Christians further deepened the existing Muslim-Christian tension. The conflicts that began in Chania in April 1896 quickly spread throughout the island and became a new source of instability for the Ottoman administration.²⁴⁸ In order to increase their diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers sent their warships to the coast of Crete on May 26. Then, on June 24, they submitted their demands to the Sublime Porte, requesting the appointment of a Christian governor and the re-implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Halepa. In addition, they requested the implementation of the 1868 regulation, the immediate convening of the General Assembly and the declaration of a general amnesty throughout the island. When the Ottoman government did not respond positively to these demands as expected, the Great Powers submitted a new note on July 2, requesting the cessation of Ottoman

²⁴⁶ Tadilat fermanı alışı, İstanbul 1313; Türkgeldi, 1987, 214; Cengiz, 1999, 94-97.

²⁴⁷ Adıyke, 2000, 141-42.

²⁴⁸ Aktepe, 1993, 38.

military activities in order to establish a basis for compromise.²⁴⁹ As a result of the increasing diplomatic pressure from the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire summoned the Cretan General Assembly to a meeting and officially declared that the provisions of the Treaty of Halepa would be implemented. However, the Athens government's continued support for the rebels in Crete rendered the Great Powers' efforts to prevent this intervention fruitless. Following these developments, the Ottoman Foreign Minister Tevfik Pasha and the ambassadors of the six Great Powers conducted a negotiation process in Istanbul. A new regulation, approved by the Cretan Revolutionary Committee (Epitropi) leader Manoussos Koundouros and containing provisions similar to the Treaty of Halepa, was prepared and this text was signed by the parties on August 25, 1896.²⁵⁰ This prepared regulation consisted of two main sections containing temporary provisions regarding the administration of Crete. The first section was titled "*Temporary Regulation of the Island of Crete*" and defined the administrative organization of the island within the framework of a nine-article structure. The second section, titled "*Fundamental principles of the new constitution of Crete prepared by taking into account articles 8 and 9 of the Temporary Regulation Order*", determined the constitutional framework to be applied in the political structure of Crete with six articles. These constitutional principles both set out the legal foundations of the administrative functioning on the island and aimed to secure the rights of the Muslim and Christian communities.²⁵¹ While tax revenues, one of the main sources of income for the island, had long been under the control of Ottoman officials, the autonomous government's decision to transfer financial resources in Candia, Chania, Rethymno and Estiye to the local administration created a new area of tension. This development regarding the transfer of tax revenues clearly revealed the distrust that Muslim officials felt towards the autonomous administration and their attitude towards preserving their loyalty to the Ottoman central authority. This situation, especially with the resistance that became evident in Candia, had serious consequences for the Muslim community on the island; the tension between the new administration and pro-Ottoman elements became the basis for new conflicts at the social and political level. The Great Powers and the local government made various diplomatic efforts to find a solution to this emerging crisis; however, the resistance of the Ottoman bureaucracy and the Muslim community made it difficult for the process to progress steadily.²⁵² As a result of these developments, the tension in Candia deepened further. Although the British detachment and the autonomous administration aimed to conclude the process peacefully, the decision of the Ottoman authorities to adhere to the

249 Tukin, 1996, 90.

250 Türkgeldi, 1987, 214.

251 Yavuz, 2017, 323-324.

252 Nesimi and Behçet, 1313, 6; Yavuz, 2017, 333.

instructions coming from the center increased the possibility of conflict. Indeed, the resistance shown by the Muslim officials during the surrender attempt on September 6 did not remain only a security problem at the local level, but also turned into a diplomatic issue that attracted the attention of the international community. This incident revealed how much the Ottoman Empire's de facto control over Crete had weakened and how vulnerable the Muslim population on the island felt in the face of the new administration. As Avcı emphasizes, the transfer of tax revenues to the local administration was not only an economic arrangement, but also a critical turning point that signaled the end of the symbolic and administrative presence of Ottoman rule on the island.²⁵³ The developments soon became uncontrollable. The armed actions of both communities increased the scale of the conflicts on the island and seriously damaged the atmosphere of social trust. While the tensions intensified around the port deepened the mutual distrust between Muslims and Christians, the harassing fire opened by British troops put not only the local Muslim population but also the Ottoman administration in Crete in a difficult situation. Such interventions, in addition to escalating ethnic and religious tensions on the island, paved the way for the region to become open to external interventions. The British military presence in Crete and the interventions carried out within this framework revealed that the future of the island would not only depend on the will of the Ottoman State, but also that European states had become guiding actors. The failure to establish a balance at the social and administrative level following the conflicts further complicated the political structure of the island; this situation increased the tension between the Muslim and Christian communities and caused serious obstacles to the implementation of the envisaged autonomous governance model.²⁵⁴ The arrival of the Greek fleet in Crete under the command of Prince George escalated the existing tensions on the island. While Christian elements intensified their armed resistance against Ottoman rule with the open support of the Greek government, this military move strengthened not only the local population but also Greece's claims on Crete. These developments made the interventionist attitudes of the Great Powers on the island more visible. The notification of the decisions taken through the consuls in Chania to the Greek members of the General Assembly of Crete and the declaration that they were accepted unconditionally revealed the influence of international actors on the politics of the island. The Ottoman State began to experience increasing difficulties in keeping the administrative crisis in Crete under control, and within this framework, a new administrative order was attempted to be established with the appointment of Berovic Pasha as governor. However, the administration of the island remained stuck between

253 Çelik, 2012, 35, 48; Avcı, 2023, 36.

254 Çelik, 2012, 37.

the Ottoman authority and the influence of the Great Powers. This situation presented a very challenging picture, especially for the Muslim population; With the support of the Christian majority behind the Greek government, the threat to Ottoman sovereignty became even more apparent. The Cretan issue ceased to be a local issue in this process and reached a level where international interventions could directly affect the political future of the island. While the Ottoman government was trying to re-establish its authority on the island, the demands for independence from Greece and the separatist elements on the island began to be voiced more loudly. In this complex environment, the results of the negotiations to be carried out regarding the status of Crete would be decisive in reshaping not only the island but also the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean.²⁵⁵ The arrival of Greek soldiers on Crete further complicated the administrative and political control on the island. Vassos' declaration on February 16, declaring that he had occupied Crete in the name of the Greek King, caused a serious diplomatic crisis between the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers. This development clearly revealed the intention of not only the local rebel groups but also Greece to establish *de facto* dominance over Crete. This attitude of Greece was considered a clear threat to the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The Great Powers attempted to resolve this crisis through diplomatic means; however, Greece's indifference to these warnings brought military intervention to the agenda at the international level. The intervention of major naval powers such as France, England, Russia and Italy in Crete with their naval elements significantly affected the balance of power on the island. This intervention made it even more difficult to re-establish Ottoman rule on the island and led to the formation of a multinational military presence in Crete. The Great Powers aimed to protect their own interests on the one hand, and to end the instability on the island on the other. However, these developments deepened the uncertainties regarding the future of Crete. Both the direct intervention of Greece and the international military presence increased the tension between the ethnic and religious groups on the island. In this context, the negotiations that would determine the political status of Crete constituted the beginning of a critical process not only for the Ottoman Empire, but also for regional and international relations.²⁵⁶

The civil war in Crete deeply shook the economic structure of the island and caused serious destruction of basic sources of income such as agriculture and animal husbandry. The resulting economic crisis was one of the top priority problems faced by Prince George under his administration. In order to reconstruct the island, international powers pledged to provide financial support and within this framework, a total of five million francs were allocated, one as

²⁵⁵ Karakasidou, 2010, 132.

²⁵⁶ Tukin, 1996, 90-91.

direct aid and the other as a loan. One million francs of this aid was delivered to Crete as direct support and four million francs as a loan. However, this financial aid only provided short-term relief in the face of the deep economic crisis on the island and could not offer a permanent solution to the structural problems. It has become clear that in order for Crete to achieve economic stability in the long term, rather than dependence on foreign aid, local production should be encouraged, infrastructure should be improved and reforms aimed at sustainable development should be implemented. Within this framework, Prince George's administration had to struggle with both the expectations of international actors and problems arising from internal dynamics; However, the adverse course of economic conditions made it very difficult to establish general stability on the island.²⁵⁷ The withdrawal of Ottoman forces from the island of Crete in 1898 constituted a significant turning point in terms of the political status of the island. With the end of the Ottoman Empire's *de facto* rule over Crete, British authorities took over the temporary administration of the island on November 5, 1898. This development marked the beginning of a period in which international intervention became even more intense. By assuming the administration of the island, Britain became a decisive actor not only politically but also economically. The British administration established strict control over the island's economic resources; Crete's indirect income and financial resources were largely under the control of this external power. This situation disrupted the local people's efforts for economic independence and caused the decision-making processes in Crete's internal administration to become more open to external intervention. While Britain's takeover was a development that reshaped the balance of power on the island, it also paved the way for the Cretan people to demand autonomy and local government more strongly.²⁵⁸

The process of British control, which began with the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from Crete in 1898, accelerated the process of the island's actual separation from the Ottoman Empire. With the granting of autonomous status to Crete in 1899, the island began to appear only symbolically as a title in the Ottoman State's official publication, the *Yearbooks*. This situation shows that Crete was breaking away from the Ottoman administrative structure and was no longer under the direct control of the central authority. The decision to annex it to Greece, taken by the General Assembly of Crete in 1905, transformed the long-standing desire for unification of the Greek population on the island into an institutional decision. However, the international political balances of the period prevented this process from being put into practice. The rejection of this decision by the foreign representatives of England, France and Russia in the

²⁵⁷ Yavuz, 2017, 353.

²⁵⁸ Admiraliy [ADM] 116/93, Cilt 2. Telegram No. 107. Biliotti to Constantinople Embassy, 5 November 1898;

meetings held in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1905 clearly revealed the attitudes of the great powers towards preserving the status quo. This attitude stemmed from the diplomatic sensitivity felt towards the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the tendency of the states in question to protect their strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.²⁵⁹ The Greek government stated that its stance on the Cretan issue was not shaped by external provocations or irresponsible initiatives at the individual or organizational level. The Council of Ministers evaluated positively the activities carried out on the island, which were described as “*religious awakening*”, and stated that these activities served the social and political interests of Crete. According to the Greek authorities, as long as this process continues, the Cretan people’s demands for unification with Greece will remain alive. Hellenic nationalism continues to exist as an effective ideological element not only in Crete but also throughout the Balkans. According to the Greek government’s assessment, approximately seven million individuals of Hellenic origin who aim to preserve their national identity are ready to take action in line with this ideology. In this context, it was decided to continue the diplomatic talks the following day.²⁶⁰

3.2.5. The 1897 Ottoman-Greek War and the Treaty of Istanbul

In September 1894, a revolutionary committee called “Epitropi” was established by the Cretan Greeks under the leadership of Manouses Koundouros. This formation obtained financial resources, weapons and volunteer support from the Greek-based Etnik-i Eteryâ; and at the same time, taking advantage of the Ottoman Empire’s intense preoccupation with the Armenian issue at the time, it managed to carry its activities to a political level through the Greek members of the Cretan Provincial Council. As of 1895, the committee intensified its armed propaganda activities throughout the island, accelerated the arming of the Greek population and this process led to the spread of ethnic-based conflicts on the island. For example, an armed attack was carried out against Ottoman soldiers in the villages, and the rebels who escaped prosecution after the attack also burned and damaged the olive groves of the Muslims in the vicinity. In the face of increasingly escalating security problems, the Governor of Crete, Kara Todori Pasha, resigned from his post on the grounds that the administration was no longer sustainable; Turhan Pasha was reappointed to the vacant governorship on March 8, 1896.²⁶¹ Turhan Pasha, who took office, extended the term of the laws containing extraordinary powers in order to re-establish the broken public order on the island and put them into practice. However, despite these

259 BOA, Y.A...HUS., 486/119.

260 Morning Post, 3 December 1896, 5.

261 Adıyeke, 2000, 144-147; Şenışık, 2014, 130; Macid, 1977, 20; Adıyeke, 2006, 187-198; Hayreddin, 1328; *Girit Hailesi*, 1313, 12, 14, 153; “*Although the sultan’s soldiers, who were in the fortification at the upper part of the region, were attacked, the bandits were dispersed in the ensuing conflict. It was reported that the bandits opened fire on the Muslim people and that the olive trees belonging to the Muslims were burned; that the fortification in question was defended by firing a few gunshots.*”

measures, the authority of the Ottoman administration on the island gradually weakened and the Cretan Greeks attempted to revolt again in various regions, especially in Candia and Chania, in 1896. The revolt, which started at the gates of Chania Castle on May 23, 1896, quickly grew and led to serious violence. As a result of these developments, the Muslim population living in the region had to take refuge in castles and safe areas in the city centers in order to ensure their safety.²⁶² Greece, which landed troops on Crete on February 13, 1897, failed to achieve the expected results from this initiative and increased its border violations on the Ottoman-Greek borderline, especially in Macedonia and Thessaly. The Ottoman government brought Greece's sending troops to Crete in violation of international law and the gang activities on the borderline to the agenda with diplomatic initiatives with the Great Powers. When the border violations continued despite the warnings, the Ottoman Empire submitted a note stating that these groups operating on the border would be considered as Greece's regular army and that the Greek government would be responsible in the event of a possible conflict. The Great Powers, on the other hand, stated that they prioritized preserving the existing balances in the Balkans and continued their stance that in the event of any war, responsibility should be placed on the aggressor. Greece's increasing military preparations on the Crete issue and its activity in the border regions from the beginning of 1897 made the possibility of war increasingly apparent. On April 16, 1897, the Greek army launched an attack on Ottoman territory, and this attack took place without any official declaration of war. This situation is similar to the strategy followed by Russia in the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War. The Ottoman Government began negotiations with the Great Powers in order to establish the Greek attack on the grounds of legitimate defense in the eyes of international law and to provide diplomatic support. Although Sultan Abdulhamid II was not in favor of war due to his personal inclinations, he was aware of the political and economic damage that a possible conflict would cause. In addition, Abdulhamid II, who did not find the policies pursued by Bulgaria in the Balkans reliable, believed that Greece could constitute a balancing element against the Bulgarians in this region. On the other hand, the Sultan's belief that Russia was behind Greece and that this state was using Greece as a tool caused him to adopt a cautious attitude. Despite all these reservations, the decision to go to war was influenced by concerns that failure to respond to border violations could pave the way for new problems in Macedonia and other Balkan regions, and that the Ottoman Empire could lose prestige in the eyes of the international community.²⁶³ In addition, considering the morale expectations within the Ottoman army, which had not achieved a military victory for a long time, and the public opinion

262 Adıyke, 2006, 187-198; Hacımihalis, 1928, 159. As. T. ve Str. E. Bşk. Kütüphanesi, 3. Yeğen 1986, 283; Çelik, 2012, 31-42; Sağun, 2023, 26.

263 Meşveret 12: 8 June 1896, 1-2.

in favor of war, the Ottoman Empire officially declared war on Greece on April 17, 1897. The Battle of Domeke on May 17, 1897, which determined the course of the Ottoman-Greek War, resulted in a heavy defeat for the Greek army, which caused great shock and disappointment in Athens. Public opinion attributed the responsibility for the war to Prince Constantine, the government, and the Ethniki Eterya Society. The victory at Domeke allowed the Ottoman forces to advance as far as Athens, and the Ottoman army, which had long been considered weak, reasserted its military capacity in the international arena with this battle. Following the battle, Prime Minister Theodoros Deliyannis resigned, and the newly established government began to seek an armistice with the Ottoman Empire. As a result of the negotiations carried out with the diplomatic initiatives of Russia, England and France, an agreement was reached on the condition that Greece would accept the granting of autonomy to the island of Crete. There was serious concern about the defeat that Greece suffered in the war and the possibility of the fall of Athens; this situation led the Greek government to follow a more moderate and conciliatory foreign policy. In the telegram sent by Russian Tsar Nicholas II to Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, it was stated that Greece accepted the autonomy of Crete and that peace could be achieved under the leadership of England, France and Russia.²⁶⁴ As a result of these diplomatic developments, an armistice was signed between the parties on 19 May 1897; the final peace treaty came into force on 4 December 1897.²⁶⁵

3.2.6. Regulation on the Organization of the Autonomous Administration of the Province of Crete in Ottoman Public Opinion

With the autonomous administration of Crete in 1898, significant changes occurred in the administrative structure of the island. Unlike the centralized administrative approach of the Ottoman Empire, during the autonomy period, local governments were reshaped with the participation of representatives of the local people. During this process, efforts were made to ensure the participation of Muslim and Christian communities in the administration, taking into account the ethnic and religious structure of the island. Local elections were held in order to represent the Muslim community, especially in centers such as Chania, Rethymno and Candia, where the Muslim population was dense, and as a result of these elections, Muslim mayors were appointed. The election of Mehmed Hamitveizades to the mayoralty of Chania, Yusuf Aliaitsidakis to Rethymno

²⁶⁴ BOA, Y.A.HUS. / 369 – 38 (1897).

²⁶⁵ “The military intervention of the Sublime Porte was similarly prevented. The Great Powers would send as many soldiers as the island needed, in agreement with the Sublime Porte; until complete security was restored, the island would remain in the hands of European soldiers as a trust. His Majesty the Sultan approved the temporary occupation of Crete by European soldiers. Since the soldiers in question landed on the island in March 1897, Crete was left – in the words of an official telegram – as a trust for the Great Powers.” Girit Meselesi Nasıl Halledilmeli, 1326, 8; Kodaman, 1990, 155; Kalelioğlu, 2009, 52; Adıyke, 2000, 185; Hatipoğlu, 1988a, 41; Sannav – Turan, 2019, 95-96; Gallant, 2001, 82.

and Mustafa Deliahmetakis to the mayoralty of Candia are notable examples of this period. This practice can be evaluated as an attempt to ensure social representation within the framework of autonomous administration on the island and to establish a relative balance between different religious groups. Despite all these efforts, however, local governments had a limited effect in resolving the deep social and political divisions on the island; the administrative structure, especially overshadowed by discussions of national affiliation, could not create a permanent peace and stability in the long term. As a result, the local government regulations during this period could not stop the annexation of Crete to Greece and could only serve as a temporary balancing element.²⁶⁶

As a result of the agreement signed between the Ottoman Empire and the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Russia on 18 December 1897, the new administrative principles to be applied on the island of Crete were determined in 26 articles. With this regulation, Crete remained under the legal sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, but was *de facto* given the status of a neutral and autonomous province.²⁶⁷ The new administrative structure was based on the following basic principles:

- **Status:** Crete was reorganized to be a part of the Ottoman Empire but with a neutral and autonomous administration.
- **Governorship:** The island's executive authority would be exercised by a Christian governor appointed by the sultan for a five-year term with the approval of the major powers.
- **Military Status:** It was envisaged that the Ottoman military units would gradually withdraw from the island, provided that the life and property of the Muslim population of Crete was secured.
- **Financial Obligations:** Crete would continue to pay a certain amount of tax to the Ottoman treasury each year, but the island's local tax revenues would remain under the control of the autonomous administration.
- **Legislative Authority:** Legislative activity would be carried out by a council elected by the people of the island, ensuring the representation of the Muslim minority and the protection of their rights; the council's decisions would enter into force with the approval of the governor.
- **Military Power:** The military forces to be established in Crete would be directly under the authority of the governor.

Within the framework of this arrangement, the “Girit Vilayet-i Muhtariyet Teşkilatına Dair Nizamname” (Regulations on the Organization of the Autonomous Province of Crete) were accepted, and on August 23, 1898, the “Regulations on the Temporary Administration of the Island of Crete”

²⁶⁶ Yavuz, 2017, 368.

²⁶⁷ Bayur, 1991, 113-114; Danişmend, 1972, 391; Sağun, 2023, 35.

were signed by the admirals of the great powers and put into effect. These arrangements are important in that they show that the Cretan issue had become an international problem not only within the framework of Ottoman-Greek relations, but also in which the great powers of Europe were directly involved.²⁶⁸ During this period, the incidents that occurred during the collection of the tithe in Candia in particular seriously shook the Ottoman Empire's military and administrative influence over Crete. These developments made the sustainability of the Ottoman military presence on the island questionable. Indeed, shortly afterwards, the major powers operating on the island, France, England, Italy and Russia, came to the conclusion that the Ottoman military presence was incompatible with the de facto autonomous status of Crete and requested the Sublime Porte to gradually withdraw its troops and eventually evacuate the island completely. The major powers undertook to recognize the Empire's nominal sovereignty over Crete if these demands were met and the security of life and property of the Muslim population on the island would be guaranteed. However, if the Sublime Porte responded negatively to these proposals, the states in question announced that they would take decisive and resolute measures to forcibly evacuate the Ottoman troops. In this context, the end of the Ottoman presence in Crete was achieved not only through military but also diplomatic pressure; the Empire lost much of its influence on the island in the face of the dictates of the international conjuncture.²⁶⁹ The great powers only permitted the continuation of the Ottoman military presence in Crete on a symbolic level; within this framework, it was deemed appropriate for a small detachment to remain in Chania to protect the Ottoman flag. The evacuation of the Ottoman troops from the island began on October 25, 1898, and the process was carried out without any armed conflict. As of November 1898, the Ottoman administrators officially handed over the administration of Crete to the admirals, thus ending the Ottoman administrative and military presence on the island. Tahmiscizade Mehmed Macid, one of those who witnessed the process, evaluated this development as "*the great powers succeeding in separating the island from the Ottomans through cooperation.*" These statements reflect both the extent of international intervention and the disappointment that the transformation in the status of Crete created in the eyes of the Ottoman bureaucracy.²⁷⁰ Following the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from Candia and Kisamo, the Turkish flag was briefly raised in these regions, along with the British and Italian flags, but it was completely lowered as of November 6, 1898. This development symbolized the beginning of a period in which Crete, although it continued to be legally affiliated with the Ottoman State, was de facto separated from Ottoman rule. In order to prevent this transformation from

268 Adıyke, 2000, 198-202; Sağun, 2023, 35-36.

269 Çelik, 2012, 34- 38/39-42; Aydın, 2008, 29-45; Çelik, 2012, 42-43; Sağun, 2023, 36

270 Çelik, 2012, 44; Aydın, 2008, 87; Şenışık, 2014, 255; Macid, 1977, 37-38; Sağun, 2023, 36-37.

causing negative reactions in domestic public opinion, the Ottoman central government tried to reflect the autonomous status granted to Crete to the public as merely an administrative regulation. This attitude can also be considered as an indication of the attempt to prevent other non-Muslim elements within the borders of the Empire from coming to the agenda with similar demands.²⁷¹ The Ottoman government tightened its censorship practices on the press in order to prevent the reactions that the developments in Crete might create in the domestic public opinion. This situation caused the public to remain largely unaware of both the political and military developments on the island and the policies pursued by the government regarding this issue. On the other hand, the recent developments regarding the Cretan issue had a significant impact on the Young Turk opposition operating outside the Ottoman borders. The Young Turks harshly criticized the interventionist attitude of the European states in the Cretan issue, arguing that these states were acting with the pretext of “*ensuring peace and order*” but were actually intervening to protect their own interests. They evaluated the European discourse on justice and human values as an insincere and interest-oriented approach. In this context, the articles written by dissident Ottoman intellectuals provided a critical perspective on the international relations of the period.²⁷²

271 Tukin, 1996, 91; Aydın, 2008, 65-67; Adıyke, 2000, 179; Sağun, 2023, 37.

272 İrtem, 1999, 76; Asaf, 1326, 15; *Osmanlı*, 1 December 1898, 17 Recep 1316, 3; Sağun, 2023, 37.

CHAPTER 4

TWO PRESSES TOWARDS THE 20TH CENTURY, ONE PROBLEM: CRETE

4.1. “The Process with an Uncertain Outcome” The Great Powers’ Intervention in Crete in the British and Ottoman Press

The Concert of Europe system was established in line with the decisions taken at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, in order to protect the borders and the existing political order in Europe after the Napoleonic Wars. Within the framework of the principles accepted at the Congress, it was stipulated that the determined borders could only be changed with the mutual agreement of the states that approved these decisions. This system was adopted by the great powers of the period, primarily the United Kingdom, France, Austria-Hungary, Prussia (later Germany) and Russia, as a tool for the collective resolution of issues in Europe without compromising the principles of national sovereignty. Although the functioning of the system weakened over time and armed conflicts could not be prevented in some regions, it is seen that during the period when the Concert of Europe was effective, the number of deaths caused by war on the continent decreased significantly compared to the 18th century. This situation allows the first half of the 19th century in particular to be evaluated as one of the relatively peaceful periods in European history.²⁷³ This period of relative peace was made possible by the European Concert mechanism based on the principle of balance of power established between the great powers. Within the framework of this system, instead of traditional bilateral agreements, multilateral and more flexible diplomatic negotiations were preferred, thus aiming to manage crises collectively. These meetings, which usually took place at the ambassadorial level, prepared the ground for a diplomatic understanding that considered the general security and stability of Europe without completely ignoring the national interests of the states. This approach made it possible, at least in part, to maintain an order based on common values and emphasizing the idea of a “*shared European civilization*.” In this context, the Cretan Question and diplomatic developments in the region were evaluated directly under the supervision and responsibility of the European ambassadors in Istanbul. Alfred Biliotti, the British consul serving in Crete during this period, was officially affiliated with the British Embassy in Istanbul, but in practice he frequently sent information directly to the Foreign Office in London via telegraph. This demonstrates both the diplomatic importance of Crete and the effectiveness of consular actors in decision-making processes regarding local developments.²⁷⁴ The primary function of the Concert of Europe in its early days was to control the revolutionary and democratic tendencies that rose after the French Revolution and to preserve the existing monarchical order. However, by the end of the 1850s, the liberal and nationalist movements that were gaining strength throughout the continent had become irrepressible and irreversible. These

²⁷³ McTiernan, 2014, 6; Rourke, 2006, 128.

²⁷⁴ Mick McTiernan, 2014, 6.

developments caused the efforts of the great powers that formed the Concert to counter these tendencies to be ineffective and, therefore, the system gradually evolved into a structure that was oriented towards accepting and directing these transformations. In this context, the self-determination processes of nations were directed by the great powers both in line with their own geopolitical and strategic interests and within the framework of a careful and gradual acceptance of the “*realities*” regarding the nation-state formation process. In addition, in order to prevent possible excesses that nationalism could cause, providing certain guarantees for the protection of minority rights became one of the goals of the system. However, the order established in Europe between 1815 and 1914 was not limited to the balance of power or diplomatic protocols between the great powers. This order was also a multi-layered system shaped by the influence of ideological, economic and social dynamics, and directly affected the relationship between the internal structures of the state and the international system.²⁷⁵ In the early 19th century, the basis of England’s Eastern Mediterranean policy was to ensure the security of trade routes to India and to prevent weak political structures in the region from falling under the influence of rival powers in Europe. Within the framework of this strategy, England supported the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and largely associated this support with its own overseas interests. However, from the second half of the century onwards, England’s Ottoman policy underwent a significant change. Especially with the transfer of the Seven Islands Republic to Greece in 1864, England gradually moved away from its policy of protecting the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and instead adopted an approach towards encouraging national structures more in line with its own interests on state lands. This policy also brought about England’s support for certain ethnic and religious elements within the Ottoman subjects in order to increase its influence in the region. However, by the last quarter of the 19th century, England’s policy had evolved once again; due to the instability that could be created by direct attempts at territorial division, it shifted to a line that actively protected the integrity of the Ottoman Empire while encouraging reforms in favor of the non-Muslim population within the country. This orientation provided the opportunity to intervene in the internal structure of the Ottoman Empire, and was also tried to be legitimized in the European public opinion with the discourse of “*civilizational mission*”.²⁷⁶

Within the scope of the strategy it followed in the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean basins in the 19th century, England tried to reshape the balance of power in the region in line with its own interests, and in this direction, it took care to keep both the Ottoman Empire and Greece in a balancing position.

²⁷⁵ Soutou, 2000, 332.

²⁷⁶ Adıyke, 2000, 229; Durmuş, 2000, 37; Aksoy, 2006, 46.

England's main aim was to maintain control in the geography in question through diplomatic pressure and interventions without engaging in direct military conflicts, and in particular to gradually take under its influence the strategic points under Ottoman rule. Within this framework, Crete and Cyprus became one of the focal points of English foreign policy; a policy supporting the Ottoman Empire was followed, especially against Russia's historical ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Straits. This support England gave to the Ottomans stemmed not only from its desire to maintain the status quo, but also from its aim to limit the influence of powers such as Russia and the increasingly rising Germany in the region. However, the limited modernization efforts of the Ottoman Empire, its inadequacy in industrialization, and its inability to follow technological developments, especially in the military field, weakened England's willingness to support the Ottomans as an ally over time. In this context, England effectively seized Cyprus in 1878; then it increasingly began to take control of a significant portion of Ottoman territory, especially the regions in the Middle East and North Africa. British interventions were not based on random or sudden decisions, but on long-term and gradual strategic planning. This situation shows that one of the basic conditions for being able to exist in the international system is not limited to having military and technological capacity; it also depends on the decision-making elites' ability to act on the basis of strategic foresight, national interest awareness and diplomatic stability. The weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire in these areas provided a suitable ground for great powers such as England to increase their influence in the region.²⁷⁷ For centuries, Russia has adopted the role of protector of the Orthodox world not only as a religious mission but also as a fundamental element of state policy. This mission played a decisive role both in its foreign policy against the Ottoman Empire and in the struggle for political influence in the Balkans and the Aegean. One of Russia's fundamental strategic goals has been to consolidate control over the Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea, and especially to prevent the use of the Straits by other major powers in the event of a possible war. In this context, the policy of protection towards the Greek and Greek communities legitimized by a Pan-Orthodox discourse has become an indispensable part of Russia's Mediterranean strategy. In line with this goal, Russia organized and supported separatist movements on Ottoman lands through the *Ethniki Eteryia*, which it pioneered in establishing in 1821. Thus, instead of direct military interventions against the Ottoman Empire, it adopted an indirect strategy aimed at establishing influence through ethnic-religious uprisings and regional turmoil. This situation led Russia to act in line with its traditional rivals, England and France, from time to time; because these three great powers were covertly advancing their own imperial interests under

²⁷⁷ Aksoy, 2006, 46.

the pretext of protecting the rights of Christian communities in Ottoman lands. Another dimension of Russia's expansionist policies was shaped in the Black Sea basin, Crimea and the Caucasus. These regions were of strategic importance both in terms of defending the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire and in terms of Russia's goal of reaching the warm seas. Within the framework of secret agreements and diplomatic agreements signed with England after 1878, Russia began to take steps to accelerate the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire; in this direction, it supported the demands for Crete to be annexed to Greece, aiming both to weaken the Ottomans and to increase its influence in the Aegean.²⁷⁸

The Cretan Question, which became one of the subheadings of the Eastern Question following the Greek Revolt, was essentially not merely a local rebellion or an ethnic-religious separation movement, but also took shape as an extension of the general strategies of the Great Powers towards the Ottoman Empire. The demands for independence in Crete were not merely the aspirations of the islanders, but also gained a dimension directly related to the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean. The demands and interventions on the island were a reflection of the conflicts of interest of the Great Powers in the region. Starting from the second half of the 19th century, the leading states of Europe, especially Britain, France and Russia, had been foreseeing the inevitable dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. In this context, each of them carried out various diplomatic and military interventions in order to increase their influence with the Sublime Porte and to direct the process of collapse in the way that best suited their own interests. Strategic regions such as Crete had been of particular importance in this power struggle; It was valuable both in terms of maritime trade and military access to the Eastern Mediterranean and became a complementary element of the policies pursued in the Balkans and the Levant. Therefore, the Cretan Question should be evaluated not only within the framework of Ottoman-Greek relations, but also as a part of the Great Powers' struggle for tutelage over the Ottoman Empire and the multi-layered structure of the Eastern Question. Within this dynamic, the Great Powers, on the one hand, tried to prevent a sudden and uncontrolled collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and on the other hand, directed the developments in Crete in order to expand their own spheres of influence and gain new diplomatic advantages.²⁷⁹ The Cretan and Morea rebellions and the process of Greece gaining independence, the Navarino Raid in 1827 and the military rebellion launched by the Egyptian Governor Mehmed Ali Pasha against the Ottoman central authority, led to serious questions being raised about the military capacity of the Ottoman Empire. These developments revealed not only the weakness of the Ottoman administrative structure but also

²⁷⁸ Durmuş, 2000, 40; Aksoy, 2006, 47.

²⁷⁹ Stavrinou, 1992, 249.

the fragility of the Empire against the great powers. Following the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, Russia in particular did not give up its strategic goal of completely freeing Crete from Ottoman rule. In line with this, Russia expanded its diplomatic cooperation with England and France and tried to implement a model of government on the island that was in line with its own interests. Within this framework, at the end of 1897, it advocated that the administration of Crete be carried out by a Christian prince and eventually secured the appointment of Prince George as the Governor of Crete on 21 November 1897. The Ottoman Empire's objections to this appointment were not effective within the balance of power at the time; the process was completed with the diplomatic pressure of Russia and the support of other major powers. The appointment of Prince George meant not only the administrative transformation in Crete, but also the symbolic and *de facto* end of the Ottoman Empire's claim to sovereignty over the Aegean Sea. This development should be evaluated as a concrete indicator of a serious retreat from the Ottomans' dominance over the island and the leading role of the major powers in the Eastern Mediterranean in terms of international law and diplomacy.²⁸⁰ The economic privileges and capitulations granted by the Ottoman Empire to France were not only aimed at providing commercial conveniences, but also at transforming a state bordering the Mediterranean and playing an important role in European politics into a strategic partner. These privileges formed the basis of Ottoman-French relations, especially those that took shape from the 16th century onwards; France benefited from these privileges to the maximum extent for a long time. However, towards the end of the 18th century, the changes in the Ottoman Empire's political orientation, and especially the significant development of Ottoman-German relations, relatively weakened France's influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the face of this situation, France was forced to pursue a policy of balance; it was forced to act within the sphere of influence of the dominant imperial powers of the period, such as England and Russia. Thus, France's traditional diplomatic and economic influence over the Ottomans evolved into a multi-actor competitive environment as of the 19th century, limiting the flexibility of French foreign policy. France participated in the Navarino Raid in 1827, together with England and Russia, in order to strengthen its position in the international alliance formed against the Ottoman Empire.²⁸¹

Regarding the issue of Crete, France, while defending the protection of the Christian population on the island, adopted an attitude that supported Crete remaining in an autonomous status under the Ottoman Empire rather than annexing it to Greece. However, this approach had inconsistencies in practice. Indeed, unlike the five European states that opposed Greece's military

280 Banoğlu, 2005, 98; Aksoy, 2006, 47.

281 Adıyke, 2000, 234; Aksoy, 2006, 47;

preparations targeting the Ottoman borders and Crete in 1889 and blockaded Greece, France displayed a supportive attitude towards Greece's position during this process. On the other hand, it is seen that France played a decisive role in the intervention of the French navy under the command of French Admiral Simon on the island during the Cretan Uprising in 1867 and the subsequent declaration of Crete's autonomous status. France's indirect support for Armenian groups rebelling in the Ottoman Empire was not limited to humanitarian or ideological reasons, but also served the purpose of increasing its cultural and economic influence over the state. This changing policy, shaped by the fear of losing influence against Germany and Russia, also affected France's position in the process of sharing the Ottoman lands; as Aksoy also stated, within this framework, France, together with England, took control of a significant part of the Middle East after the First World War.²⁸² In the last quarter of the 19th century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially in the face of instability in the Balkans and the increasing influence of great powers such as Russia and Germany, limited its effectiveness in foreign policy and prioritized internal security and stability. This situation paved the way for the Ottoman Empire to become more isolated in the international arena and to be left to the initiative of other European states. On the other hand, the exclusion of the Ottoman Empire, which was the leader of the Islamic world, from the European political system did not contradict the foreign policy interests of Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary, which provided a certain amount of support to the Ottoman Empire until the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, withdrew its troops from the island together with Germany on the issue of Crete. However, at this point, it adopted a different stance from Germany and did not make diplomatic interventions regarding the future of Crete. This passive approach largely stemmed from Austria-Hungary's focus on problems in the Balkan geography such as Bulgaria and especially Bosnia-Herzegovina during the same period.²⁸³ The Cretan Question, which flared up again between the Ottoman Empire and Greece at the end of the 19th century, went beyond being merely a dispute between the two countries, and was shaped by the reactions of European public opinion and diplomatic processes directed by the great powers (the Great Powers). The harsh and uncompromising stance of the Athens government, which violated Ottoman sovereignty, was criticized not only in the Ottoman press, but also in European public opinion. It has been stated that Greek politicians were aware that these policies were wrong, but that they continued these mistakes because they were afraid of the domestic political consequences that would result from taking a public step back. However, not sharing the mistakes at the social level and insisting on them both contradicts national honor and causes

282 Adıyeke, 2000, 235; Aksoy, 2006, 48.

283 Durmuş, 2000, 43; Aksoy, 2006, 49.

greater diplomatic impasses. This situation also contradicts the principle of “*in medio tutissimus ibis*” approach (reconciliation in everything), which has an important place in Greek cultural history, and has been the subject of criticism by impartial observers. The developments in Crete were interpreted in different ways in the European press; For example, while the efforts of the British consul in Chania to protect the Muslim population were appreciated in some circles, publications such as The Standard newspaper argued that the Greek presence on the island was essential for the preservation of order and warned that possible intervention by major powers could have more serious consequences than the current unrest. In this context, the Cretan Question should be evaluated not only as a local uprising or ethnic tension, but also as a multi-layered diplomatic issue in which conflicts of interest between major powers materialized. Analyses made at a time when trends in Europe were closely followed by the Ottoman public through the British press reveal that the policy pursued by Greece was approaching a dangerous line. The Greek government’s disregard for the joint decisions of major powers was evaluated as a situation that threatened not only regional stability but also Greece’s fragile internal balance. It was stated that if international support was delayed by even ten days, Athens would not be able to carry this burden politically and economically.²⁸⁴

The decision to blockade the island of Crete and the coasts of Greece had been under negotiation for a long time among the major powers and was eventually put into effect within the framework of a common agreement. According to the British press, it is understood that this initiative was first brought to the agenda by the German Emperor Wilhelm II and that later the other major powers supported the proposal with some changes. However, there were significant hesitations at the diplomatic level during the implementation of the decision; unusual difficulties interrupted the process. Although the details of these reservations were limitedly included in the documents of the period, it is observed that the European public opinion and diplomatic circles evaluated the implementation in question as a form of intervention that protected the legitimate rights of the Ottoman State. The European press in particular portrayed the blockade as a form of use of force in favor of the Ottoman Empire; however, the effectiveness of this intervention and its contributions to Ottoman interests in the long term were brought into question by observers of the period. In this context, the Cretan Question should not only be evaluated as the manifestation of a limited regional conflict, but also as a multidimensional crisis of the international balance of power reflected in the Ottoman geography.²⁸⁵ Although the blockade of the island of Crete was presented by the great powers as a step taken to protect Ottoman sovereignty, it is seriously debatable whether the expected results of

284 Bedrekâ-i Selâmet 5; 24 March 1897, 1.

285 Carlisle Journal, 19 March 1897, 5; Grantham Journal, 27 March 1897, 7; Türkgeldi, 1987, 73;

this intervention would be realized in practice. The main goal of the blockade in question was to prevent the passage of rebel elements from Greece to Crete and to prevent the deepening of the existing unrest on the island. Indeed, as a result of this attempt, Greek military units and local rebels cooperating with them were in a difficult situation due to the lack of food supplies. However, considering the complex geographical structure of Crete and the organizational abilities of the local elements on the island, it is not expected that the blockade in question will bring a permanent solution. Moreover, the decisions taken by the great powers do not include a clear and binding provision regarding the withdrawal of Greek military units from the island. This situation not only makes it difficult to maintain order on the island but also shows that rebel elements will continue to obtain aid and ammunition from regions far from control. On the other hand, it remains uncertain whether the blockade of Greek ports will lead the Athens administration to back down. Past experiences have shown that Greece has only changed its stance in the face of a direct military or economic threat. In this context, the possibility of indirect measures such as restricting commercial activities alone creating sufficient pressure in the short term is low. Furthermore, it is assessed that even if Greece's current food supplies are depleted, this process will be prolonged over time and therefore it will be difficult to maintain the blockade for a long time. While it is recalled that a similar blockade implemented in 1886 was effective to a certain extent, it is emphasized that the Ottoman Empire simultaneously applied pressure from the land border at that time and that this two-way strategy contributed to its success. In today's conditions, the adequacy of a strategy based solely on a naval blockade stands out as a serious matter of debate. In this context, it should not be forgotten that the developments in Crete are not only an island issue, but also constitute a multi-layered diplomatic equation in the context of conflicts of interest between major powers.²⁸⁶

At this point, it should be clearly stated that unless Ottoman military forces cross the Greek border and create an element of actual pressure, the possibility of resolving the Cretan issue solely through diplomatic means seems weak. It is understood that this issue, which is being presented to the European public as the "*solution of the Eastern Question*," is not essentially a regional issue but rather a reflection of an ongoing geopolitical competition between the great powers. Accordingly, it is unrealistic to assume that the issue can be finally resolved only through indirect intervention tools such as a naval blockade. Because the direct intervention of the Ottoman State has become necessary in order to change the actual situation on the island and to reestablish order. If the great powers truly wish for peace in Europe to be maintained, they

286 Peterborough Standard, 20 March 1897, 7; West Somerset Free Press, 27 March 1897, 3; Evening Irish Times, 28 September 1898, 5; Hamiyyet 23: 19 March 1897, 1.

should demand the complete and immediate withdrawal of the Greek military units in Crete from the Greek government; otherwise, it should be clearly stated that the coastal cities of Greece could be exposed to artillery fire from the Ottoman navy. Likewise, the message should be given that the Ottoman land forces are prepared and, if necessary, determined to hold accountable the civilian casualties on the island. Indeed, the casualties suffered by the Muslim population in the clashes that have been going on for about two months in Crete have caused deep indignation in the Ottoman public opinion. In this context, it is imperative to implement a comprehensive reform program on the island urgently in order to restore public order. Otherwise, it is not possible for the Ottoman State to remain passive in the face of the blatant violation of the caliphate and Islamic law. It should be kept in mind that this situation could threaten not only the Ottoman domestic public opinion but also the general stability in Europe. In light of all these developments, the mobilization of a fleet of armored, cruiser and torpedo class ships of the Ottoman Navy towards Crete clearly demonstrates the state's determination regarding the issue. This military shipment, which left the Bosphorus and headed for the Mediterranean, clearly shows that the Ottoman State will not hesitate to resort to armed intervention if necessary.²⁸⁷

It is seen that criticism of the inconsistent and ambivalent attitude of the European states towards the Cretan issue has intensified in the Ottoman public opinion. When the developments in Crete and the reactions of the European public opinion to these developments are examined closely, it is understood that an attempt was made to create sensitivity through the security of the Christian people, and that this sometimes became a tool for political manipulation. For example, the *Serbota* newspaper published in Italy claimed that the Christians living in Crete were under threat in some regions and had to take refuge in castles. However, the reliability of the local sources on which these claims are based is debatable, and even if such news is assumed to be authentic, the attacks carried out by Christian groups against the Muslim people in the history of the island have not yet been erased from memory. In this context, it is thought that the reflex developed by the Muslim people to defend themselves is not only a security reaction, but also a reflection of their sense of justice.²⁸⁸ Because according to the public opinion, the attitude of the European states on the Crete issue is constantly changing. Another news item in *Sırat-ı Müstakim* newspaper started by defining the place of lies in politics due to the attitudes adopted by the great powers on the Crete issue. Accordingly, although it is accepted that lies are not valued worldwide, political institutions have never been able to

287 *Hamiyyet* 23: 19 March 1897, 1-2; *Morning Leader*, 12 March 1897, 7; *Nelson Chronicle*, *Colne Observer* and *Clitheroe Division News*, 19 March 1897, 7; *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 16 October 1897, 5

288 *Mesveret* 13: 5 July 1895, 5-6; *Hamiyyet* 23: 19 March 1897, 2; *Exmouth Journal*, 20 February 1897, 2; *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 6 March 1897, 3; *Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal*, 19 March 1897, 2.

completely sever their ties with lies throughout history. Especially in political structures shaped by personal interests, religious discourses or ideological goals, deviations from reality and misleading discourses are frequently observed. In this context, the Crete issue constitutes an example that clearly reflects the insincerity and interest-oriented attitudes of the international policies of the period. The telegrams conveying current developments show that there is no qualitative difference between the past and present of the issue. Expectations for the future, on the other hand, are surrounded by uncertainty and insecurity due to the hypocritical policies displayed by the great powers. The common policy that the states have long adopted towards the East, especially the Islamic geography, is also clearly evident in this crisis. The Ottoman administrators, aware of this reality, adopted an extremely careful and meticulous attitude in the diplomatic process in the context of Crete. The Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha cabinet exerted great effort in this process, and when Hakkı Pasha was appointed as the Grand Vizier, he emphasized that Crete could not be easily disposed of considering the prices paid and the blood shed. The interventions of the four major powers that followed the developments in Crete were evaluated as tactical maneuvers that sought their own political interests. The telegrams from France, the oaths taken in the name of the Greek King and the emphasis on French influence, but the fact that these influences did not translate into concrete actions, damaged the credibility of the diplomatic theater that was staged. The states in question had long intervened with the claim of protecting Crete, but they were inadequate in preventing the oppression against the Muslim population. This contradiction suggests that the rhetoric of protection only worked in favor of the rebellious elements in practice. It is claimed that the states in question prepared the ground for the annexation of Crete to Greece, advised King George to be patient and made political moves in this direction. These developments show that the so-called friendship and sincerity discourses towards the Ottoman Empire were actually part of interest-based strategies. The states did not adopt a sincere attitude towards protecting the sovereign rights of the Ottoman Empire, on the contrary, they used the events to achieve their own goals. After the oaths taken in Crete, the Ottoman Empire evaluated this situation as a violation of sovereignty and informed the great powers. However, the diplomatic reactions given tended to evade responsibility and the issue was glossed over with the statement "*it is as if this oath never happened*". The fact that the Cretan Christians were forced to take an oath not recognizing Ottoman sovereignty when they were accepted into parliament shows that the problem was shaped not only by internal but also external pressures. At this point, the gap between the apparent efforts of the Western states and their real intentions was clearly noticed. The Ottoman

administrators sensed this situation and displayed a determined attitude towards protecting their rights. Interviews with members of the foreign press revealed that the state was ready not to make concessions on this issue.²⁸⁹ The statement made by Hakkı Pasha when he left Rome and similar statements by other statesmen reflect the sensitivity of the Ottoman State regarding national honor and sovereignty during the constitutional period. Depending on the course of the Cretan crisis, news that some rebel groups in Albania changed their stance in favor of the Ottomans and headed towards the Greek border can also be interpreted as an indicator of public support for the issue. These developments reveal that religious and national solidarity at the societal level can be mobilized in times of crisis. Thus, the diplomatic pressures that the Ottoman State faced in the context of the Cretan issue revealed the hypocritical policies of Western states. These powers, who seemingly claimed to seek reconciliation and peace, were in reality focused solely on protecting their own interests. *“The proverb is well-known. A common enemy unites two opposing brothers. What we want to say here is the sincerity of the states against our state. They are wasting their time fanning the flames. They are waiting for a suitable time to resolve the issue against the Sublime State.”* According to the news, the Ottoman State clearly showed that it would not fall for these tricks with its mature and cautious foreign policy and that it would resolutely defend the integrity of its homeland. With this understanding, Crete continued to be considered a *“part of the homeland”* and the honor of the state was defended with the sensitivity that a father protects his child, *“in the way a father protects his child.”*²⁹⁰ While the international guarantor states known as the Great Powers continue to claim that the legal security of the Muslim population in Crete is ensured and that this population is protected against any attack, concrete developments on the ground reveal that these statements are far from reality. The organized and intense acts of violence carried out by local Greek gangs show that the threats against the Muslim population have reached a systematic level. In particular, the wounding of a Muslim in Chania, the attempted robbery by strangling Dervish Efendi, a respected Muslim, by two Greeks in Rethymno, and the fact that this incident was prevented only by the screams of the Muslim women in the area are clear indications that the attacks were not random but planned and deliberate. Similarly, the severe beating of another Muslim in the village of Volyons confirms that such violations are not isolated incidents but a systematic policy of oppression carried out throughout the island. The prevalence of linguistic and physical violence in the city centers also shows that the daily lives of Muslims are directly targeted. *“If the necessary precautions are not taken, it is likely that the poor Muslims will be subjected to a terrible attack.”* In other

289 Sirat-ı Müstakim 92: 9 June 1910; 19.

290 Sirat-ı Müstakim 92: 9 June 1910, 20.

words, it is understood that these attacks on the island are not only due to local dynamics, but also to a broader strategic framework strengthened by external connections; since the fact that the Greek leadership that organized these actions was recently brought from Greece and returned to the country after completing their duties suggests that these people may have been sent to Crete with a temporary and special mission. All these developments reveal that the Muslim population in Crete is not only facing a security threat, but also an existential threat; therefore, the silence of both the international public opinion and especially the protective powers in the face of these systematic violations creates not only legal but also moral responsibility. For the Ottoman Empire, this situation is not only a local security issue, but also a crisis that requires direct intervention in the context of international legitimacy and humanitarian responsibility.²⁹¹ Therefore, the most striking aspect in understanding the international dimension of the Cretan issue is the significant differences between the attitudes of European states towards the Muslim population under Ottoman rule and the Christian communities on the island. The boycotts, economic pressures and political exclusions carried out by Christian elements have been evaluated as part of a systematic strategy aimed at forcing Muslims to emigrate from the island. The fact that Christian deputies in Crete took an oath in the name of the Greek King and excluded Muslim representatives from the national assembly seriously mobilized Ottoman public opinion, not only as a local violation of rights but also as a sovereignty issue. On the other hand, the view that *“the real point of interest in the matter is that if one thousandth of the following actions of the Christians of Crete were carried out by the Muslims, the Powers of Protection would not delay in taking definitive decisions and protecting the Christians,”* became a dominant judgment in the Ottoman public opinion of the period, indicating that if one thousandth of the above-mentioned actions were carried out by the Muslims, the guarantor powers would intervene immediately and with definitive decisions. This situation reinforced the perception that the principle of equality was violated in the context of international law and diplomacy principles and that the Muslim population living in Ottoman lands was systematically pushed to a secondary position. It can also be evaluated as a clear reflection of the biased approach displayed by the Powers of Protection in the context of Crete and the double standards in international diplomacy. This double standard not only threatened the security of the Muslim community on the island, but also deeply affected the Ottoman State’s search for international legitimacy.²⁹²

The silence of some circles accusing Muslims in Crete of “savagery” in the face of past massacres has been evaluated as a serious contradiction and

291 Sirat-ı Müstakim 95: 30 June 1910, 18.

292 Sirat-ı Müstakim 96: 7 July 1910, 16.

inconsistency in the public opinion. Similarly, the claims in some European press organs that Muslims were a minority in Crete have also been criticized as not reflecting the truth. Such statements are interpreted as attempts to distort the population balance on the island and to prepare the ground for political manipulation in the eyes of international public opinion. On the other hand, the fact that many soldiers lost their lives in an ammunition depot explosion on a Russian warship and that this tragic event was described as “divine punishment” in some Greek newspapers shows that even the disasters experienced were instrumentalized within the framework of a political discourse. This approach reveals how widespread propaganda-based reflexes were in the press of the period. It is reported that the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury did not directly accept the proposals regarding the military occupation of the island of Crete by Europe, but gave instructions to the British navy to blockade Greek ports and to apply the necessary military sanctions if Greek troops did not respond to peaceful warnings. This situation reveals a remarkable inconsistency between the rhetoric and actual practices of the European states. While the uncompromising attitude of the Greek government was criticized in the public opinion, on the other hand, the establishment of direct contact with the armed groups in Crete and the evaluation of these groups’ demands on legitimate grounds were met with a reaction in the Ottoman public opinion. The Greek government’s attempt to legitimize its demands that Crete be left to European control, gain autonomy, or be directly annexed to Greece through the statements of the armed elements on the island also lies at the center of this criticism. Thus, the ambivalent attitude of the European states on the issue of Crete created deep distrust in the Ottoman public opinion; this situation was satirized in the press of the period with expressions such as “*Bu ne perhiz, bu ne lahana turşusu?*” (What is this diet, what is this pickled cabbage?/ When someone’s actions don’t match their words)²⁹³

The fact that the Greek government has recently completely withdrawn the warships it had deployed around the island of Crete indicates that the Athenian government has begun to adopt a more cautious diplomatic line, considering the increasing pressures on the Ottoman Empire and European public opinion. This development, especially when compared to the nationalist and interventionist discourses previously reflected in the public opinion, reveals a noticeable change in the attitude of the Greek government. However, this decision to withdraw does not fully coincide with the previous harsh and ostentatious attitude that Greece adopted regarding the Cretan issue. Because the discourses frequently expressed in the Greek public opinion and press against the Ottoman Empire, shaped by the demands for independence, contrast with the actual withdrawal

293 Hamiyyet 23; 19 March 1897, 2; Exmouth Journal, 20 February 1897, 2; Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press, 6 March 1897, 3; Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal, 19 March 1897, 2; Illustrated London News, 7 August 1897, 3; Portsmouth Evening News, 7 September 1897, 2.

step. The Greek government's claims that it had the capacity to gain any military superiority over the Ottoman Empire have been questioned with this latest development. However, the withdrawal of the Greek navy is directly related not only to the internal dynamics of Greece but also to the general diplomatic strategy pursued in line with the demands of the European Great Powers for a peaceful solution. In order to prevent the Cretan issue from causing further regional instability, the European states are inviting the parties to negotiation and non-conflict. Therefore, Greece's decision to withdraw can be evaluated as a result of these international pressures and diplomatic pressures. This decision of the Greek government shows that diplomatic methods rather than military means have begun to come to the fore in the solution of the Cretan issue and that the issue has gained an international dimension and has become open to the intervention of the European states. In the late 1890s, it has been recorded in various Ottoman sources and the press of the period that a significant number of Muslims from the Thessaly region migrated to Ottoman lands, especially to the province of Thessaloniki. This migration movement should be evaluated as a concrete reflection of the security and future concerns of the Muslims in the region. However, the Greek press has tried to present the migration movement in question in a different framework. The news in Athens newspapers included statements such as "*It is surprising that Muslims living in Greece are migrating despite not being subjected to any pressure.*" This approach aims to construct an image in favor of the Greek administration by ignoring the socio-political and security-oriented reasons underlying the migration. The Ottoman press, on the other hand, approaches such comments with a critical attitude and finds the distortion of the events in question by the Greek newspapers to be untrue. Because it is clear that the migrating Muslims did not leave their places voluntarily, but as a result of actual or perceived threats. This situation was observed not only in Thessaly, but also in the context of Muslim migrations in Crete. The fact that the Cretan Muslims left the island due to the violence, discrimination and insecurity they had been exposed to for many years confirms the existence of similar concerns for the Muslim population in the region.²⁹⁴ Ultimately, as expressed in the adage, "*A person does not leave his homeland of his own free will,*" mass migrations mostly occur as a result of serious social pressures or security concerns, which reveals the difficulties experienced by the Muslim population in the region. In this context, the Greek press's efforts to portray the situation differently than it actually was should be evaluated within the propaganda strategies of the period. According to evaluations in some European newspapers of the period, Greece's intervention in the island of Crete began to be compared by some circles to the Austro-Hungarian Empire's occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In particular, the Vienna-based publication *Fremdenblatt*

²⁹⁴ Northern Whig, 8 February 1897, 5; Western Morning News, 8 February 1897, 8; Financial News, 25 February 1897, 2; Hamiyyet 23: 19 March 1897, 4.

argued that the policies of Greek King George towards Crete followed a similar course to Austria's dispositions over Bosnia-Herzegovina; however, it was emphasized that these two processes were based on fundamentally different dynamics. According to the assessments in *Fremdenblatt*, while Austria's military occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was carried out with the approval and guidance of the European Great Powers, the policy pursued by Greece in Crete was evaluated as an action undertaken on its own, despite the warnings and diplomatic advice of these states.²⁹⁵

For this reason, the publication in question described Austria's course of action as "legitimate" and "rational", while criticizing Greece's stance as "arbitrary" and "irrational." However, the evaluations in the Ottoman press of the period exhibited a critical approach to this comparison. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular, it was reminded that Austria had only carried out a military occupation and had not permanently annexed this region; the occupation was a temporary situation based on international legal agreements. According to this perspective, Austria's sovereignty over Bosnia-Herzegovina would one day be questioned by international consensus, and it would be reminded that it had to withdraw from these lands. In this context, it was emphasized that although the similarities between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Crete were superficial, the two events had quite different characteristics in terms of both international legitimacy and diplomatic grounds. In the European press of the period, not only the Ottomans and Greece but also the foreign policy tendencies of other major powers were evaluated in the context of the Crete crisis. In an article published in the Vienna-based newspaper *Fremdenblatt*, a striking analysis of France's diminishing influence in international politics draws attention. The commentary in question argues that France, which was a decisive actor in the policies of European states in the early 19th century, has now fallen under the influence of Russia and has become, in effect, its intellectual toy. The article states that diplomatic failures such as the Lausanne and Egyptian issues underlie France's weakened position, and claims that France is therefore incapable of developing an independent and consistent strategy regarding current foreign policy issues. In this context, whether France's stance on the Crete issue will be shaped in line with the support it expects from Russia stands out as an important question. However, according to the *Fremdenblatt* author, it is neither in the hands of the public nor the French political elite to provide a definitive and reliable answer to this question. The fact that this criticism appeared in an Austria-based publication makes the impartiality of the commentary debatable. The Ottoman public also followed such assessments carefully, and according to some comments, publications such as *Fremdenblatt*

295 Northern Whig, 8 February 1897, 5; Western Morning News, 8 February 1897, 8; Financial News, 25 February 1897, 2; Newcastle Chronicle, 1 March 1897, 5.

acted more with political tendencies than being objective in their criticisms of Russia. Indeed, it was also emphasized that such statements could backfire on the diplomatic interests of their author or the country they were affiliated with. On the other hand, the newspaper *Rachsam*, published in Paris, brought up the quantitative and qualitative inadequacies of the military force that Greece was trying to send to the Thessaly region in a sarcastic tone. According to the newspaper, Greece was only able to recruit a force of 9,000 men; despite the call, a large part of the reserve units and reserve soldiers did not respond to this invitation. The fact that the French press addressed this situation in a satirical tone reflects the general suspicion in the European public regarding the limited military capacity of Greece. It is observed that such a sarcastic approach could affect the reputation between the parties in the diplomatic atmosphere of the period.²⁹⁶ In the public statements of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Monsieur Bánffy, it has been claimed that the issues of Crete and Greece do not have such importance that they threaten the general peace of Europe. According to him, the governments in the Balkan Peninsula are in a deep silence and there is no perception of any threat to the general situation in the region. Bánffy based his opinion on the recent speech of the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Monsieur Stoilov, in Sobranya, in which he clearly stated that his country would not violate the peace.²⁹⁷ According to these assessments, the Great Powers (Great Powers) also displayed a common stance in favor of peace and continued to seek solutions through diplomatic means. On the other hand, it was emphasized that the Ottoman Empire had sufficient military power ready against possible unrest on the Balkan borders and thus had the capacity to ensure regional security. However, in the face of these optimistic and reassuring assessments, some Ottoman newspapers of the period displayed a more cautious approach. These publications included criticisms that the Austro-Hungarian Empire would not be pleased with alliance initiatives in the Balkans, since such regional collaborations were incompatible with the expansionist (invasive) goals of the state in question. Because Austria's policy was based on the Balkan states appearing to be in conflict or at least divided among themselves. In this way, the possibility of the powers on the Austria-Germany axis to intervene in the region increased and the collective action capacity of the Balkan states weakened. At this point, in the comments reflected in the Ottoman press, it was argued that the establishment of a permanent alliance between the Balkan states would only be possible under the leadership of the Ottoman State. Indeed, when the historical, cultural and strategic ties of the Ottoman Empire were taken into consideration, it was thought that a union with the regional states would yield more sustainable results in terms of both political and military stability. According to the press

296 *Hamiyyet* 23: 19 March 1897, 3; *London Daily Chronicle*, 17 February 1897, 7; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 25 February 1897, 5; *Morning Mail* (Dublin), 9 September 1897, 3

297 BOA, HR.SYS. 194 -34 (1899).

sources of the period, unofficial negotiations were ongoing for the establishment of such an alliance and it was stated that the issue had started to find a place on the international agenda. In an analysis published in the newspaper *Peşter Luid*, it was emphasized that the European states would not consent to any change or easing of the conditions included in the note they submitted to the Greek government regarding the Cretan issue. Moreover, it is already known that the Great Powers will not hesitate to use coercive force against Greece when necessary in order to preserve their own prestigious positions in this matter and that they have made their decisions on this matter firmly.²⁹⁸ According to the news, it has been openly stated that if the Greek government does not abandon its current demands, this attitude will be met with serious intervention and that Greece will have to suffer the consequences of this response. On the other hand, in an interview recently conducted by the Athens correspondent of the *New York Herald* with Greek Prime Minister Theodoros Deliyannis, the Greek government's approach to the Crete issue was conveyed to the public in more detail. Although the interview in question has lost some of its relevance due to the rapidly changing diplomatic agenda, Prime Minister Deliyannis' statements are important in terms of shedding light on Greek political thought at the time. In response to the correspondent's question on what grounds the Greek government was trying to legitimize its right to intervene in the island of Crete, Deliyannis gave the following answer:

"This right to intervene is extremely clear and natural. Greece is a state and of course cannot follow the developments in Crete with indifference. Moreover, approximately seventy years ago, the Cretans attempted a similar uprising. At that time, the European states left the Cretans' efforts fruitless in line with their newly adopted political orientations."

Deliyannis's words reveal that the historical and emotional significance of Crete in the eyes of the Greek public opinion continues and that the tendency to actively intervene in developments in the region continues. However, this approach pushes the limits of legitimacy in terms of international law and diplomatic practices, and carries a serious potential for conflict, especially when evaluated within the framework of Europe's collective diplomacy mechanisms.²⁹⁹ The interview that Greek Prime Minister Theodoros Deliyannis gave to a *New York Herald* reporter should be evaluated as an important source reflecting the Greek government's approach to the Crete issue and the diplomatic tensions of the period. Deliyannis referred to Greece's historical and emotional ties with Crete, stating that they had made significant economic sacrifices for the island and that this situation was one of the main reasons for their current

²⁹⁸ BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK. / 53 – 60 (1897).

²⁹⁹ BOA, Y.PRK.PT. 15 – 6; Hamiyet 23: 19 March 1897, 3; *London Daily Chronicle*, 17 February 1897, 7; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 25 February 1897, 5; *Morning Mail* (Dublin), 9 September 1897, 3; *London Evening Standard*, 11 November 1897, 5

financial crisis. In this context, he argued that sending the Greek army to Crete was a step that the government considered justified and necessary. Deliyannis avoided giving a definitive answer to the reporter's question about whether Greece would send soldiers and a navy to the island in line with the ultimatum given by the European states. However, he stated that the government and the nation would not reverse their decisions. When the reporter reminded him of the threat of a possible blockade (the possibility of a blockade of Piraeus and other ports by the European navy, as in 1886), Deliyannis argued that such an intervention would endanger international peace, shake stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, and even pave the way for a general war in Europe. When the reporter brought up the possibility of the Ottoman Empire remaining silent in the face of this situation and declaring war, Deliyannis stated that the Greek people would not hesitate to fight the Ottomans; however, he still expressed the wish to reach a solution without bloodshed. However, he emphasized that if the Ottoman army entered Greek territory, Greece would not hesitate to respond and would carry out a large-scale military transfer, as in 1886. Deliyannis's ambitious statements raised serious doubts about the extent to which they coincided with the financial and military capacity of the Greek government at the time. Despite two and a half months of preparations, the military force that the Greek army was able to send to the border was limited to twelve thousand people, and this figure was in great contrast to the claimed one hundred and ten thousand-person army. This situation has led to questions about how much Deliyannis' statements reflect the actual situation. On the other hand, after the official response of Greece within the framework of the latest note from the European states reached the British Parliament, an extraordinary parliamentary meeting was held under the presidency of Lord Salisbury. In this meeting, Lord Salisbury declared that Austria-Hungary would make every diplomatic effort to find amicable solutions to the Cretan issue; however, if the use of force against Greece was necessary, he would not hesitate to act together with the Great Powers. This statement was published in *The Times* newspaper. As a result of the recent events on the island of Crete, the Muslim population has been dragged into a serious humanitarian crisis. In some regions throughout the island, the lives of the Muslim population have been in danger as a result of various attacks and lootings, and their homes, belongings and property have been destroyed. It is reported that many families were completely homeless and had serious difficulties in accessing basic foodstuffs. In the face of this serious situation, the Ottoman State launched an aid campaign to help Muslims in Crete. In a short period of two days, a total of five hundred liras were collected through donations made by the public to the aid book. In addition, the state allocated an allocation of 150,000 kuruş from the budget. It is stated that aid announcements continue to come from various circles. In addition, it

has been learned that more than fifteen thousand sacks of grain (cereals) and other basic materials will be prepared and sent to the region in a short time with the direct contribution of the caliphate and the ministries of finance and trade. This aid was widely appreciated and welcomed by the Ottoman public. This charity shown to the co-religionists in difficult situations in Crete was evaluated as a strong manifestation of both the spirit of social solidarity and the understanding of the Ummah. According to the latest news, the goods, belongings and money of the Muslim people under siege in Kandanos were completely usurped by Greek soldiers and local Christian bandits on the day the events were announced. Even their animals were taken from them during these attacks on their return. As we have previously reported, it was stated that some Italians who had proven their courage and skill to the whole world in the Abyssinian war wanted to go to Greece and take part in a possible war against the Ottomans due to their Christian fanaticism. According to news in the European press, a group of approximately one thousand Italians working in unskilled jobs such as bricklayers, pavers and apprentice cooks wrote a letter to the Greek government and conveyed these demands. The Greek government, on the other hand, stated that it welcomed this tendency to sacrifice, but stated that they were content with the current volunteer soldiers for now and that they would consider their offers if needed in the future. This situation once again reveals the fact that there is a general awareness in the world about the military power of Greece. Since Greece, with its limited means, is currently unable to allocate sufficient resources even to its own poor people, it is clear that it will not be able to allocate a share to these “pasta sacrificers” either. However, this initiative should not be interpreted as the entire Italian people supporting Greece. Because the volunteers in question are just idle people who spend their time on bridgeheads in Italy. According to the telegram from Paris dated March 15, the decisions taken after the statements of the French Foreign Minister Monsieur Hanotaux in the Chamber of Deputies were as follows: The Great Powers have decided to intervene in the island of Crete, provided that it remains under the sovereign rights of the Ottoman Sultan. It has been decided that the existing international military units in Crete will be deployed in the designated areas and that each state will send 500-600 more soldiers to ensure public order. If the Greek commander Vaso refuses to withdraw his troops from Crete, coercive measures will be put into effect immediately. The European states are determined to establish absolute public order in Crete. If necessary, the necessary orders have been given to the admirals of the fleet to blockade suitable ports in Greece. In line with these decisions, it is now expected that the French government will make a final decision on whether or not it will join this joint decision.³⁰⁰

300 Hamiyyet 23: 19 March 1897, 4.

The policies pursued by Greece in the context of the Crete issue and the results of these policies both in domestic public opinion and in international relations were closely monitored by the Ottoman press of the period and were sometimes subject to intense criticism. In this context, the policies pursued by Greece were harshly evaluated in some newspapers, especially in terms of its approach to the Crete issue, which was seen as a “national cause.” The Greek government’s efforts to use the Cretan rebellions to its advantage in relation to its demands for Ottoman territorial integrity were mostly interpreted in the Ottoman press as an aggressive and expansionist attitude. In these publications, Greece’s attempts to legitimize its interventions against the Christian population on the island, both at the diplomatic level and through military preparations, were criticized, and it was emphasized that these policies threatened not only the Ottoman State but also the general peace order in Europe. With the Crete crisis gaining an international dimension, the intervention of major European states, primarily England, France, Russia, Austria and Germany, was interpreted as Greece being forced to step back in the face of these demands. During this period, the Ottoman press also conveyed the disappointment that the public opinion in Athens, and especially the Greek newspapers, had experienced with the intervention of the European states. Some publications stated that the Greek press overreacted to diplomatic developments and made harsh statements targeting major powers such as Germany, Austria and Russia in this context. This situation was evaluated in the Ottoman newspapers as the Greek public displaying emotional and irrational reflexes; it was argued that such behavior indicated that Greece acted without taking into account its limited power in the international system. Such evaluations in the Ottoman press were not limited to criticisms directed only at Greece, but also formed the basis for inferences about how the European public opinion viewed the issue. It was stated that the attitude displayed by Greece on the Crete issue was not accepted by the major powers and that these states even considered the use of coercive force (coercive power) in order to maintain public order on the island. Such analyses in the Ottoman press not only provided a critique of foreign policy, but also shed light on the tension between the balance of power, public pressure, and nationalist-based demands in the international relations of the period.³⁰¹ Both directly obtained reliable private information and the evaluations in the political press of the period reveal that Greece had actually entered a new phase of war and that for this reason the public was trying to postpone the demands of the occupation of Crete until a possible war was approaching. In its previous political evaluations, the Ottoman press had underlined that the European states, especially the British cabinet, intended to join the peaceful tendencies in Europe by resorting to coercive measures and thus aimed to prevent possible

301 Hamiyyet 25: 27 March 1897, 1.

unrest on the continent. It had even stated that if such political goals were to be truly achieved through peaceful means, a final solution to the issue should be reached through an impartial arbitration board and thus a new, exceptional principle should be added to the framework of international law.³⁰² In the warning letter jointly written by the admirals regarding the armed military detachments sent by the European states to Crete, it was stated that it was desired that the military operation to be carried out to suppress the unrest in the region should be carried out in accordance with the principles of humanity to the extent that it would be an example for the people of Crete. The warning letter also emphasized that the efforts to protect military honor were equally valuable as the duty in question was of great importance to the states to which the soldiers belonged. On the other hand, the artillery fires made by the warships belonging to the allied European states against the armed gangs in Crete caused an extraordinarily harsh reaction in the public opinion in Athens. It was learned that a Palikarian soldier from the Greek military class who had arrived in Athens from Plovdiv about a month ago had returned to his country via Yorgoz. The person in question was an officer known as a sensible and perceptive person in his acquaintances. In the interview he conducted, he made the following assessments about the general situation in Greece: *“They called us to duty in such a hurry that we were ordered to return only one week later. This situation caused serious confusion and indecision in the government levels. Our public opinion, on the other hand, did not know what to do. In my opinion, the reason why our nation rose up with such great excitement is the desire to ignore the internal affairs of Greece by passing over the Crete issue as a fait accompli.”* The Athens cabinet sent a note to all embassies in European capitals, announcing that it officially protested the allied states due to the siege of Crete. The note stated that the responsibility for the situation that had emerged belonged to the European states. However, it is understood that this protest initiative of the Greek government was a symbolic objection rather than based on objective grounds. This initiative, compared to the political temperament of the period, was far from producing realistic results.³⁰³ The policy pursued by England in the context of the Crete issue is not open to criticism, but it is worth examining carefully. Because England believes that the island of Crete does not have strategic importance for Russia and therefore assumes that Russia will not intervene to deepen the issue. Although it has been clearly demonstrated that the suppression of the rebellion in Crete requires the Greek side to suffer military losses to some extent, it does not seem politically possible for Russia, which is an Orthodox sect, to mediate such a result. England, on the other hand, does not expect any negative results in this process and this attitude indicates an

302 Emniyet 58: 4 April 1897, 1.

303 Emniyet 58: 4 April 1897, 2.

approach that is open to understanding rather than criticism under the current conditions. In fact, one of the main factors that has delayed the solution of the issue to this day largely stems from the parties' aim to prevent bloodshed. While Greece has been constantly displaying an excited and excessive policy of "looking for an opportunity to shed blood" for the last two months, the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, has been acting calmly and awaiting the peaceful mediation of the European states. If there is a more effective and constructive solution than the current situation, it is expected that this will be proposed by Russian diplomacy in the name of humanity. On the other hand, a telegram sent from Istanbul to British newspapers stated that the Greek cabinet gave an unofficial response to the latest note given by the allied states. It is understood that this response was based on a negotiation between the French Ambassador in Istanbul, Monsieur Cambon, and the Greek Ambassador, Prince Mavrokordatos, following the speech of the French Foreign Minister, Monsieur Hanotaux, in the French Chamber of Deputies. During these negotiations, Mavrokordatos made a statement that he stated was his personal opinion, stating that the Greek government could consent to administrative reforms to be carried out by the allied states in Crete under certain conditions. However, the Greek government officially denied the allegations that it had made such a proposal to the allied states.³⁰⁴ The recent tendency towards calm in the Greek public opinion has led to a slight increase in the activities of the rebellious elements in Crete. It is understood that the bandit movements on the island have been negatively affected by the cooling of national sentiment in Greece. This situation is leading the non-Muslim public opinion, especially in Crete, to divide into two different tendencies.³⁰⁵ According to news from Petersburg, the Greek bandits and Colonel Vaso in Crete were completely banned from communicating with Greece on the grounds that they were against international law. This decision should be evaluated as an extension of the diplomatic balance policies implemented in the region. On the other hand, the Muslim population living in the Chania, Rethymno and Candia regions of Crete emphasized that the new administrative regulations planned to be implemented on the island should be established in a way that would ensure their safety of life and property, and clearly stated to the foreign state representatives serving on the island that it was imperative to preserve the Ottoman Empire's rights of influence and sovereignty over the island. This statement should be read as a political demand that the central authority should be maintained in the region, in addition to the security concerns of the population subject to Ottoman rule.³⁰⁶

The telegrams dated March 2, 1898 contain important statements regarding the Cretan issue. In these correspondences, it is understood that if a solution

304 Emniyet 58: 4 April 1897, 3.

305 BOA, Y.PRK.MYD. / 8 – 85 (1889).

306 Emniyet 58: 4 April 1897, 4; BOA, Y.PRK.EŞA. / 31 – 6 (1898).

formula is put forward by the European states regarding the Cretan issue, the Russian Emperor will not oppose this initiative and that the issue has been postponed for the time being. This approach was evaluated by the Ottoman Sultan as a new manifestation of the sincere intentions of the Russian Emperor and this attitude was the means of the Sultan's appreciation and satisfaction. In addition, the Russian Empire reiterated its friendly intentions towards the Ottoman Dynasty and it was stated that the helpful attitude displayed by Russia against the known attacks on Anatolia and Crete, especially during the reign of the decedent Mualla Mehmed Ali Pasha, was remembered with appreciation by the Ottoman Sultan. However, it is emphasized that in order to eliminate the difficulties faced by the Island of Crete, the Ottoman government should first take the necessary steps using its own means and then trust in the power and patriotism of the nation. In this context, the tendency to seek a solution by turning to a state such as Moscow, one of the most deep-rooted enemies of the Ottoman Empire throughout history, was identified with weakness and betrayal in the Ottoman public opinion of the period, and such a tendency was heavily criticized.³⁰⁷ On the other page of the newspaper, the news critically interprets Sultan Abdulhamid II's attitude towards the Cretan issue in the context of both Ottoman domestic politics and international relations. Accordingly, if Sultan Abdulhamid II had truly intended to produce a solution to the Cretan issue, it would have been expected that he would have sent some reliable representatives to the island to examine the situation on site and try to ensure the welfare of the Cretan people through a fair administration before starting diplomatic correspondence regarding the crisis. It is recalled that in similar examples in Ottoman history, Sultan Mahmud II displayed a more determined and direct attitude when suppressing the Greek rebellion. Sultan Mahmud acted by fulfilling his duties and responsibilities with clear determination. At this point, a historical comparison is made and the determined attitude displayed by Sultan Mahmud II against the Greek rebellion is given as an example, and Abdulhamid's passive and cautious approach is indirectly criticized. In contrast, there are criticisms that Abdulhamid II neither fulfilled his religious nor political responsibilities, but instead acted only with the aim of protecting his personal security and peace. In this context, it is emphasized that the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and the sovereign rights of the state were made open to the intervention of foreign powers. It is stated that the relationship established with Russia in particular weakened the capacity of the Ottoman administration to act independently in foreign policy and that this dependency relationship turned into a strategic preference aimed at preserving the personal power of Abdulhamid II. This form of relationship is evaluated as an alliance in which both parties pursue their own interests: Russia wants

307 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 8: 21 July 1902, 1.

to break the influence of the European states through the Ottoman sultan and weaken the Ottoman geography; Abdulhamid II tries to preserve his personal power with Russian support. In this context, heavy sanctions are imposed on opposition elements within the country and political pressure is exerted through methods such as exile and imprisonment. Finally, some segments of the Ottoman public opinion define this period as a “period of treason and murder” and argue that the political crisis experienced must be ended. Such criticisms can be evaluated as an example of a historical questioning of the centralist, conservative and security-oriented character of the politics of the Abdulhamid II era. At the same time, it sheds light on the discussions carried out by late Ottoman intellectuals on concepts such as political legitimacy, responsibility and external dependency.³⁰⁸ The security concerns in the Ottoman public opinion regarding the Cretan issue are expressed through a “discourse of victimization” shaped by religious identities; it draws attention to the fact that the two-faced and biased policies of the European states have reached a level that directly threatens the right to life of the Muslims on the island. This situation shows that the Cretan crisis was approached in the Ottoman press of the period not only as a diplomatic or political issue, but also as a moral, social and inter-civilizational conflict ground. Again, the news in the Ottoman public opinion is a striking example of how the ethno-religious conflicts in Crete in the late Ottoman period were perceived by the Muslim public. According to the news, the tendency of Cretan Christians to violence against the Muslim people exhibits a historical and characterological continuity. In this context, the feelings of “excessive savagery” and “fanaticism” expressed by the Christian community are coded as “desire for freedom” by the European states, and various administrative privileges are granted to Crete in this direction. Accordingly, it argues that this approach is not only a misreading, but also a political choice that directly threatens the security of the island’s Muslims. It is emphasized that the autonomy, representation rights and privileges granted are not enough to restrain the excesses of the Cretan Christians; on the contrary, it is implied that these developments pave the way for them to implement their hostile tendencies even more recklessly. The behavior of the Christian population is not only compared to the past, but also the perception of the “internal enemy” created in the Ottoman public opinion by drawing parallels with the Armenian rebellions is seen to be extended to Crete. This discourse is the product of an understanding that positions Christian elements as a potential threat in terms of both internal security and social order. In addition, between the lines of the news, it argues that the Cretan Christians have risen to an advantageous position in local government with the interventions of European states, and that this has legitimized their control over the island by bringing them to the status of a kind

308 Şürâ-yı Ümmet 8: 21 July 1902, 2.

of “spoiled child”. In this context, attacks on the property, life and honor of Muslims are depicted not only as individual actions, but also as a systematic policy of exile and intimidation. In addition, it is stated that this attitude is carried out with a sense of “duty”, indicating that the hostility in question is internalized at an ideological and institutional level.³⁰⁹

In another narrative, observations regarding the initial period of the autonomous administration established in Crete are conveyed, drawing attention to both the superficial effects of international politics and the ongoing social tensions at the local level. According to the news, the flamboyant declarations of the European states regarding the new administrative structure in Crete, rather than being functional guarantees of security and stability, have presented a symbolic appearance like a scarecrow erected in a garden; in other words, they have remained merely an external show. Within this framework, the establishment of the autonomous administration in question has been associated either with Crete’s efforts to give the impression of a “worthy administration” towards Europe or with a desire for reconstruction following the social and administrative fatigue caused by the long-lasting rebellions. Indeed, during this temporary period, some peace was achieved on the island; some of the Muslim population began to cautiously return to the villages and towns they had previously been forced to leave. The main motivation for this return was both to see the ruined houses and properties and to hope to save some of the assets that had been taken from them. However, this short-term optimism was received negatively by Christian elements. The news emphasizes that the community in question continued its past attitudes and behaviors, in other words, hostile attitudes towards Muslims had re-emerged. A series of hostile behaviors, starting from daily interactions such as greetings, to humiliation, physical attacks and finally murders, turned into a systematic policy of exclusion and violence. In this context, the news claims that the autonomous administration established in Crete was inadequate in protecting the Muslim population and could not serve to build trust between communities. At the same time, it criticizes that this new form of government established under European auspices only provided a superficial appearance of order rather than establishing a real regime of peace and equality. This approach also reflects the widespread belief among a significant segment of Ottoman public opinion that Western-backed reforms created an imbalance in favor of non-Muslim elements and deepened the victimization of Muslims.³¹⁰ The government’s lax and indifferent attitude towards this situation – almost to the point of tolerance – despite its declarations that any attack on Muslims should be treated as if it were against its own soldiers and that it should be intervened accordingly, and despite the indifference displayed by the

309 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 8: 21 July 1902, 4.

310 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 8: 21 July 1902, 4.

admirals of the states that committed these violations, has caused the Christians to increase their oppression and cruelty against Muslim citizens, whom they believe they are obliged to oppress, under the pretext of trade and in line with their political ambitions. The number of such incidents has increased especially in recent days. The most horrific and frightening of these incidents took place this time near the port of “Isfakiya”, in the location of “Ayaramalı”: Two Muslim captains from Chania had come to Isfakiya a few days ago in order to load a cargo ship carrying four thousand bushels (units of measurement) that they had embarked on to take to Alexandria. After completing the loading process, when they were about to board their boats, the Christian dockworkers immediately separated from the Muslims with a rifle shot instead of a password. With this signal, a large number of armed Christians lying in wait in the sea opened fire on them. In this attack, one of the captains and a crew member were killed in the boat, and another crew member who had not yet boarded the boat was killed on the shore. One of the surviving rowers managed to swim under heavy fire, drag the boat and carry the bodies to the ship with great difficulty. When the ships set off for Chania, a fire was seen at the point where the other captain who remained on the beach fell; this suggests that he was also burned to death. The other three bodies were inevitably thrown into the sea during the journey. Another point worth mentioning and appreciating is this: Although the majority of the surviving crew were relatives of those killed, they showed humanity and virtue by not harming any of the Christian passengers on the ship.³¹¹ This painful and cruel murder caused a great wave of mourning and anger among the Muslim people. The Ottoman public opinion addressed the social reactions that emerged after an anti-Muslim attack in Crete and the political and diplomatic processes that took place at both local and central levels in this context. For example, it is reported that a murder caused deep mourning and indignation among the Muslim people, and for this reason, a group of people acting within the constitutional framework gathered and made an attempt to convey the issue to the diplomatic authorities. The fact that the minutes drawn up as a result of the meeting were submitted to the major state consulates in Bursa to be forwarded to the assembly of ambassadors in Rome shows the importance of resorting to international channels in the search for political legitimacy of the period. It is also emphasized that the disarmament policies implemented with the claim of maintaining order were carried out unjustly. While the weapons of the Muslims were confiscated, the large stock of weapons in the hands of the Christians was ignored; thus, a ground was created where the Muslims were left defenseless. This situation contradicts the European principles of “equality” and “justice” and indicates that the reform policies of the great powers in Crete are being implemented in a biased manner in the field of security. The last part

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of the news contains a much more direct and harsh political criticism. It is stated that the main responsible for the tragedy in Crete is the government in Istanbul, namely Sultan Abdulhamid II. Accordingly, attention is drawn to the sultan's tight control over the press and his censorship policies, and the fact that not even a single expression of mercy appeared in Istanbul newspapers after such a serious massacre is criticized. It is argued that the fact that a ruler who holds the title of Caliph turned a blind eye to the cruelty against his Muslim subjects is not only due to insensitivity, but also because he himself is the main perpetrator of this situation. These harsh criticisms are indicative of a structural opposition directed at Abdulhamid II's style of governance. The news characterizes the Sultan's despotic regime as an insistence based on ignorance and implies that this understanding of governance paved the way for both the tragedies in Crete and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in general. When viewed in general terms, the news in question is important not only in terms of narrating a local tragedy but also in terms of questioning the political and moral responsibility represented by the central government.³¹²

It addresses the deep disappointment in the Ottoman public opinion regarding the Crete issue in the context of national identity and religious values; it is also possible to see feelings such as distrust of the government and desire for political change. The loss of Crete is represented not only as a geopolitical problem but also as a moral and historical breaking point in the collective memory. For example, a news report is written with a strong rhetoric emphasizing the symbolic, political and religious importance of the island of Crete for the Ottoman Empire. It also argues that Crete has become not only a strategic geography but also a sacred place representing the honor of Islam and the Ottoman nation. In this context, the island is depicted as a political scene shaped by sacrifice, where religious and national efforts have been kneaded with blood throughout history. In the focus of the report, the loss of Crete is treated not only as a political failure but also as a deep historical and moral collapse. The government policies of the last twenty-five years are accused of ignorance and treason; these recent practices are linked to the structural problems that, combined with three centuries of mismanagement, caused Crete to be lost. This discourse overlaps particularly with the criticisms directed at the reign of Abdulhamid II; it highlights the idea that the historical heritage was lost due to the incompetence of the administration. It also evaluates the loss of Crete beyond a territorial issue and states that this loss means the damage to the "honor" and "rights" of the nation. Thus, national pride and collective conscience are portrayed as having suffered a great trauma with the fall of Crete. In this respect, it aims to mobilize the public's emotional reaction while

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at the same time using nationalist and Islamic references together to shed light on the ideological atmosphere of the period.³¹³

The Ottoman press began to share with its readers not only diplomatic statements but also concrete developments on the ground about Greece's intention to annex Crete. According to recent news in the European press, it is stated that the Greek King told a journalist that the island of Crete would be officially and publicly annexed to Greece in the near future. This statement reveals the point that the long-standing political tension over the Cretan issue has reached. The statement in question reveals not only the intentions of the Greek monarchy, but also the weakening control of the Ottoman Empire in this process and the initiative it has lost diplomatically. However, the main point that the news draws attention to is that this development can be read not only through diplomatic statements, but also through concrete developments on the ground and the impotence of the administration. The imprudence displayed by the Ottoman administration, especially in recent political decision-making processes, paves the way for such annexation attempts to be put into practice. The use of the phrase "Ottoman government" in quotation marks and in a sarcastic manner in the text reflects the harsh criticism of the administrators of the period. Thus, it accuses the current administrators of ignorance and positions them as responsible for a destruction that caused the country's territorial losses. In addition, the Cretan issue is not only a foreign policy issue, but also a manifestation of the internal governance crisis and the disintegration of the state structure. One of the elements that makes the tragic facts about the Cretan issue even more painful is the severe hardships and victimization that the Cretan Muslims who were displaced as a result of the conflicts and political crisis on the island encountered both in Crete and in the Ottoman lands to which they were forced to migrate. The people in question were largely victimized by the chaos and negligence caused by the administrative style followed during the reign of Abdulhamid II; their homes, properties and social order were seriously damaged. As a result of this situation, while some of them tried to stay in Crete, a significant number of them found the solution in migrating to Ottoman lands. However, the difficulties they encountered and the hardships they were subjected to in the places they migrated to were no different from the humiliation and hardships they experienced during the new administration process established under the auspices of the four major powers in Crete. This situation reveals the extent of the victimization that the Cretan Muslims were subjected to both in their own homeland and in Ottoman lands, and reveals the negative impact of the administrative weaknesses of the period on the immigrant masses. A letter received from Crete includes the following statements regarding the recent

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developments on the island: Following the announcement of the decision that paved the way for the de facto annexation of Crete to Greece, a minority of only four members of the parliament objected to this decision. However, the Cretan government and the local Christian population have begun to turn their long-standing latent resentment and discontent towards the Muslim population into open hatred, and have begun to put these feelings into practice. The pressure on Muslims is increasing at every opportunity; especially the orphanages and foundations that constitute the center of the spiritual and institutional solidarity of the Muslim community are being intervened in, and the administration of these institutions is being transferred to incompetent persons. Despite the fact that the current constitutional order requires the principle of equality, in the face of non-Muslim officials who were appointed to key positions despite their small numbers, Muslim officials were systematically removed from their posts; sometimes they were dismissed individually and sometimes collectively. Even the judiciary lost its impartiality, and many respected Muslims faced heavy punishments for minor matters such as a simple coffeehouse dispute. It is reported that Cretan Muslims no longer have words to express the treatment they are subjected to, and their helplessness deepens with each passing day.³¹⁴

As difficult as the situation of the Cretan Muslims in their own homeland was, their situation after migrating to the Ottoman lands was equally sorrowful and difficult. In this regard, some cases based on both our direct observations and reliable information will be mentioned here. It is reported that during the winter of 1899, when Javad Pasha fled from Crete to Damascus, his relatives -his brothers, sons and fathers- were executed and hung from trees, they were targeted by bullets, and they were forced to leave the island, leaving everything behind in order to survive. In the meantime, Cretan immigrants began to reach Izmir on Greek and Ottoman ships. However, Sultan Abdulhamid II, concerned that these immigrants might revolt against the Ottoman lands and seek revenge for the oppression they had been subjected to, kept the passengers, who arrived on three separate ships, on the ships for a week and put them under strict pressure. During this period, four women had miscarriages due to cold and deprivation, and some passengers lost their lives. In the end, the refugees were only taken to the barracks square on the dock. The air temperature dropped to five degrees below zero, yet their contact with the public was cut off. The Governor of Izmir, Kamil Pasha, informed the center that there was no potential danger of rebellion and adopted a humane attitude and allowed some of the refugees to stay in the city.³¹⁵ However, these developments, especially due to incidents such as a Cretan immigrant cutting off his fingers that were crushed on the ship with a knife, caused serious concerns in the foreign consulates in

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315 BOA, Y.EE.. / 86 – 48 (1899).

Izmir. As the number of immigrants approached twenty thousand, Ferik Şakir Pasha was sent to Izmir with extraordinary powers in order to prevent possible complaints and reactions. With the arrival of this individual, who is known as the perpetrator of many incidents that paved the way for Crete to leave Ottoman control, the oppression and violence against the immigrants increased. While the immigrants were struggling to survive in hunger, disease and cold in the barracks set up in the barracks square, even this could not save them from oppression. Şakir Pasha considered the misery of the immigrants as a sign of rebellion against Abdulhamid II and used it as a justification to impose oppression and punishment on these oppressed people. Those who wanted to help them or voice their grievances were silenced with slander and imputation; Even when it was suggested that some of the immigrants could earn their living by farming, this idea was not supported and the people who voiced the suggestion were exiled. As a result, most of the Cretan immigrants were left without any support and struggled to survive in desperation. Unfortunately, their cries did not reach the Sultan, who delivered the bodies of thousands of Muslims who lost their lives in Crete to the son of the Greek king. The hardships experienced by a group of approximately twenty thousand immigrants who migrated from Crete to Ottoman lands were extremely severe during the settlement process. In just three months, more than two thousand of these immigrants lost their lives. A pasha with the rank of Ferik and his entourage sent from Istanbul aggravated the situation with their practices regarding these incidents, and the pain and misery spread among the immigrants reached the highest level. As a result, the authorities in question legitimized these practices under the guise of “government wisdom” and returned to Istanbul. Some of the surviving immigrants were sent to different provinces such as Benghazi, Konya and Tripoli, while others were forced to remain scattered in the places where they were. As a result of these developments, a strict policy was followed to prevent the Cretan immigrants from approaching Istanbul. There were two basic concerns behind this attitude: First, the possibility of an individual attack due to a possible sense of revenge against the sultan. Second, and this is one of the most obvious manifestations of the mentality that shaped the sultan’s decisions, was to prevent the people of Istanbul from learning about the way Crete was being lost. For this reason, the Cretan immigrants were kept away from the capital, and efforts were made to prevent the public from being affected by the developments.³¹⁶

The main reason why all the indigenous people in the lands that left Ottoman rule were oppressed is that the Turks and Muslims living there were deprived of the power of political representation. The more they were discredited, the more they were subjected to insults and oppression. However, it is known that these

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communities were more or less respected and appreciated in different periods throughout history. In this context, when we remember the three centuries that Crete spent under Ottoman rule and the struggles and successes experienced under Ottoman rule before, it becomes clear that the Cretan people are capable of becoming a nation again in any environment they find themselves in with their intelligence, fortitude and talent. For this reason, it is possible for this people, which has produced many ministers, scholars and heroes who have served the state in the past, to reach the position they deserve again with similar merits today. Our opinion in this direction is shared by many people who know the conditions and sensitivities of Eastern nations. Cretan Muslims have demonstrated a social formation based on education and upbringing and a social structure open to civilisational developments throughout a long historical process. Despite the severe poverty and migration conditions they experienced, the fact that they were able to build elements of civilisation in the regions they settled in, even with limited means, shows that they have a high cultural potential. With these characteristics, they are not only considered a victimised community, but also a productive and resilient element. When the Cretan immigrants are compared to the Algerian immigrants who came to the Ottoman geography later, it is stated that if sufficient support and guidance had been provided, they could have achieved a higher level of welfare and social success. However, it is emphasised that the inability of this community to sufficiently raise their voices against the discriminatory and unjust practices they are subjected to due to their Turkish and Muslim identities is not a weakness, but a natural result of long-term fatigue and trauma. On the other hand, the fact that the Ottoman administration still claims to have control over Crete and that it has made official statements in the Istanbul press regarding the preservation of the current status quo is considered an attitude that is disconnected from reality and based on optimism, considering the changing international and local conditions. In an environment where the status quo is actually changing every day, such statements are open to criticism in terms of the seriousness and consistency of the political will.³¹⁷

4.1.1. Withdrawal of Ottoman Forces from the Island

The views expressed by certain segments of the Ottoman public opinion emphasize that the pain and responsibility for the developments in the context of the Cretan issue were primarily borne by the Ottoman subjects, especially the Muslim people. According to this perspective, the real addressee of oppression, tyranny and victimization was the Ottoman people. For this reason, the satirical description of Istanbul, which was the center of the Ottoman State, as the “Darü'l-Hurâfât” (Capital of Rumors) reveals the harshness of

317 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 9: 6 August 1902, 2.

the political criticisms of the period. These criticisms particularly target the practices of the period of Sultan Abdülhamid II; it is claimed that the central administration during this period caused the loss of Crete through political intrigues. In this context, it is argued that some individuals who are not aware of the developments in Istanbul or who have a different perspective on the issue should have personally observed the oppression, deportation and socioeconomic destruction that the Cretan Muslims were subjected to. Accordingly, the loss of Crete was not only a loss of land, but also the loss of security for the Muslim population, the deepening of hostility between Christian and Muslim elements, and the deterioration of the social fabric in the region. Again in this context, some Cretan Muslims were forced to leave their homeland and migrate to Ottoman lands, but they also encountered various difficulties there. Problems such as economic pressures and persecution against them and restrictions on their employment opportunities further aggravated the living conditions of this immigrant population. According to allegations, rather than resolving these grievances, the central government resorted to a kind of double standard by distributing the properties of subjects of different religions and ethnic groups to foreigners. This situation forced some Cretan Muslims to return to their homeland and live in lands where political control had now passed to Greece. Because the constant pressure and misery they faced in Ottoman lands forced them to return to their former homeland under enemy control. In addition, the visits of Muslim dignitaries in India to Istanbul as a result of their affection for the Ottoman caliph were initially seen as a sign of respect and loyalty; however, it has been suggested that the guests in question were exposed to various difficulties due to security concerns and intelligence activities in the palace during these visits. According to some sources, these people both lost their assets and were oppressed in different ways. Through these examples, the administration of the reign of Abdulhamid II was criticized and a deep distrust of the political atmosphere of the period was expressed.³¹⁸ The situation shared by the Hilafet newspaper in the continuation of the same news sheds light on the practical problems encountered during the circulation of press and publication activities during the period and the calls for the solution of these problems. Accordingly, although the demand for the newspaper was high, there were some difficulties in delivering the copies in question to the addressees in the Ottoman lands completely and without any defects. The most important of these difficulties was that readers preferred to physically divide the newspaper into two and send only the Turkish or Arabic parts in order to save on postage. This practice prevented the entire content of the newspaper from reaching the addressees and therefore created a gap between the right to receive news and the function of the press. In the continuation of the text, a call was made to

318 Hilafet 9: 22 January 1900, 1.

personalities living in different regions of the Ottoman geography and known for their religious devotion and patriotism in order to solve this problem. In this context, it was expected from these personalities to show the necessary sensitivity and increase social awareness in order to prevent similar practices and to disseminate the full content of the newspaper. Therefore, news is not only a detection of a communication problem, but also a call for public opinion formation and collective responsibility. In this respect, it is an example of the press understanding of the period that includes both the function of news carrier and social guidance.³¹⁹

4.1.2. Establishment of the Bank of Crete

There were two main institutions operating in Crete that provided credit support to the Greek people. The first of these was the Evkaf and Orphanage Funds, which had been operating since 1858, and the other was the Cretan National Bank, which was established by the Cretan government in 1899 in cooperation with the Greek National Bank. The Cretan Greeks had been demanding the establishment of an independent local bank that could provide loans at reasonable interest rates for the repair of their properties damaged during the rebellions, especially since 1869. Although this demand was voiced again in 1888, it was rejected on the grounds that banking activities within Ottoman territory were under the monopoly of the Ottoman Bank and that this bank had the authority to open branches in provincial centers. However, as a result of persistent demands to establish a credit institution that would meet local needs, the Cretan National Bank was established in 1899 under the management of Prince Georgios, in partnership with the Greek National Bank, with a capital of 10 million francs. The bank in question provided extensive credit facilities to the Greek people, enabling both the purchase of properties belonging to Muslims and the repair of properties damaged during the rebellions through borrowing. However, the depletion of credit facilities in a short time led to the bank being unable to meet local demands. In addition to its activities, the bank provided financial assistance from regions where Greeks were densely populated, from Greece, and even from Cretan immigrant communities in America, in order to facilitate the acquisition of Muslim properties at low prices by the Christian population in Crete, especially during the period when migration movements intensified. Greeks within Ottoman territory also secretly participated in this assistance. When looking at recent research, for example, the information that the Greek consul on the island of Chios was organizing local Greeks was reported to the Ottoman central administration by Abidin Pasha, the governor of "*Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid*" (Vilayet of the Archipelago). Similarly, donation lists were created in Cyprus to provide financial support to Cretan rebels, and

319 Hilafet 9: 22 January 1900, 2.

information was obtained by the Ottoman authorities that approximately one hundred palikarians were preparing to go to Crete to participate in the armed struggle.³²⁰

4.1.2.1. The Other Side of the Problem: “Foreign Capital Movements in the Bank of Crete”

The early years of autonomy on the island were also marked by simultaneous efforts to establish a banking system. In May 1899, the government, the National Bank of Greece and the British financial group Hambros signed a contract to establish the Bank of Crete. The bank's capital reached 10 million gold francs (40,000 shares of 250 francs). The banknotes, the exclusive right to issue of which belonged to the bank, were not compulsorily in circulation, and the bank was required to hold a reserve of specie equivalent to one-third of the banknotes in circulation. The bank, which began operating in November 1899, opened four more branches in urban centers such as Heraklion, Rethymno, Neapolis and Vamos, in addition to its headquarters in Chania. The bank undertook to allocate 1 million francs for real estate loans, with a government guarantee and 5% interest, as collateral. Each loan did not exceed 500 drachmae and was limited to a maximum term of 31 semiannual terms; The amount of the loan to be granted could not exceed one-third of the market value of the mortgaged property. Of the 500 applications made up to the first quarter of 1900, 250 were approved as mortgage loans; in addition, thousands of short-term agricultural loans were granted. By the end of the year, although all the capital allocated to real estate loans had been used and a total of 3,134 loans had been distributed, many applications remained unanswered. For this reason, the bank decided to allocate an additional one million drachmas to real estate loans with a 6% interest rate. On the other hand, 500,000 drachmas (2,326 loans) were allocated to agricultural loans, while commercial loans fell far short of expectations. In fact, due to the high demand for mortgage loans, the existing capital was exhausted in the first quarter of 1901, and this situation was far from satisfying the bank's management. As stated in an observation from the same period, *“the commercial stagnation observed last year continues due to the general famine... Fortunately, this year's harvest seems to be quite fruitful, and it is hoped that this situation, together with the expected development of commercial activities, will considerably increase the bank's activities in this field.”* Acting with the desire to reorganize everything, the autonomous government of Crete decided to reform the agricultural credit system inherited from the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, in 1901 the Public Benefit Credit Fund reopened its doors to the peasantry and acquired the status of an agricultural bank. The bank's

320 Daily Record, 8 March 1897, 3; Portadown News, 3 April 1897, 7; Financial News, 21 July 1899, 5; Adıyeke, 2021, 361-362.

management is carried out by a five-person board appointed by the government every four years. The bank's declared purpose is to promote agriculture and "agro-based industries" in Crete, and to this end it aims to provide loans with collateral or mortgage, simple or subject to amortization. The interest rate is set at 6%, and a capital of 2 million drachmas is allocated to the bank by the public treasury.³²¹ In general terms, the bank's activities are grouped under the following headings:

- a) *To provide mortgaged loans with an upper limit of 1,000 drachmae per person for the cultivation and improvement of all kinds of agricultural properties. In these loans, the market value of the mortgaged real estate must be at least three times the amount of the loan received; the loan term is determined as a maximum of 20 years.*
- b) *To provide simple agricultural loans with a term of 9 months in return for collateral.*
- c) *To provide loans with a term of 6 months and a term of 150 drachmae on agricultural or industrial products (upper limit 150 drachmae).*
- d) *To provide industrial loans with a term of 3 months and an upper limit of 200 drachmae in return for collateral.*
- e) *To accept interest-bearing deposits.*
- f) *To borrow through real estate bonds.*

Although deposit transactions received limited attention from the public, credit services were in great demand. In fact, in this new period, the Credit Fund began to operate as a real estate-based agricultural bank. The institution agreed to renew loans granted before 1897 for a maximum of two years and continued to allocate new loans.³²²

4.1.3. Island's Gendarmerie

On May 24, 1887, near the village of Vamos in the Apokoronas region of Sfakia Prefecture, two brothers and a relative attacked a group of men on the road. The three assailants were drunk and wounded three of the group members. They stabbed one with a knife and wounded the other two. The assailants fled the scene and encountered gendarmes near the village of Kalamitsi, about five kilometers southeast of Vamos. One of the assailants attacked with the intention of killing a gendarme, but another officer stopped him. However, the intervention of the other gendarmerie failed to arrest the assailants; an armed group of villagers helped the three assailants escape despite the intervention of the police.³²³ Although the gendarmes in this case had not acted outside their

³²¹ Rapport du directeur de la Banque de Crète pour l'année, 1901, 1-7.

³²² Bournova, 1995, 32-34.

³²³ Kefalas, 2020, 98.

job description and had in fact done what they were required to do in the given situation, the incident exemplifies the dissatisfaction and resulting hostility felt by the Cretan people towards the gendarmerie throughout the 1880s. During this period, the Cretan Assembly, the island's legislative body, held meetings proposing changes to the gendarmerie. Members of the assembly expressed their dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of the gendarmerie. They saw the large amounts of money spent on training and supplying the gendarmerie – more than half of Crete's total budget – as a waste. Therefore, in order to make the gendarmerie more efficient in a way that would meet the economic investment, they aimed to attract trained and qualified officers by imposing stricter requirements for joining the gendarmerie and to ensure the implementation of regular protocol, thus eliminating abuse of power in general.³²⁴ As in the rest of Europe, the Ottomans used gendarmes as a form of police in the 19th century. In 1845, the Ottoman police were institutionalized with the Police Regulation. Until 1878, the gendarmerie, essentially a paramilitary police force, operated as a militia. Gendarmes began to form in Western Europe, especially by the French, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. As in the Ottoman case, gendarmes were formed to suppress rebellions and pave the way for reform in Europe. The French gendarmerie was established after the French Revolution and its members were professional soldiers, which demonstrates the military character of the gendarmerie. The French gendarmerie was seen as an institution that followed the marshals, who were also responsible for policing the population and ensuring justice. While the marshals had functioned as an important force in the control of the provincial areas, after their judicial powers were taken away from them, it became clear that relying on military force to maintain provincial order would be a bad idea, especially since the marshals seemed to be influenced by revolutionary ideology. Furthermore, the new commissariat organizations established to control rural areas were ineffective against bandits.³²⁵

Thus, the gendarmerie organization emerged as a structure that performed both civilian and military duties. The Napoleonic Wars accelerated the spread of the gendarmerie, and as the French model was imposed on the peoples under Napoleon's empire, the establishment of gendarmerie organizations became widespread throughout Europe. Similarly, the Ottoman police organization was also responsible for monitoring and controlling the population, and preventing and suppressing social unrest, according to the 1845 regulation mentioned above. The police were established to monitor and eliminate unwanted behavior or behavior that violated social norms. However, the primary duty of the Ottoman police at the beginning of the century was to control banditry and rural rebellions. This duty is similar to the French use of the gendarmerie in

324 Kefalas, 2020, 98-99;

325 Emsley, 2002, 37-40; Kefalas, 2020, 102.

their colonial projects at the beginning of the century. However, the Ottomans aimed to maintain state order rather than expansion. Over the course of the century, the Ottoman police increasingly became involved in civilian policing and criminal investigation, and this process led to a formal separation between the police and the gendarmerie in 1879. The police organization was directly connected to the Ministry of Police, while the gendarmerie was left under the authority of the Ministry of War. In 1909, the Ministry of Police was abolished and the General Directorate of Security was established under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.³²⁶ Between 1879 and 1913, the gendarmerie in Crete continued to fulfill the dual function that the Ottoman police had undertaken until 1879. While the gendarmes were expected to suppress the frequent rebellions in the region and catch fugitives, they also had the duty of maintaining public order by conducting neighborhood patrols, arresting criminals, and participating in criminal investigations. The gendarmes were subordinate to the corporals, the lowest rank in the non-commissioned officer hierarchy. The corporals were the lowest level in the chain of command, which consisted of sergeants, sergeants-majors, second lieutenants, lieutenants, captains, majors, and the gendarmerie colonel. The gendarmerie colonel was on duty in Chania, the capital of Crete, while five majors were responsible for the five administrative districts of the island. Captains were responsible for larger areas of authority within the regions, and lieutenants, second lieutenants, sergeants-majors, sergeants, corporals and private gendarmes served in these areas.³²⁷

In the 1880s, the gendarmes were ineffective in fulfilling their daily duties and general responsibilities. The Cretan Assembly took action in the early 1880s to address this problem, and considered the main reason to be the general corruption and lawlessness among the gendarmes. Although concrete steps were discussed in the Assembly meetings to address this problem, the two-volume compilation of laws, which included the Cretan Code of 1879 and the laws published and put into effect in 1893, the decrees of the general administration and the circulars distributed by the chief prosecutor of the Cretan Court of Cassation, left out of their scope the important regulations regarding the functioning and structure of the Cretan Gendarmerie in 1884 and 1888. Furthermore, specific laws regulating the conduct of the gendarmes in response to major problems within the institution were not included in these texts. These regulations were published in the Kriti newspaper and presented to the public during a series of meetings, together with early drafts containing comments by members of the Cretan Assembly on the relevant articles. Although there were

³²⁶ Emsley, 2002, 54-56; Aksu, 2014, 4-7; Kefalas, 2020, 103.

³²⁷ See Article 3, 104-105, Law of Crete, Law on the Organization of the Gendarmerie, Law of Crete, 1879. The hierarchical structure of the gendarmerie remained the same during the autonomy period, but the major was moved to Chania, while the captains were made responsible for each of the five administrative districts of Crete. The gendarmerie battalions in the regions were divided into detachments stationed in the major cities of each region, and these detachments were commanded by lieutenants or second lieutenants. The detachments were divided into platoons commanded by sergeants or corporals in the towns and villages. Kefalas, 2020, 103-104.

no clear criteria for joining the Ottoman police force until 1909, the regulations of 1884 stipulated some qualifications for the Cretan gendarmerie. However, these regulations were inadequate in practice because they contained vague expressions.³²⁸ This was because the establishment of the gendarmerie did not directly regulate the character of the personnel the force hoped to attract. The Cretan Law of 1879 contained a short eight-page section entitled The Cretan Gendarmerie Organisation, but did not provide any details about the selection process for gendarmes or commissioned officers – appointed or commissioned. However, five years later, three basic criteria for gendarmes were included in the gazetted regulations under the Cretan Gendarmerie Regulations: being between 20 and 50 years old, not having been convicted of a felony, misdemeanour or theft punishable by more than one year's imprisonment, and not suffering from any mental or physical disability.³²⁹ The most important criterion for the Assembly was the quality of the individuals serving in the gendarmerie. Because one of the most frequently voiced complaints by the Assembly members was about the character and background of the gendarmes. In the minutes of the Assembly session dated 31 May 1884, a member drew attention to this problem by saying, "It is not right to put the cat among the pigeons and establish a gendarmerie organization composed of criminals." This statement legitimized the public's hatred and distrust of the gendarmes because it officially acknowledged that corruption within the organization was an obvious problem and needed to be addressed. However, the requirement that the gendarmes not have any previous convictions brought with it two important problems. The first was that individuals who had been sentenced to less than one year in prison could still be recruited as gendarmes. The second was that this criterion was determined as if there was an effective gendarmerie organization in catching criminals; however, the local gendarmerie forces did not yet have this effectiveness during this period.³³⁰

In the Assembly, it was complained that the gendarmes did not arrest the criminals, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The members of the Assembly who made this complaint, in a period of four months, dealt with fifteen crimes committed by the criminals that the gendarmes did not ultimately catch. The Assembly, which considered this indifference as negligence, issued a decree in 1886 that strengthened the 1884 regulations and prohibited the gendarmes from neglecting their duties in public order. Here, the most important factor in the indifference of the gendarmes can be considered as their weapons, since the gendarmerie weapons were not included in the budget. Therefore, it is important for a member of the Assembly to emphasize that the

328 Aksu, 2014, 6; Kefalas, 2020, 104.

329 While Article 11 contained vaguely stated criteria of "competence" and "honorability," the first specific provisions, starting with Article 12, laid down the obligation of ranking officers to select individuals who met these criteria. 1879 Cretan Code, Law of the Organization of the Gendarmerie, Article 11-12, 109; Kefalas, 2020, 104-105.

330 Perakis, 2008, 112; Şenışık, 2011, 92-93; Kefalas, 2020, 105.

firearms of the criminals were more powerful than the weapons in the hands of the gendarmes. Moreover, since the gendarmerie was not allowed to use the weapons of the criminals, according to Article 15 of the second part of the 1884 regulation, it was foreseen that the gendarmes who used weapons that were not authorized would be fined.³³¹ Neglect of duty, deliberate negligence resulting from distraction, was another possible cause of the gendarmerie's failure to function properly. Senior managers often allowed gendarmes to serve in their hometowns, paving the way for deviation from their duties and the failure to properly enforce the law due to favoritism. According to the fourth article of the Special Provisions in the final section of the Regulation on the Organization of the Gendarmerie on the Island of Crete, it was not appropriate for officers to be assigned to towns or villages where they had previously lived.³³² On the one hand, it was advantageous for officers to have a good knowledge of the local community. They could easily use physical geography to track criminals and defuse potentially dangerous situations by predicting the behavior of people they knew. However, their kinship with the community made it difficult for them to act as impartial mediators. Indeed, many gendarmes turned a blind eye to the illegal activities of their family members.³³³ The government tried to solve this problem by transferring the gendarmes to other regions if they did not fulfill their duties. However, according to the Assembly, this method was unsuccessful because the families of these gendarmes continued to cause unrest. The main purpose of this practice was to show that only gendarmes from that region could negotiate with the local people and maintain public order because they knew them. However, this situation revealed that the gendarmes were completely integrated into local kinship networks and instead of controlling the society, they used their professional positions for personal gain. It was thought that the gendarmes' geographical proximity to these social networks would help them both expand these networks and gain a more prominent position within them. Because the members of these networks relied on the gendarmes to use their authority for their own interests, the gendarmes also gained the opportunity to create conditions that would provide them with more privilege by using these social relations.³³⁴ This problem seemed particularly important to the Assembly, as it simultaneously sought to eliminate feuds on the island and hold public officials accountable for actions that could harm society. The ambition to govern fuels feuds, as powerful men at the head of this chain compete with each other, which can lead to conflict. The risks are even greater when a public official heads patronage networks. As one of the final solutions to this problem, the Assembly proposed that gendarmes from

331 Kefalas, 2020, 106.

332 Cretan Code, Law of the Organization of the Gendarmerie, 1879, 110-111; Kefalas, 2020, 106.

333 Perakis, 2008, 109; Kefalas, 2020, 106.

334 Kefalas, 2020, 106-107.

different regions be brought together in a single unit. This was thought to increase accountability among colleagues. However, this did not improve the situation either.³³⁵ It is noteworthy that the illiteracy problem in the police force was not addressed among the criteria in the regulation. The members of the assembly discussed the illiteracy of the gendarmes, and even the commanders, as a problem that increased corruption and bad behavior. The fact that the basic literacy criterion for entry into the gendarmerie was not included in the legal legislation brought about the classic problems caused by lack of literacy. In the gendarmerie organization, this situation resulted in a bureaucratic registration system that was either non-existent or incomprehensible, and led to the failure to ensure accountability due to the lack of reading skills necessary to critically understand the law and to correct application methods.³³⁶

Lack of literacy also paved the way for unnecessary and often negative third-party interventions. Police officers and commanders had to resort to the help of the limited number of literate civilians of the time in order to fully understand orders or to determine the addressee of an arrest warrant. In the latter case in particular, the interpretation of arrest warrants, the intervention of intermediaries led to undesirable developments. The Assembly was aware of cases of such fraud in the past. If a literate civilian knew the criminal who was the addressee of the order personally, he could deliberately lie about the content of the order and mislead the gendarmerie. More importantly, the third party could immediately inform the suspect that the gendarmerie was looking for him and give him the opportunity to escape.³³⁷ This dangerous combination—namely, the employment of illiterate and criminally minded individuals as gendarmes—is particularly evident in the issue of the issuance of arrest warrants, which is at best inconsistent. The gendarmes frequently raided homes without a valid search or arrest warrant. In 1885, the Assembly noted that the police arrested people with invalid, incomplete or incorrectly written warrants. Two years later, this situation had not changed significantly. The gendarmes finally began to present warrants to suspects before taking them into custody, but they still refrained from implementing this in every arrest. A circular issued by the public prosecutor's office in 1887 stated that the gendarmes still did not regularly present warrants. The prosecutor's criticism emphasized the similarity of the gendarmes' behavior to ordinary burglaries, since the only difference between entering a person's home legally or illegally is the consent of the homeowner or the presence of a piece of paper—that is, an arrest warrant. The prosecutor stated that gendarmes not only entered houses without authorization, but also frequently did so at night, and that this was

335 Perakis, 2008, 109; Kefalas, 2020, 107.

336 Şenşık, 2011, 93; Kefalas, 2020, 108.

337 Kefalas, 2020, 108.

both suspicious and illegal. A gendarme could only enter a house at night if he personally witnessed a burglary and was after the suspect. This circular also made it clear that it was not only the gendarmes who violated this law, but also the commanders who gave them these orders. Therefore, the penalty for this crime—including up to six years in prison—applied not only to the gendarmes but also to the leaders who gave them their orders. Given the gendarmerie's bad reputation, it was understandable that the public's interactions with them were tense, as the narrative at the beginning of this section makes clear. Another incident of public aid to outlaws occurred in 1884. When the gendarmes arrived in the village of Vafe to arrest Nikolaos Marinakis, the villagers took action to protect the suspect. According to the Sultan's decree, the Cretan gendarmerie, which had previously been selected from the island's natives, will now be selected from non-natives.³³⁸

The British press also provides a very clear description of the political and social unrest in Crete towards the end of the 19th century. The Ottoman administration and local forces, especially the gendarmes, failed to maintain order. The role of the British Consul was critical in understanding and reporting the situation, but it is noted that previous reports missed important events. According to the special correspondent, the violence and mistreatment of the local population, especially the Christians, created a deep distrust of the Ottoman system. This distrust increased suspicions about the ineffectiveness and corruption of the measures implemented under the name of "reform". The correspondent emphasizes that the local population sought not only administrative reform from the Ottoman administration, but also justice and security, but these needs were constantly ignored. Impunity and mistreatment further fueled the local population's resentment, which in turn deepened Crete's unrest under Ottoman rule. Another prominent problem is the corruption and injustice of the gendarmes in their own regions. The inadequacy of the consulate and the local government in solving these problems was one of the factors that accelerated the process of Crete's independence from the Ottoman Empire and unification with Greece.³³⁹ The restructuring of the Cretan gendarmerie also became another important issue, as it was ineffective in maintaining law and order. This restructuring task was likely to be given to the military attachés of the various embassies, reflecting the international intervention of the period and the interest of the great powers in the administration of Crete.³⁴⁰ The restructuring of the Cretan Gendarmerie is quite remarkable. The transfer of the Gendarmerie, especially to the military attachés of various embassies, puts the administration on the island under international control and perhaps puts the Ottoman administration under more external pressure in this regard. This situation can

³³⁸ Civil & Military Gazette (Lahore), 12 December 1889, 2; Kefalas, 2020, 108-109.

³³⁹ Daily News (London), 20 December 1889, 5.

³⁴⁰ South Wales Echo, 29 September 1896, 3.

also be evaluated as a move towards the Ottoman desire to have more control over local security forces and to make these forces more professional under international observation. However, in a multi-ethnic society like Crete, it is also a matter of debate how much the restructuring of the Gendarmerie can reduce tensions in the region. The presence of international observers has also led to discussions about the security of the local population.³⁴¹ The meeting held for the restructuring of the Cretan Gendarmerie aimed to create a significant impact on security and administration in the region. The coming together of the military attachés of the six embassies shows that there will be international coordination on the security of the region. In particular, the appointment of the British delegate Colonel Chermside indicates that this process will be carried out with professional and experienced leadership. Chermside's extensive experience in the Ottoman Empire and his command of the country's languages make him an ideal name for this task. Chermside's continuation of the duty is important not only as a military leader but also as a diplomatic representative. He is someone who has the capacity to communicate effectively with both the local population and the Ottoman administration. In this case, Chermside will be very useful in considering the ethnic and cultural differences in the region during the restructuring of the Cretan Gendarmerie.³⁴² Colonel Chermside's appointment to a special mission to a commission appointed by the Sultan and the Great Powers, after leaving his post as British military attaché in Istanbul, is seen as an important step towards reviving the reform process in Crete. This announcement will be welcomed, as the delays in implementing reforms in Crete are beginning to cause concern among the public.³⁴³

According to a telegram transmitted by the Reuters News Agency, it was reported that representatives of the Great Powers will meet in Constantinople on November 24 to discuss the issue of not accepting foreigners into the Cretan gendarmerie. The report states that the Cretan reform plan does not directly foresee the admission of foreigners into the gendarmerie, but that a commission of European officers will undertake the reorganization of the gendarmerie on the island. However, it is reported that this situation may lead to a disagreement, as the foreign representatives have a common view on the need for a structure that does not consist solely of Cretans in the Cretan gendarmerie.³⁴⁴ According to a report dated November 24, representatives of the Great Powers will hold a meeting the next day to consider the issue of not accepting foreigners into the Cretan gendarmerie. The report states that the Cretan reform plan does not explicitly foresee the acceptance of foreigners into

341 Dublin Evening Mail, 29 September 1896, 3; Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 29 September 1896, 4; Edinburgh Evening News, 29 September 1896, 3.

342 Dundee Advertiser, 24 October 1896, 6; Army and Navy Gazette, 14 November 1896, 12.

343 Manchester Courier, 11 November 1896, 5; Northern Guardian (Hartlepool), 11 November 1896, 3; Pall Mall Gazette, 17 November 1896, 8.

344 Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 25 November 1896, 3.

the gendarmerie, but that a commission of European officers will undertake the reorganization of the gendarmerie on the island. However, it is reported that the foreign representatives agree on the need for a structure that does not consist solely of Cretans in the Cretan gendarmerie, and that this situation is likely to create difficulties in the negotiations.³⁴⁵ According to another news report, it is reported that in the session of the International Commission for the Reorganization of the Gendarmerie of Crete held the previous day, the Ottoman delegates opposed the admission of foreigners to the gendarmerie, while the foreign commissioners insisted on the necessity of admitting foreign elements. The news report also states that the protocol of the Commission's session that day was the subject of discussion both in the meeting of the Ottoman Council of Ministers and in the meeting where the representatives of the Great Powers came together.³⁴⁶

According to a news report dated January 15, it was reported that the Ottoman government (the Sublime Porte), after a long period of resistance, finally accepted the plan proposed by the Great Powers, which envisaged the establishment of a Cretan gendarmerie that included European elements. According to an interview in the February 17 issue of the *Neue Freie Presse* newspaper, Sir E. Ashmead Bartlett, who stopped in Vienna on his way back from Istanbul, stated that Russia was currently determining the political balance in Istanbul, but that it was not difficult to change this situation. According to Bartlett, in order to achieve this goal, Great Britain needed to abandon its anti-Ottoman policy and approach the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy). Because there were reports in the newspapers about the support of the Triple Alliance for the Ottomans. For example, Austria was ready to provide naval support to the Turkish army in the event of a military intervention by the Ottoman Empire in the Cretan issue. For this reason, the Triple Alliance played an important role in the formation of Ottoman foreign policy and played a critical role in understanding the diplomatic relations of the period.³⁴⁷ Bartlett argued that only such an approach could prevent the Straits and Istanbul from falling under Russian control. He argued that the first step to be taken in this direction was to dismiss the then British Ambassador Sir Philip Currie; because, according to Bartlett, Currie was a bureaucrat and not a real diplomat, and was being misled by the Russian Ambassador to Istanbul, M. de Nelidoff, as well as Austria and Germany. Sir Ashmead Bartlett declared that he would initiate a propaganda campaign to convey these ideas to the public through Parliament and the press when he returned to his country. In the news from Istanbul at the same time, it was found remarkable that the Sultan's first secretary had directly conveyed his orders to the seven army commanders, bypassing the

³⁴⁵ Birmingham Daily Gazette, 26 November 1896, 5.

³⁴⁶ Bristol Times and Mirror, 27 November 1896, 8.

³⁴⁷ BOA, Y.A.HUS. / 359 - 36 (1896).

Ministry of War. As a result of the pressure from the ambassadors, the Sublime Porte accepted in principle the acceptance of foreign officers into the Cretan Gendarmerie, but the decree to make this decision official had not yet been published. In addition, the Ottoman government approved the appointment of Bishop Ambrosino in order to prevent a possible conflict between the Greeks and the Serbs in the Kesküb region; this decision was welcomed by the upper echelons of the Greek Orthodox hierarchy, but it was anticipated that it would draw the reaction of the separatist Serbs.³⁴⁸

According to a telegram sent from Chania on January 22, it was reported that the appointment of Major Bor from the British Army as Colonel of the Cretan Gendarmerie by the European Commissioners created a general atmosphere of trust and peace among both Muslims and Christians, but the following day, news that the Russian Ambassador to Istanbul Nelidoff did not approve of this appointment caused great uneasiness on the island. The news stated that the Cretans were not happy with the policy pursued by Russia and that this situation caused Russia to lose prestige in the region. It was also stated that a bishop speaking on behalf of the Christian community in Crete informed the consuls that the differences of opinion between the embassies would be viewed with sadness by the Christians. On the other hand, it was emphasized that there was also serious concern among the Muslims on the island. Another news report from the Reuters News Agency reported that the representatives of the Great Powers in Sofia requested the Bulgarian government to select 30 qualified gendarmes and send them to Crete, and that the Bulgarian government accepted this request. The news also stated that 80 gendarmes under the command of a captain and a first lieutenant had departed from Çetinje to Kandiye to serve in the newly established Cretan Gendarmerie. According to a telegram from Chania dated January 28, it was reported that there was an atmosphere of panic in the city due to the concentration of the Muslim population coming from rural areas and two murders committed near the city.³⁴⁹

According to a report from Istanbul on Friday, according to information received from Chania, foreign warships have recently left the port of Chania and headed towards Candia, but the situation there is still dangerous. In addition to Russia, France also opposed the appointment of British officer Major Bor to the command of the Cretan Gendarmerie. The fact that these two powers did not accept the appointment caused widespread repercussions in political circles and was met with sadness, especially because Major Bor had successfully organized the gendarmerie in Cyprus and was greatly appreciated by both Christians and Muslims. In addition, Major Bor's excellent command of Turkish and Greek is another factor that reinforces the appropriateness of

³⁴⁸ Civil & Military Gazette (Lahore), 18 January 1897, 2.

³⁴⁹ Civil & Military Gazette (Lahore), 19 February 1897, 6; St James's Gazette, 25 January 1897, 10; Edinburgh Evening News, 30 January 1897, 4;

the appointment. Therefore, it is thought that the appointment of a Dutch or Belgian commander would have no practical value. It is emphasized that in an environment where trust between countries is broken even on secondary issues, the likelihood of efforts to improve the general situation reaching a practical result is low. The news also states that the Cretans fear a new rebellion in the spring and that this is intended to end the current uncertain situation. The ambassadors requested the Ottoman Government to issue a decree for the removal of the Kurds from the Armenian villages. In addition, Admiral Juriëff was elected as the Head of the Russian Patriot Fleet. It was added that M. Oscar Robert Thomptander was a former Foreign Minister. Major James Henry Bor was an important British officer who played a critical role in the establishment of the Cretan Gendarmerie in 1897. Bor joined the Royal Marine Artillery in 1874, served in the Cyprus Military Police between 1878 and 1892 and served as the Commander-in-Chief of this force for the last eight years. After serving as a Turkish translator in the Mediterranean Fleet between 1895 and 1897, he was selected by the Ambassadors' Conference in Istanbul in January 1897 to organize the newly established Cretan Gendarmerie, and was appointed commander of the entire gendarmerie force by the Sultan in the same year. However, he resigned from this post in March and continued to command the European troops on the island until July. During his duty in Crete, he was awarded the Silver Medal for Military Valour by the King of Italy and the CMG by Queen Victoria of England for his suppression of a rebellion by the Albanian gendarmes with the help of Italian and Russian troops and French and British marines. His activities during this period are important in terms of showing the character of international intervention and the formation of military-civilian administration in Crete, where the Ottoman Empire maintained its claim of sovereignty.³⁵⁰

According to a Reuters telegram from Chania dated March 14, it was reported that upon the recommendation of the British and French consuls, Major Yusuf Bey was temporarily appointed as the Colonel of the Ottoman Gendarmerie. The news stated that Yusuf Bey was appointed in place of Emin Pasha, whose appointment was cancelled upon the request of the Great Powers.³⁵¹ A news article dated March 20, 1900 summarizes the career of James Henry Bor, who played a key role in the establishment of the Cretan Gendarmerie. Bor, who served here since the British occupation of Cyprus in 1878, was sent to Bombay in 1885 to combat the locust plague in India, and in 1897 was tasked with establishing the Cretan Gendarmerie by the Conference of Ambassadors in the Ottoman Empire. Bor's selection for this post is important in terms of demonstrating the influence of European officers,

³⁵⁰ Edinburgh Evening News, 30 January 1897, 4; Army and Navy Gazette, 30 May 1903, 15.

³⁵¹ St James's Gazette, 15 March 1897, 9.

especially the British, sent to the island during the period when Crete was under international control, on security reforms on the island. Bor's role in the organization of the gendarmerie was not limited to the establishment of military order, but was also influential in the reconstruction of order in Crete according to European norms after the Ottoman Empire. His appointment to a high-level bureaucratic position in the Royal Marines after this post reflects the rise of Bor's military career and the importance of his success in Crete in the eyes of Britain.³⁵² According to a report dated July 24, 1906, the decision taken by the Great Powers envisaged that the management of the Cretan gendarmerie would be given to retired Greek officers, a large administrative control would be exercised by the consuls, and a loan guarantee of nine million francs would be provided.³⁵³ According to statements made in Athens at the end of 1905, the Greek government had to postpone the army reform decided in 1904 for two years due to financial insufficiencies. Prime Minister Theotokis stated that the army would be strengthened in terms of weapons and equipment with the special resources to be obtained during this period. In addition, a bill was submitted regarding Greek officers wishing to serve in the Cretan Gendarmerie, allowing these officers to temporarily leave the army to serve in Crete and then return without losing seniority. This development reflects Greece's policy of strengthening the law enforcement forces in Crete with its own officers and its efforts to increase its influence over Crete.³⁵⁴ By the end of 1905, the majority of Italian carabinieri had left Crete, ending their duties on the island. A few Italian officers remained on the island during the process of transferring the command of the Cretan gendarmerie to Greek officers. This development indicates that the international military presence on the island was being reduced and that the management of the security forces was increasingly being transferred to Greece. It also indicates that the administrative autonomy of Crete was de facto coming under Greek influence.³⁵⁵

The de facto separation of Crete from the Ottoman Empire has been evaluated as a result of the systematic policies of some European states that have been acting for many years with the aim of weakening the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. These states have portrayed the Greek population on the island as a society that has the right to "*autonomy*" and eventually "*independence*"; they have used this discourse as a tool to separate Crete from Ottoman rule. Thus, the process of separating the island from Ottoman rule was accelerated by international intervention, the Ottoman soldiers were forced to leave the island, and the Ottoman flags and coats of arms were removed from the castles. During this process, many Ottoman soldiers were martyred; some

352 Portsmouth Evening News, 22 March 1900, 2

353 Cambridge Daily News, 24 July 1906, 3; Northampton Chronicle and Echo, 24 July 1906, 4.

354 Morning Post, 08 December 1906, 8

355 Morning Post, 24 December 1906, 5

of the soldiers who lost their lives in regions such as Thessaly and Crete could not even find a grave. Crete was virtually sold off as a political “*diş kirası*” (gift or money for poor guests in ottoman era). The armed gangs operating in Crete have effectively invalidated the theses of the European states that presented themselves as advocates of “*freedom*” and “*autonomy*”. Despite this, however, in European public opinion and diplomatic circles, the responsibility for all the negativities experienced on the island was placed on the Ottoman State; the Ottoman administration that ruled the island for years was blamed. Some Western diplomats even justified the attacks carried out by Cretan armed groups against Ottoman soldiers in the context of the groups’ “*freedom*” struggle; they even interpreted the violence against European military units that arrived on the island as the so-called “*temporary reaction of the peoples liberated from the Turkish yoke.*” However, it has been confirmed by various observations that the fundamental motivation of the movement in Crete was not only autonomy but also the annexation of the island to Greece, and that the use of armed force served this purpose. It has been observed that the principles of international law have largely lost their validity in practice during this process. The principles of “*international law*” that European states frequently mention in their diplomatic discourses have often been used only to keep weak states under control and to ensure their own material and moral interests. In practice, the principle of “*the precedence of force over right*” has become the basis in practice. While the removal of Crete from Ottoman rule and its submission to the influence of a Christian state constitutes an example of this understanding, what was taken into consideration was not how fair this new situation was, but how appropriate it was in terms of the existing balance of political interests.³⁵⁶

With the removal of Crete from Ottoman rule, the issue began to be evaluated not only as a political loss of territory, but also as a manifestation of an opposition based on religion and civilization. Some Ottoman intellectuals stated that in such incidents, as in the past, distinctions based on “*Christianity*” and “*Islam*” were highlighted; they argued that the policies pursued by European governments in the modern period were essentially no different from the Crusader mentality of the Middle Ages. In this context, it is noteworthy that although the European powers are referred to as “*civilized nations*” today, they are still described by some authors as “*civilized righteous people.*” Because it has been stated that the interventions carried out by these powers with the claim of “*bringing civilization*” were in fact violations of the property, law and freedom of the local people. The loss of Crete caused great indignation in the Ottoman public opinion, and especially the treatment of the Muslim population on the island was subject to serious criticism. It has been stated that the Muslims who remained in Crete after the Ottoman rule were not treated “*humanely*” and

356 Ahali, 8 November 1906, 1.

that this situation contrasted with the European discourse of “*civilization*”.³⁵⁷ In this context, it has been argued that merely verbally condemning the states in question and personal anger will not be sufficient and that an understanding of solidarity must be developed against these attitudes on a material and spiritual level. It has been emphasized that Muslim societies must act with a greater sense of responsibility towards the victims. On the other hand, it has been put forward that there is a double standard in the context of the principles of “*nationalism*” implemented by Western states. It has been stated that if principles such as “*France belongs to the French, Germany belongs to the Germans, America belongs to the Americans*” are really valid, then Tunisia should likewise belong to the Tunisians, Algeria to the Algerians, Egypt to the Egyptians, India to the Indians, and Turkestan to the Turks. However, it has been observed that in practice, these regions are subjected to the colonial order of the European states, not the relevant indigenous peoples, and that the will of the Muslim societies living in these lands is ignored. At this point, it has been observed that the practices towards the Islamic world are much different and harsher compared to other nations; It has been stated that the abandonment of geographies where millions of Muslims live under colonial rule is legitimized with the discourse of “*civilization*.” As in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the abandonment of Muslim communities to the domination of foreign administrations against their will, with vague terms such as “*eternal-temporary*,” is presented as another example of this double standard.³⁵⁸

4.1.4. Prince George and the Cretan State

According to the 1899 report by the Athens correspondent of The Times newspaper, Prince George, the High Commissioner of Crete, returned to Athens to visit his family after one year and ten days of assuming office. The report emphasizes that despite his young age and relative inexperience, Prince George took important steps towards establishing a modern and civilized state on the island after centuries of chaos and mismanagement. It is stated that many problems such as a serious financial collapse, impoverished peasant population, devastated olive groves, long-standing religious divisions and armed elements in the mountainous regions constituted major obstacles to the process of rebuilding the island. The report states that the refusal of the six major powers to resolve the crisis for approximately eighteen months both damaged their own prestige and caused the people of Crete to suffer even more. It is reported that ultimately, following the events in Heraklion, Ottoman troops withdrew from the island and Prince George was appointed High Commissioner of Crete as the representative of the major powers.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ Ahali, 8 November 1906, 1.

³⁵⁸ Ahali, 8 November 1906, 1-2.

³⁵⁹ Daily News (London), 9 January 1900, 7.

According to the Times newspaper correspondent, Prince George achieved a success that could be considered as “solving the Cretan issue” even at the beginning of his term. Although it was not possible for him to provide direct aid to thousands of impoverished peasant families, he managed to disarm the people, calm the Muslim minority and establish a strong central administration. It is emphasized that he showed great success in disarming the island in particular; it is stated that he was able to achieve this process, which European admirals could not achieve before, with the confidence that came from being a Greek prince and the voluntary support of the people. Integrating the Muslim Cretans into the new administration was a more difficult process. Particularly a part of the Muslim population living in the villages, who were less educated and conservative, preferred to leave the island under the influence of agitators coming from Istanbul, and two fifths of the approximately 70,000 Muslim population migrated to Anatolia and Macedonia. Thanks to Prince George’s visits to mosques and religious courts and his public declaration that he granted equal citizenship rights to Muslims, this wave of migration gradually decreased and some immigrants began to return to the island, also due to the economic hardships they experienced. The reporter argues that the treatment these immigrants encountered in Ottoman lands made them realize that their previous privileged position was an exception.³⁶⁰

In the Daily News newspaper dated January 9, 1900, among the steps taken to gain the trust of the Muslim community in the administration of Crete, Prince George’s appointment of a Muslim advisor to the post of minister responsible for public security was considered an important symbolic gesture. This person also assumed the command of the local gendarmerie. The atmosphere of trust in the Muslim community was further strengthened by the Greek Queen Olga’s visit to Halepa, where she established direct contact with the ladies of the palace and paid them a return visit. The queen’s gesture was greatly appreciated by the Muslim women, who presented her with many gifts. The political administration of Crete continued to be one of the most fundamental issues. The autonomous structure established with the Halepa Edict of 1878 failed, and the parliamentary system, on the other hand, was not compatible with the political maturity of the society and thus became the scene of intense party fights and struggles for office. In these circumstances, the necessity of a strong central administration was also accepted by the political leaders of the old period. Under Prince George’s supervision, the new Assembly, which convened in Chania, was restructured to meet every two years with a mandate limited to making laws and approving the budget, while executive authority was vested entirely in the Prince. Prince George’s responsibility only to the European states, not to the Ottoman authorities, kept him in a position that

³⁶⁰ Daily News (London), 9 January 1900, 7

made him independent of both the influence of Istanbul and the daily political pressures of the Cretan people.³⁶¹

The British press of the time described Prince George's administration in Crete as a de facto "*enlightened dictatorship*." His clear stance against factional conflicts, for example, his exclusion of a respected politician such as Dr. Sphakianakis from the government because he did not want to be on the same council with his political rival Koundouros, is one example of this approach. The Cretan gendarmerie, structured by Italian officers, quickly proved its effectiveness, making it possible to enforce the law even in mountain villages. The newly established bank, with the support of the Greek National Bank and foreign capital, contributed to the agricultural reconstruction process by providing low-interest loans to the villagers. Although the military presence of the European powers was limited (approximately 1,200 soldiers), public order on the island was maintained in a strong and impartial manner. The main reason for this was Prince George's determined administration and his legitimacy over the local population. The fact that the Prince came from the Greek Royal Family gave concrete meaning to the Cretans' deepest desire, the dream of union with Greece. According to the news, this symbolic representation power is a more effective source of legitimacy than the Prince's personal charisma and international position. Although some circles are cautious about unification on the grounds that Crete and Greece are not yet ready, the strong will among the people is in this direction.³⁶² Prince George's words during his departure for Crete, "*Hellenism will be put to the test in Crete!*" show that his duty had not only an administrative but also a national mission. According to the news, the Prince's term of office was a period in which Hellenism was redefined in an environment purged of the negativities of Greek political culture. The fundamental condition of this "political laboratory" is that the corruption, partisanship and demagogic politics caused by the constitutional system in Greece should not contaminate Crete. In this context, it is argued that if Crete joins Greece before maturing through constitutional education, both Crete and Greece will suffer from their current corrupt structure, while it is argued that a delayed but solid unification will offer Greece the opportunity for a "rebirth through Crete." The text reveals both how the reforms in Crete were legitimized by Hellenistic ideology and the incompatibility of central Greek politics with the European understandings of the period.³⁶³

Another news article begins with the Prince's words, "*Hellenism is being put to the test in Crete*" reflecting the view that the reforms in Crete were not only an administrative success but also a modernizing test of Greek national identity. According to the article, it has become clear that Hellenism, when removed

361 Daily News (London), 9 January 1900, 7

362 Daily News (London), 9 January 1900, 7

363 Daily News (London), 9 January 1900, 7

from the political atmosphere in Greece, could function as a “civilizing” force in the East. The Prince’s achievements include establishing an atmosphere of trust between Christian and Muslim peoples, achieving disarmament, and establishing a strong and impartial administration. His efforts to establish contact with the Muslim population stand out in particular—steps such as visits to mosques, emphasis on religious equality, and the appointment of a Muslim official responsible for public safety. In this respect, the article constructs a narrative that emphasizes not only Prince George’s personal qualities but also the inclusive and “civilizing” nature of the Hellenistic mission. However, the text defends the semi-autocratic nature of the administration established in Crete, and legitimizes the limitation of constitutional representation on the grounds of “*lack of political maturity*.” This situation reflects both the paternalistic political understanding of the European powers towards the “*eastern peoples*” and the tendency of the Greek intellectuals to combine modernization with national interests. The approach in the article sees Prince George’s presence in Crete not as a temporary means of stability but as a long-term Hellenistic project.³⁶⁴

Another report in the British press reported Prince George’s temporary departure from his post as High Commissioner in Crete and his departure for diplomatic visits in Europe. The Prince, who was seen off the Gulf of Suda on 23 September with great public cheers, boarded a Russian warship in Piraeus and was welcomed in Athens by the Royal Family and state officials. This event shows how popular Prince George was not only in Crete but also in Greece, and the importance attached to his post in Crete in terms of Greek national interests. The Prince’s travel plans—visits to the capitals of other Great Powers, primarily Russia—show that he was not only a local administrator but also a diplomatic figure representing Crete’s international status. The particular emphasis on his visit to Russia is both related to the fact that the Prince’s mother, Queen Olga, was a member of the Romanov dynasty and demonstrates Russia’s influence on the Cretan issue.³⁶⁵

This news dated October 30th announced the military organization plan of the new Cretan administration established under Prince George. The regulation, which was stated to be welcomed by both the Muslim and Christian people living in Crete, introduced compulsory military service, but initially only 600 soldiers were expected to be recruited annually. After one year of active service, the soldiers would be transferred to the reserve class, and all other healthy men who were not selected would be included in the reserve class by being called up for training at regular intervals. This new army, which would be led by officers of European origin, would include non-commissioned officers selected from the Cretan gendarmerie in the lower ranks. This regulation aimed to both

364 Tablet, 13 January 1900, 2-3

365 Evening Mail, 24 September 1900, 2.

strengthen domestic legitimacy by including the local people in the process and to give confidence to external observers by assigning European officers to ensure neutrality in the command level. In addition, the establishment of three separate garrisons in the cities of Heraklion, Rethymno and Chania was a step towards making the physical presence of the central authority on the island permanent.³⁶⁶ This report, dated 22 December, covers the official ceremonies held on the anniversary of Prince George's arrival in Crete and the enthusiastic participation of the public. The anniversary of the prince's arrival on the island was crowned with a Te Deum service, attended by the commanders of international military units and the navy, consuls and local officials. The prince was greeted with applause by the public as he went to church and returned, and then received local administrators at the palace. This ceremony should be considered more than just an anniversary celebration, but a representation of both public support and international legitimacy. The participation of the international military presence and diplomatic representatives emphasizes that Prince George is still acting as the representative of the Great Powers and that the administration in Crete continues under multilateral supervision. On the other hand, the enthusiastic participation of the public and the devotion shown to the prince's person reveal the extent to which the administration has been accepted by the Christian population on the island.³⁶⁷ According to the observations of the British Vice-President Consul Lascelles, the establishment of public order in Crete under the presidency of Prince George and the effective organization of the gendarmerie had a positive effect on commercial life. The merchants in the cities began to reestablish relations with European firms and were able to provide payment guarantees. However, the fact that the islanders did not show the expected interest in agriculture was criticized. Lascelles stated that England lost its commercial share in some sectors, especially cotton fabric, due to Italian competition and that one of the reasons for this situation was the small number of British trade representatives. He emphasized that Italian, German and Austrian representatives visited the island regularly and delivered their goods directly to the port of Chania, while British firms only required delivery at the British port.³⁶⁸

According to a report in the *İntikam* newspaper, foreign consuls in Chania notified Prince George of the final decisions of the international commission that had gathered in Rome. One of the most important of these decisions was regarding compensation for the damage suffered by the states during the unrest in Crete. It was requested that the compensation in question be discussed and decided upon before the assembly convened. Apart from this, the British consul

366 *Morning Post*, 31 October 1900, 5

367 *Evening Mail*, 24 December 1900, 3

368 *Belper News*, 21 October 1904, 7

specifically reminded Prince George that the money planned to be printed on behalf of the Cretan government should not have any derogatory or reputation-damaging nature towards the Ottoman Sultan (his majesty). When evaluated in the context of these developments, the printing of a special coin for Crete could have a symbolic derogatory meaning for the Ottomans. However, it is observed that such symbolic insults did not have a direct effect or sensitivity on Sultan Abdulhamid II.³⁶⁹

As of 1903, total trade in Crete was 1,019,341 pounds, an increase of 220,515 pounds over the previous year. This development marked the beginning of a promising period for Crete's commercial future. The excellent organization of the Cretan gendarmerie and the desire of the rural population to return to normal life encouraged town merchants to trade with European houses again and provided the opportunity to provide payment guarantees. Important structures such as the new Bank of Crete building in the suburbs of Chania show the vitality experienced in the construction sector. In addition, the increase in construction activities stimulated the import of timber, and this increase, which seems statistically small, is remarkable despite the overstocked market of the previous year. Although a budget of 40,000 pounds was allocated by the Cretan Assembly for 1903, road construction and repairs were still carried out to a very limited extent. One of the important industries of Crete is the production of soap, which is exported extensively to Greece and Istanbul. Carpets and curtains are also produced in Crete, but the export of these products is quite limited. It is stated that England suffered a significant loss of market in cotton trade, especially due to competition with Italian houses, and that these houses offered good quality and affordable products that suited the taste of the Cretan people. Although England's cotton products were superior in quality, merchants generally preferred cheaper Italian products due to the price difference. The iron trade in Crete was in the hands of German and Belgian companies; these companies offered similar quality products at more affordable prices compared to the English. One of the main reasons for the decline in English trade in Crete was the lack of English trade travellers; it is stated that Italian, German or Austrian trade travellers visited even a small town like Crete every week. In addition, while German, Italian and Austrian companies provided loans with three or six month terms, English companies generally did not provide loans, which is another important reason for this decline.³⁷⁰

Prince George, the high commissioner of the Great Powers (England, France, Russia and Italy) in Crete, has now embarked on one of his regular trips to Europe. However, it is reported that this time the trip will be limited to only stopping in Athens, from there to Copenhagen to meet with his father,

369 İntikam 34: 25 April 1901, 4.

370 The Scotsman, 29 October 1904, 7

the King of Denmark, and then to London to attend the wedding of his brother Prince Andrea. It seems that, as in his previous trips, he will not be visiting the capitals of the great protectorate states in order to convey his wishes for the annexation of Crete to Greece. The limitation of Prince George's program and the fact that despite leaving Crete, there is no news in the Greek newspapers about the island's annexation to Greece are striking. This situation is made even more apparent by the silence of the press in question, contrary to its usual attitude. After all, following a similar trip last year, as a result of the advisory suggestions and attitudes taken by European states, discussions on the status of Crete had flared up again. In this context, according to a widespread public opinion, it was thought that the warnings made by the Ottomans and the diplomatic attitude shown at that time had found a response. However, this time, the fact that Greek newspapers refrained from giving space to their usual excessive rhetoric and baseless annexation talk has attracted public attention. Apparently, these press organs are suppressing their desires for conquest that have accumulated within them, and are keeping their imaginary "gazâ" visions that have accumulated in their minds secret for the time being and are remaining silent. This moderate attitude, when compared to the heated propaganda of the past, has been evaluated as a noticeable change.³⁷¹

This time, the rumors about the annexation of Crete to Greece have manifested themselves in a more strange and even ridiculous manner than before. According to the allegations, the annexation issue has now become a reality and it is even claimed that the great powers are ready to accept this situation. It is even rumored that after this development, Prince George's duty in Crete will end and that he will therefore be appointed to Cyprus with a new duty as high commissioner. This baseless expectation has been described with the satirical expression "*Pretentious is in flight, singing a song of boasting*". It is a fact that such ideas should not be despised in terms of national effort and patriotism. Such enthusiasms, especially those that emerge with the motive of patriotism in circles that direct public opinion, can be evaluated as sincere feelings, even if they push the boundaries of fantasy. In this respect, we do not intend to ridicule those who have such dreams as a political idea. However, on this occasion, we would like to remind you of some truths about the annexation of Crete. The issue of the annexation of Crete to Greece is not a simple local will or popular movement. Indeed, the temporary cession of Cyprus to England, then the transfer of its administration within the framework of a special agreement; similarly, the annexation of Crete to Greece after it was left to the joint administration of the great powers for a period of time, are actually based on complex commitments and mutual obligations between the great powers.

371 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 38: 6 October 1903, 1.

This framework is essentially part of a historical and deep issue known as the “*Eastern Question*”. In this context, the Greek royal dynasty, public opinion and press should act with some caution and deliberation and see the dangers that these complex processes may pose. Because external interventions and demands supported by bias have often caused regrets that are difficult to compensate.³⁷² The current administrative situation of the island of Crete is not based on any international legal basis; on the contrary, it seems to have emerged largely as a result of a political mistake and unforeseen developments. The fact that Crete was evacuated without being left under the direct protection of any state is the product of a remarkable flexibility and interventionist attitude displayed by the great powers, including the Greek royal dynasty. In this context, the Greek population of Crete should try to make the most of the current situation by evaluating the opportunity for progress and development in this administrative autonomy environment they have. Because Crete is a geography rich in natural resources and open to economic development due to its geographical location, climatic characteristics, mountainous structure suitable for agriculture and proximity to trade routes. However, in order for this potential to turn into a concrete development process, internal security must be ensured, social peace must be established and constructive policies aimed at progress must be implemented. Annexation to Greece, in accordance with the reasons to be explained below, does not meet these needs and carries the risk of directly deepening social and economic instability. For this reason, it is necessary to avoid preoccupying the mindset of the islanders with political expectations; those engaged in agriculture should be directed to production, merchants to trade; an environment free from political chaos should be established. Similarly, investments in education and science should be increased, and local handicrafts and small-scale industry should be encouraged. Thanks to the economic and social policies to be developed in this direction, Crete’s natural resources and fertile land structure can make the island a stable and prosperous center in the region. Crete’s natural beauties and high mountain ranges have qualities that can be compared to the Swiss Alps. Although there are no natural lakes on the island, the clear waters of the Mediterranean surrounding it compensate for this deficiency. These physical characteristics provide the island with significant advantages not only in terms of agriculture and trade, but also in terms of climate and natural life. This potential of the island can make it compete with other calm and prosperous regions of the Mediterranean—for example, cities such as Nice or Ajaccio. Considering the decline in the rural population, especially in recent years, and the decisive role of the Muslim population in this decline, policies should be developed to re-strengthen this community. In this way, both the imbalances in the population structure of the island can be eliminated and

372 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 38: 6 October 1903, 2.

economic and social development can be sustained in a more balanced way. With this approach, it is not far-fetched for Crete to become a second Sicily in terms of tax revenues and economic production.³⁷³ In terms of commercial revival and economic development, the island of Crete should be carefully evaluated not only for its local agricultural activities but also for its strategic role in the trade routes between the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. The island has the potential to be a safe center and a natural warehouse for the storage, distribution and shipment of goods transported between these three continents, thanks to its current geographical location and the convenience of its ports. In this context, the reorganization of Crete's commercial structure and its integration into the developed trade network would be a development strategy that suits the island's natural possibilities. However, under current conditions, the desire to unite with Greece, which has a narrower political structure compared to the autonomous and privileged status that Crete had under Ottoman rule, could mean a serious setback in terms of economic and administrative stability. Because Greece, as a small, weak and financially shaken state in its current period, is far from the capacity to support the development initiative that Crete needs. In particular, when the sacrifices made by the Ottoman Empire for many years to ensure peace and order in Crete and the blood shed for this purpose are taken into consideration, the annexation of the island to such a country seems no different than a conscious political suicide. While Crete has a structure suitable for all kinds of progress and growth with its natural, social and economic capacity, the weakening of this potential with inappropriate political unions both endangers the future of the islanders and negatively affects regional balances. This situation can be likened to the endangerment of the development process of a child with a healthy constitution who is suitable for development by being left in an environment that carries diseases. The political and economic future of Crete depends on a healthy structure and a safe environment. Therefore, the possibilities of long-term stability and prosperity should not be ignored for the sake of short-term nationalist desires.³⁷⁴

According to the news, Crete, which is under the joint protection of the Ottoman Empire and other major powers, will be able to ensure both its current prosperity and future stability with the healthy operation of its current autonomous administration. Moreover, this idea is the common view not only of the Ottoman authorities but also of every sensible observer and every political authority capable of evaluating. When the issue is examined with an eye that deeply considers the interests and real happiness of the islanders – especially the Cretan Greeks – of the period, it is seen that, despite the occasional displays of Greek nationalism on the surface, the possibility of destruction and collapse

373 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 38: 6 October 1903, 2.

374 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 38: 6 October 1903, 2.

that would arise from the annexation of Crete to Greece has become a serious source of concern in the conscience and hearts of the islanders. In fact, a significant portion of the Cretan people interpret the negative developments such as poverty, financial crisis, social stagnation and the decline in real estate values that resulted from the de facto rapprochement established with Greece as a kind of ill-fortune and unlucky situation experienced immediately after the withdrawal of the Ottoman administration. However, they are reluctant to express these real observations openly, preferring to conceal their conscientious feelings out of fear of being accused of betraying the national cause or fearing their safety. A comparison between the autonomous administration of Crete and its accession to Greece also points to important conclusions. Because, while the Cretan people are currently free individuals who have the right to self-determination and have a say in their administration, in the event of annexation, they will come under the domination of Greece, a small, weak state with an unstable administration; their freedom will give way to dependency, and their hopes for the future will give way to misery and oppression. While the islanders are the owners of their own property, they will be subject to heavy taxes and excessive demands, and they will have to share the earnings they have earned with the sweat of their brow with others. In this case, the position of Prince George, who serves as high commissioner in Crete, will also change significantly. If the island maintains its current autonomous status, the Prince will continue to appear as a ruler acting within his own authority as the representative of the great powers; he will have a symbolic and functional weight in regional politics as a modern “Minos”. However, in the event of annexation, he will be reduced to the status of an ordinary prince belonging to the Greek dynasty, and will lose his current political position and symbolic importance. In the future, the annexation of Crete to Greece will lead to a serious setback not only in terms of the physical development of the island and the material and spiritual well-being of the people, but also in terms of political order, administrative stability and diplomatic balance in the region. Such a development will mean a loss for both the people and the current administrative structure. At this point, we believe that in the evaluations made regarding the future of Crete, instead of the demands for “annexation”, demonstrations and attempts to bring about a *fait accompli*, which are now frequently repeated in the political arena and seem to have lost their meaning, a more constructive approach should be adopted by both Prince George, the islanders and the Greek press. Because, as stated above, the real issue of Crete is not annexation but the development of the island in the fields of education, industry, agriculture, trade, infrastructure and general administrative functioning. The current and future welfare of the islanders can only be ensured through sincere efforts in these areas. In this

context, when the issues mentioned are taken into account, it is observed that Crete's political importance and influence, especially at the regional level, is gradually decreasing. At this point where the issue has come to an end, it would be appropriate to recall the open letter written by Bizantios, former editor-in-chief of the Trieste-based newspaper Nea Hemera, shortly before his death, regarding Prince George's change of office. The letter in question is almost a political testament, and on this occasion, it contains a remarkable content that can be recommended to Prince George, the Cretan people, and the Greek press – and even to some aspects of the Ottoman political elite – to be read again and again.³⁷⁵

It should be emphasized that the violence and injustices suffered due to the attitude of the Christian elements on the island are also continuous. On the eleventh day of the Hijri month, a Muslim named Hüseyin Ağa was killed by the local Christian people while he was on his way to his field. According to the stories, the attackers competed with each other in their actions against the body of the victim. Similarly, another Muslim went to a village to get food but was lynched. This person was saved from death by the intervention of some influential people, but was severely beaten. His life is still in danger due to the blows he received. Although the Muslim people have made various complaints to both the local authorities and the consulates regarding the events in question, no concrete results have been obtained from these attempts. Because in the current situation, concerns about the security of Muslims are not being taken seriously enough at either the administrative or diplomatic level. The perpetrators of the murders that took place last week have still not been caught, and these individuals do not even feel the need to hide their crimes and are walking around public areas and boasting about the acts they have committed. On the other hand, there have been some reports that the Athens Court of Appeals has rejected the files from the Cretan courts, but these claims have been sarcastically denied in the Cretan press. Diplomatic initiatives carried out by the consulates regarding this issue are limited to friendly advice to officials in the island administration, but such warnings are not heeded by their addressees. Furthermore, news that the word "Greece" has been removed from the stamps in circulation in Crete does not reflect the truth. In light of these developments, "*Muslims living in Crete are trying to continue their existence without even the most basic right, security of life*". Thus, it is possible to see in the news not only the tragedy but also the ineffectiveness of the state and the international community against this situation.³⁷⁶ In addition, an important irony and criticism regarding the political uncertainties of the period, the ambiguity of the Cretan issue in the international arena and the feeling of insecurity in the Ottoman

375 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 38: 6 October 1903, 2.

376 Sirat-ı Müstakim 57: 7 October 1909, 16.

domestic public opinion came again from Sırat-ı Müstakim newspaper. “*Come on, this time they have granted us the peninsula of Cretan, what a great treat!*”. The fact that Crete was presented as “*granted*” to the Ottomans is in fact a bitter criticism of an international process that took place outside the will of the Ottomans. The word “*grant*” is presented as a favor made to the Ottomans; however, it is stated that this is not a real gain, but rather a covert declaration of the weakness that the Ottomans have fallen into. The sentence “*I wonder if they have given a real gift? Can we be sure that the issue will not grow bigger issues in five months?*” is where this critical discourse meets with anxiety. In other words, while it is sensed that what was given is fake, there is also the fear that this “*gift*” will cause a new problem in five months.³⁷⁷

377 Sırat-ı Müstakim 64: 25 November 1909, 16.

CHAPTER 5

A PAINFUL PROCESS: CRETE'S EXIT FROM OTTOMAN SOVEREIGNTY

5.1. Internal Unrest and the Theriso Rebellion

By the summer of 1904, information had reached the Ottoman press that the Cretan people had been seriously dissatisfied with the current government's attitude, actions and general understanding of administration for the last three or four years. The elements that formed the basis of the complaints were both numerous and deep-rooted. So much so that, if one of these complaints had occurred during the Ottoman administration, it could have led to the dismissal of three governors, the constant unrest of Cretan fishermen, great confusion and harsh interventions in the command and control of military units. However, the fact that Prince George, who was at the head of the administration, was a member of the Greek royal dynasty and that this affiliation gave him certain privileges largely prevented the issues from being voiced in wider circles. Some circles, especially among the Greek population, were trying to display a more pro-Greek attitude than the Greeks themselves, and they were trying to reduce the people's complaints to mere rumors circulating in narrow circles; Similarly, they consider it a sufficient excuse to ensure that the consuls remain silent on these matters.³⁷⁸

However, it seems that the people's patience has finally reached the point of exhaustion; because the rumors that had previously only been whispered and passed from mouth to mouth have now created an explosion effect, and all kinds of truths have been voiced out loud. The reactions and visible movement that have been put forward are of a nature that will eliminate all doubts about the current administration's practices. A petition that the Christian Cretan population has prepared, openly criticizing and condemning the current oppressive administration and arbitrary practices, has been presented to the Prince by a committee of six people selected from among those who had previously held positions such as the captaincy. On the other hand, the Muslim population, who have suffered the most, are constantly faced with suspicion and discrimination, and are the target of all kinds of oppressive regimes, have not been involved in this petition in any way in order not to be wronged again. This information is conveyed by an editor from our editorial board who is staying in Piraeus to wait for the ferry. He also sent a passage from the section titled "*A Political Interview*" in Neon Asty, one of the respected newspapers in Greece, published on May 17, to the Şûrâ-yı Ümmet newspaper. This text contains information about the meeting between the Prince and the Cretan representatives and the content of the petition in question. The document in question states that the people of Crete were invited to negotiate and organize the new administrative method to be implemented on the island together with

³⁷⁸ "...But the privilege of being a member of the Greek royal dynasty, which the head of the administration enjoys, is accepted as a sufficient excuse for his ability to keep the cries of the Greeks, who are trying to act more like Greeks than the Greeks themselves, from mouth to ear, only in a narrow circle, and to ensure that the consuls remain silent on the subject." Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 58: 27 August 1904, 2.

the Prince, and that a constitution based on constitutionalism was prepared as the soundest form of government within this framework. However, it is stated that the most fundamental provisions of this constitution have not been implemented in practice for a long time, that freedom of the press in particular has been abolished, that licenses for publishing newspapers have not been granted, and that existing licenses have been deemed invalid by government decision. In addition, it has been stated that the local election authority has been taken from the people, and the electoral rights of mayors, deputies, and council members have been eliminated; It has been stated that the principle of responsible government, which is one of the fundamental principles of the constitution, has effectively been eliminated and that the current form of government has excluded competent and qualified individuals and brought into power incompetent individuals who are after their own personal interests. The document also states that the Prince is surrounded by such incompetent individuals and that due to the lack of freedom of the press, interventions in elections have become impossible to control by a responsible government. It has been stated that the current government lacks the ability to lead Crete on the path of progress and has established an oppressive administration by sowing seeds of discord and division among the people. In this context, it has been stated that individuals who lack either patriotic feelings or honor and dignity are being protected and brought to power, while competent individuals are being removed. It has been stated that no effort has been made to increase state revenues, that the taxes paid by the people with their sweat are being wasted, that these resources are being spent on protecting incompetent individuals, and that works of public benefit are being neglected. It was stated that the current government only looks after its own interests, and therefore, apart from the assistance received from the Italian “Carabinieri” for about five and a half years, no attempt has been made to reform the police organization and no importance has been given to the integration of local police officers into the system. Finally, it was stated that the issue of foreign trade and compensation for damage, which could have enabled the revitalization of the island, which is in financial difficulty, has been postponed for three years without justification, and that all of these issues have been brought to the attention of the Prince.³⁷⁹

In the introduction of the certificate, it was stated that the current situation had emerged against the will of the Cretan people. Prince George responded harshly to this statement, stating that he had achieved the freedom of the people himself, that this situation had not been achieved through the struggle of the people, an armed victory, or as a result of the war between Greece and the Ottomans, but rather through his own personal efforts and relations with the Russian Tsar. In fact, to emphasize these words, he beat his chest and said, “If

379 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 58: 27 August 1904, 2.

it were not for me, you would not be free today. For this, you must bow your head.” It was emphasized that this interview took place not in a coffeehouse or a tavern, but in a high-ranking state residence, in the presence of a king, representatives of the four great powers, and the people’s representatives, thus drawing attention to the gravity of the event. It was explained that Crete was being dragged into a more severe tyranny than the privileged and semi-independent form of government it had enjoyed during the Ottoman period, and that this situation caused the people to face a deeper oppressive regime in a process that they had entered with the hope of freedom. The free language of expression used by the Cretan deputies in response to this situation is being praised; it is hoped that such outspokenness will become a freedom of expression that Kurdish Muslims can also enjoy. In other news received regarding Crete, it is reported that two people with significant influence on the island — “*Malidreto*”, known as a scholar, and “*Yanar*”, who has an influential position in Crete and even in England — led by a person named “*Receb Olisi*” sent a petition to Prince George’s brother, Prince Nikola. This petition stated that Prince George was inadequate in running government affairs and demanded that he be removed from office and Prince Nikola be appointed in his place. However, this initiative was learned of by the Russian representative George and the two men mentioned were arrested and tried, with Yanar being sentenced to three years in prison, and Malidreto to fifteen months in prison. These arrests increased support for the anti-Prince “*Vehni Zehlo*” group; In fact, a group of eighteen people consisting of Malidreto’s relatives took up arms, took down the Cretan flag on a municipality building and hung a Greek flag in its place, and retreated to the mountains chanting “Long Live Annexation!” Despite being followed, these people managed to escape to Greece on a boat. In light of these developments, it is stated that the supporters of Venizelos who oppose the administration of Prince George are also growing stronger and are preparing for a general uprising in Crete. However, in order not to be accused of “*treason*” by Greece, these groups are shaping their activities by acting like the group mentioned above. On the other hand, if the supporters of Venizelos aim to disturb the peace of Crete and to make the Greek administration seem weak and inadequate in the eyes of Europe, especially through massacres targeting the Muslim population, it is likely that innocent Muslim blood will be shed this time as before. It is reported that some circles are planning to form a delegation to apply to the consulates of the major powers and demand strong guarantees against this possibility.³⁸⁰

In Crete, political conflicts between Eleftherios Venizelos and Prince Georgios reached their peak in 1905. Venizelos argued that if Prince Georgios continued to serve as high commissioner on the island, the unification of Crete

380 Şûrâ-yı Ümmet 58: 27 August 1904, 3.

with Greece would be impossible. In this tense environment in Crete, between 10 and 23 March 1905, around 400 armed rebels led by Konstantinos Fumi, Konstantinos Manos and Eleftherios Venizelos gathered in the Therisso region of Crete to start a resistance against Prince Georgios. The aim of this rebellion, as always, was to achieve the unification of Crete and Greece. On 25 March 1905, a declaration was written by Eleftherios Venizelos, clearly stating the aim of the rebellion and the reaction against Prince Georgios, with various claims.³⁸¹ From the beginning, the Prince was introduced as the representative of the national cause. However, it was stated that this definition was wrong. It was stated that Crete did not need representatives of the national cause, and that what it really needed to represent was Crete's struggle. While the Prince was accepted as a high commissioner, it was thought that he would contribute to the unification of Crete and Greece. However, it was emphasized that this unification goal had taken a long time for Crete and had become both a heavy and impossible burden to bear. It was stated that the expected leader had not emerged and that in order to gain freedom, it was necessary to act like a leader. With these statements, it was expressed that the gains achieved with the support of European states in previous rebellions were not enough and that the Prince did not struggle enough for Crete to unite with Greece. The main aim of all the rebellions in Crete was to unite with Greece. However, the Prince's attitude and cowardice as high commissioner on the island prevented the unification goal from being achieved. In a letter he wrote to Georgios Theotokas, who would become Prime Minister of Greece in 1903-1904 and 1905-1909, Eleftherios Venizelos summarized the period and stated that the Prince was not making enough efforts for the national cause. He also stated that those who shared his views were subjected to great pressure, which left no other solution than rebellion. Venizelos advocated the unification of Crete with Greece from the very beginning and adopted the idea of "Enosi" (unification) within the framework of the national program as of April 1901. The high commissioner preferred to adopt a form of government in line with his own sovereignty, fearing international reactions. Although it was considered too early for unification according to the Prince, according to Venizelos and his supporters, the unification of an autonomous Crete with Greece was only a matter of time.³⁸² In the context of the current conditions, in order to restore order on the island after the Tiriso Revolution, the note given by the patronizing powers included a commitment to gradually withdraw the occupying forces from the island after establishing a temporary military police force. However, despite the sincere efforts made to implement this obligation, when the serious attacks, acts of violence and systematic oppression against the Muslim population during the previous Theriso Rebellion are taken into

³⁸¹ Deterakis, 1994, 53; Eser, 2017, 28.

³⁸² Eser, 2017, 29.

consideration, it is clear how serious the damage that could be caused by a large-scale rebellion that is expected to occur this time could be.³⁸³

Prince George issued a statement to the people of Crete expressing his deep sorrow for the revolutionary movement. Expressing his sorrow for the wounding of two gendarmes, the Prince stressed that the instigators of the movement were misleading the people and that they should remain calm. The Prince added that the national interests of the island would be harmed by such an illegal action, stating that it would have very bad consequences for the country. After the rebels in Therisso declared themselves the Provisional National Assembly, M. Papayannakis, who was elected President of the Assembly, issued a statement to the foreign consuls. In this statement, he stated that the Cretan people were under almost absolutist rule and that their representatives had gathered in a general assembly for the purpose of declaring the union of Crete with Greece. The statement thanked the powers for the actions taken in the past and asked them not to continue the current regime, taking into account the needs of civilization. In addition, it was emphasized in the declaration that the entirety of Crete was declared to be annexed to Greece and that this decision covered the remaining areas except for the areas occupied by international troops in 1897. Along with these developments, it was reported that new Cretan gendarmerie reinforcements arrived from eastern Crete and that these forces were carried by the Russian cruiser *Khrabry*. In addition, the British cruiser *Lancaster* arrived in Suda Bay from Malta.³⁸⁴ On 11 April, it was reported from Chania that Canadian rebels had set up a trap for the gendarmes near the village of Agion Miron. The gendarmes were surrounded, some shots were fired but no one was injured. While passing through the village of Tylissos, the rebels mistreated the mayor of the village. Afterwards, they left the British sector and the gendarmerie regained control of all the outposts. Russian torpedo boats “Prositelno”, “Prozorlivy” and No. 213 are cruising along the coast guarding the ballot boxes that the gendarmes are carrying from Georgioupolis to Souda.³⁸⁵

The rebellion spread throughout the island in a very short time. Because after the previous rebellions and especially the events of Candia, the Ottoman soldiers on the island withdrew from the island in November 1898. Only a small detachment tasked with protecting the Ottoman flags was left in Chania. This situation provided a great advantage to the rebels and gave them the freedom to act as they wished. The European states were neither completely indifferent to the events nor actively involved, aiming to achieve a result in their own interests. For this reason, they were trying to understand the reaction of the Ottoman State. However, in line with the principle of the right of peoples to determine their own future, the Italian and French gendarmes

383 Balkan 456: 30 May 1908, 3.

384 London Evening Standard, 28 March 1905, 7; Daily News (London), 28 March 1905, 7.

385 Globe, 11 April 1905, 7.

on the island did not intervene against the rebels under the leadership of their commanders. French commander Loubanski and France in particular thought that the prince's high commissionership would not provide any benefit. For this reason, sympathy for Eleftherios Venizelos had developed in the gendarmerie units on the island.³⁸⁶ On April 20, according to reports from Chania, the Cretan Assembly was officially opened by Prince George. International soldiers and the Cretan Gendarmerie were activated early in the morning and a large crowd appeared. In his opening speech, Prince George explained the steps taken with the Powers for the unification of the island with Greece, but noted that the Powers had not responded positively to the wishes of the people. He accused the Therisso rebels of trying to impose their views on the Powers by armed force. "*With armed rebellions,*" the Prince said, "*tyrants can be mobilized, but not useful people,*" adding that he would support all reforms presented to him by legal means. The government will present to the Assembly drafts containing amendments to certain administrative laws for economic purposes and will invite members of parliament to make proposals. After Prince George left the Assembly to enthusiastic applause, the President of the Assembly, M. Mandakas, read the following declaration: "*In the name of Almighty God, the Assembly of Crete unanimously accepts and declares the union of Crete with Greece; Crete will be an inseparable part of the Greek Empire under the constitutional sovereignty of King George I of Greece for all time.*" The Assembly requested the Prince to communicate this decision to the Powers and also decided to go to the consulates with the Bureau of the Assembly, the deputies and the public to deliver the decision to the consuls. The deputies swore an oath of allegiance to the Greek Constitution.³⁸⁷

The leader of the opposition forces, Eleftherios Venizelos, preferred to maintain contact with the consuls of the European states, as he foresaw that Prince Georgios, the high commissioner of Crete, would not give up easily. While on the one hand he was working towards the goal of unification with Greece, on the other hand he was drawing attention to the strategic importance of removing the Prince from the island. These diplomatic contacts continued until November 1905 and eventually resulted in the European powers withdrawing their support from Prince Georgios, who defended the existing order, and approaching the position of Venizelos, who advocated the integration of the island with Greece. Negotiations between Venizelos and the European representatives continued until November 1905, and the last critical meeting was held on November 15, 1905 in the Murnion region of Crete. As a result, Venizelos was only able to achieve the first of the two goals he had been aiming for since the beginning of the rebellion (the removal of Prince Georgios from

³⁸⁶ Eser, 2017, 29-30.

³⁸⁷ Morning Post, 21 April 1905, 4; Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 21 April 1905, 7; Birmingham Daily Gazette, 21 April 1905, 5.

office and unification with Greece). In line with the decision of the European states, Prince Georgios resigned from his post as high commissioner of Crete and left the island, and after this development, Venizelos rose to the position of the most influential political figure in Crete.³⁸⁸

During the Therisso rebellion, Eleftherios Venizelos founded the Therisso newspaper in order to expand the movement and provide financial support. This newspaper served as the official mouthpiece of the rebels during and after the rebellion. The first issue of the newspaper, published on 24 June 1905, clearly stated the reason and goals of the rebellion. Crete had lived under oppression for nearly four centuries and now longed for its freedom. When Prince George arrived on the island as High Commissioner, he was greeted with great enthusiasm by all the Cretan people. Despite the expectation of his relatives for the island to be integrated with Greece, he himself initially opposed this integration. The European powers, however, are concerned that similar demands may arise in the Balkans. However, the situation in Crete is not the same as that of any other Balkan state. Although Crete has been freed from the domination of the great powers, it is currently suffering from a familiar face: the High Commissioner Prince George, the son of the King of Greece, who is of his own blood.³⁸⁹

The 1905 Therisso rebellion, although it did not achieve all of its goals, did, as always, provide significant progress towards the unification of the island with Greece. The son of the Greek King and High Commissioner of Crete, Prince Georgios, who was reluctant to unify Greece with Crete, resigned and left the island in September 1906. After Prince Georgios left office, the Ottoman Empire could not play a decisive role in the discussions on who would be appointed as High Commissioner in Crete, and the process was largely shaped by the initiative of non-Ottoman actors. In line with the joint decision of the European great powers, Alexander Zaimis, a former prime minister of Greece, was appointed High Commissioner to the island of Crete. Zaimis arrived on the island on September 18, 1906 to officially assume this duty.³⁹⁰ When the process is evaluated from the Greek perspective, it is understood that the plans to establish complete control over Crete were carried out quietly. The Therisso rebellion had expanded and become uncontrollable due to both the inadequacy of the island's local security forces and the collaboration of some security forces with the rebels. Therefore, Greece, relying on its diplomatic relations with Europe, proposed in 1906 that officers from the Greek army be included in the Cretan gendarmerie organization and that these officers assume command of the Cretan Gendarmerie. This Greek proposal was accepted by the European

388 Eser, 2017, 30

389 Eser, 2017, 30-31.

390 Adıyeke, 2000, 227; Eser, 2017, 31.

States. Despite all the objections of the Ottoman Empire, 23 Officers and 52 Sergeants from Greece came to Crete in November 1907 and took control of the Cretan Gendarmerie. On the other hand, the European powers announced that they would withdraw all their forces from the island by 1908 and also committed to lending the Cretan Government 9,300,000 French Francs.³⁹¹

The 1905 Therisso rebellion was the final stage before Crete united with Greece. After this date, the Cretan government would continuously attempt to declare its union with Greece, but the international political environment would not allow it until the end of the Balkan Wars. When we consider Eleftherios Venizelos, the Therisso rebellion elevated him from being just a well-known politician to a national hero fighting for Hellenic interests, and increased his fame not only in Crete but also throughout Greece. The recognition he gained thanks to this rebellion made him the most sought-after figure in Greek political life during the Gudi military movement of 1909. When the military unit was looking for a new prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, who had gained great fame with the Therisso rebellion, was one of the first names that came to mind. As of 1908, the Cretan administration had adopted an autonomous stance. On October 6, 1908, the Cretan Assembly unilaterally declared its union with Greece. The Ottoman Empire reacted quickly to this unilateral union and organized protest meetings all over the country (in Kosovo, Thessaloniki, Edirne, Bursa, Kastamonu and many other cities). Crete's demand for union with Greece was heavily condemned in these meetings. The first protest meetings started towards the end of 1908. The participation of groups supporting the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy and acting within the framework of the ideal of "*Ottomanism*" was particularly striking in these first demonstrations. Boycotts of Greek goods continued until the Turkish-Italian war that began in October 1911. Various Greek sources present Crete's declaration of union with Greece as a reaction to the Young Turk movement. Although there are attempts to legitimize this declaration by referring to the nationalist tendencies of the Union and Progress, this view is not based on solid foundations in many respects. First, when the Second Constitutional Monarchy was declared, the slogan "*freedom, equality, fraternity*" was adopted throughout the country. A particularly striking point is that in many cities, especially Istanbul, Greek was also included alongside Turkish in posters. It seems logically inconsistent that the Second Constitutional Era, which was declared with the aim of uniting all Ottoman citizens under one roof, would have a negative reaction in Crete. On the other hand, those who emphasize the nationalist discourse of the Union and Progress actually ignore the efforts of this movement to protect and implement the idea of Ottoman unity until the end of the Balkan Wars.³⁹²

391 Sancaktar, 2012, 110-14; Salahi, 1976, 90; Eser, 2017, 31-32.

392 Adıyeke, 1991, 51-52; Eser, 2017, 32-33.

In addition, the developments experienced on the island after the Second Constitutional Era have caused serious concerns in terms of social peace on the island, according to the public. The events that have intensified particularly in the city of Rethymno indicate a deepening crisis environment within the framework of systematic violence, injustice and social exclusion practices against the Muslim population. The social and economic boycott carried out by the non-Muslim population against Muslims, although weakened for a while, has regained strength; shopping from Muslims has been strictly prohibited and serious sanctions have been brought to the agenda for those who do not comply with this prohibition. Such arbitrary and legally unfounded boycott attempts implemented by one of the two social segments living together within the framework of a common geographical and political affiliation against the other not only lead to individual rights violations, but also emerge as a structural problem that threatens social integration on the island. The presence of Cretan Muslims is of strategic importance both in terms of the political and legal interests of the Ottoman State in the region and the representation of Islamic identity. *“To die for one’s homeland, to sacrifice one’s family and all one’s being; no Cretan Muslim would turn away from this, since it is appropriate for the altruistic and generous. However, time has not yet given birth to a hero who would fight against hunger.”* Although this community has historically displayed a resilient and patient profile, it should not be overlooked that their capacity to endure long-term conditions of poverty and systematic threats to religious and national values are limited. For Cretan Muslims, economic devastation and deprivation of basic vital needs can overshadow even the lofty ideals that would make people willing to die in war. In this context, the boycott implemented by the Greek community is evaluated as a means of pressure that could cause the Muslim population to emigrate; therefore, the Ottoman central administration’s taking the necessary diplomatic and legal initiatives against these developments is seen as a vital step in terms of both ensuring the security of Muslims in the region and consolidating Ottoman sovereignty.³⁹³ In addition to the boycott news, another news shared on Sirat-ı Müstakim is an example of political discourse that strongly reflects the repercussions of the Cretan Question in Ottoman public opinion and the Ottomans’ increasing distrust of Greece. The idea that the Cretan Christian people are endangering their own future with the manipulative propaganda of Greek nationalism is expressed; the disappointment they experience when the military and political support they expect from Greece does not come true is depicted in a symbolic scene by comparing it to the authority of the Ottoman sultan. In this narrative, while emphasizing that Ottoman sovereignty is the legitimate power that brings stability and security, it is argued that Greece’s actions are described with the

393 Sirat-ı Müstakim 88: 12 May 1910, 19.

concepts of “*intrigue*” and “*treason*” and that it exhibits an attitude contrary to international diplomatic norms. While the Greek government makes official declarations that it recognizes Ottoman sovereignty on the one hand, its covert and indirect moves to establish de facto control over Crete on the other hand (such as the appointment of postal officials, the oath-taking of Cretan Assembly members to the Greek King, and the acceptance of Cretan deputies to the Greek Parliament) are presented as a clear contradiction. This situation is considered a kind of diplomatic hypocrisy and it is stated that the Sublime Porte cannot be deceived by such “*intrigues*”. “*Even if the daring to interfere with the sovereign rights of the direct owner and legitimate ruler of Crete was done as a reward or hush money to the İttihad-ı Zabitan (Union of Zabitan) and this society was disbanded thanks to this, we believe that such intrigue confections that damage the political honor of Greece cannot be easily digested in the stomach of today’s Sublime Porte.*” In particular, the references made to domestic political actors of the period such as the “*Union of Zabitan*” show that these attempts of Greece were aimed not only at foreign policy but also at influencing Ottoman domestic politics. In addition, a message is given here about the resistance shown by the Ottomans against Greece and that they will meet this not only with an economic boycott but also with direct military and diplomatic means. The final section of the report presents the three-stage reaction strategy that the Ottoman public and the state were considering implementing against Greece: economic boycott, preparation for the use of coercive force, and intervention by direct order from the central authority. These options show that the Ottoman state was now prepared to produce active responses when necessary, not just through diplomatic means, and was determined to defend its own sovereign rights.³⁹⁴

The Yellow Book on Cretan affairs, published in Paris on 14 December, contains documents from 24 August 1904 to 26 November 1903. The first document deals with the exchange of notes between various ambassadors with the aim of establishing a common programme on the Cretan issue. The circular note sent by M. Delcassé on 18 March approves Prince George’s request for an international military contingent to support the Cretan gendarmerie. The document of 3 April 1905 contains the final text of the collective note sent to Prince George. On 5 April 1905, M. Maurouard draws attention to a new appeal made by Prince George to the Powers on the grounds of the spread of the rebellion. On 14 April, M. Delcassé states that the French Ambassador in Rome, M. Barrère, forwarded to Count Tornielli the proposal that the Powers should hold a new conference in Rome. Several documents deal with the occupation of Creta by international troops. On May 11, M. Cambon informed M. Delcassé of the attitude of the British Government. The documents that follow deal with

394 Sırat-ı Müstakim 87: 5 May 1910, 15.

the sending of ships to the coast of Crete and the International Committee of Inquiry sent there. On November 3, M. Maurouard informed the Consuls of the measures taken to put an end to the rebellion, and on November 17, an agreement was reached between the Consuls and the leaders of the rebellion on the terms of peace. On November 26, M. Maurouard announced that the rebellion had ended, with the rebels surrendering their arms and ammunition and a general amnesty for political crimes committed in connection with the rebellion.³⁹⁵

Regarding the reforms in Crete, the Great Powers adopted various measures such as the reorganization of the Cretan gendarmerie and the establishment of a militia with local elements. These reforms included economic arrangements such as the withdrawal of international troops from the island and the implementation of the Greek Finance Commission on the island. It was also decided to grant equal rights to Christians and Muslims. These measures emphasized that the people should focus on the establishment of order and stability in order to achieve national goals. However, the replacement of Italian officers by Greek officers in particular caused concern among the Muslim population. During this period, after the Cretan National Assembly decided to unite with Greece, the international powers stated that changing the political status of the island was not possible under the current conditions.³⁹⁶

According to another report, an agreement is expected to be reached on a constitutional amendment in Crete that will bring the island's annexation to Greece closer. Although Prince George's threats to resign and the Cretan people's demands for annexation to Greece continue, the Great Powers plan to accept the establishment of a gendarmerie force led by Greek officers on the island. This step will increase Greek influence and end the tensions with foreign powers that have been constantly experienced on the island. In addition, Prince George is expected to leave his post as Governor General (High Commissioner), but it has been stated that a Greek official should be appointed in his place in order not to harm the Greek cause. The appointment of a new governor will require approval from the Ottoman Empire, and this process will put significant pressure on Istanbul. The new arrangement will lead to a situation where the island will be *de facto* affiliated with Greece, but will give the impression that Ottoman influence continues.³⁹⁷ The Great Powers, in line with the proposals of their delegates, considered it possible to extend the autonomy of Crete and proposed certain reforms. These proposals included the reorganization of the Cretan gendarmerie, the establishment of a militia force consisting of Cretan and Greek elements, the withdrawal of international troops (when the gendarmerie and militia were sufficient to maintain order

³⁹⁵ Aydın, 2008, 15-16; Morning Post, 15 December 1905, 8

³⁹⁶ Globe, 26 July 1906, 9

³⁹⁷ Globe, 26 July 1906, 1.

on the island), the establishment of equal rights for Christians and Muslims, and, in particular, equality in appointments to public offices. These reforms aimed to bring more local elements into the administration of the island and to significantly transform the existing political structure.³⁹⁸

The visit of King George I of Greece to Rome in 1905 is important in terms of the diplomatic solution process of the Cretan issue. It is stated that the decisions regarding the status of Crete were discussed in Rome by the four protective powers, Britain, France, Russia and Italy. It is understood that the main purpose of King George's visit was to express his demand for the unification of the island with Greece. However, it is reported that the Italian public opinion was distant from this unification and that the harsh style of the King's son, Prince George, in the past had a negative impression on diplomatic circles. These conditions, which do not make the task of the new High Commissioner M. Zaïmes easier, show that the Cretan issue is still complex and unresolved. According to the news, these developments show that international intervention in Crete has begun to end and that local elements are taking steps towards institutional autonomy.³⁹⁹

Following the Therrisso Revolt in 1905, the Cretan Greeks took advantage of every opportunity to annex the island to Greece. In line with this, the Cretan Chamber of Deputies convened in 1906, despite the opposition of the representatives of the four major powers (England, France, Italy and Russia), and officially declared that Crete had been annexed to Greece. The Assembly's statement on the annexation was as follows: "*Today, Crete has been annexed to Greece, and in accordance with the wishes of the people, the cruelty and hardships it has been subjected to for a long time have come to an end. The Assembly will not take any action until this decision comes into effect. In any case, the major powers that were in a position of protection have also consented to the issue being concluded in this way and have tolerated the developments.*" As can be understood from this declaration, the Cretan Assembly acted independently of international balances, and declared the annexation decision, considering itself the authority to determine the political future of the island. However, this declaration should be considered as a symbolic step aimed at the de facto unification of the island with Greece rather than changing the legal status of Crete, because the international conjuncture of the period made it difficult for such unilateral declarations to gain legitimacy and required the explicit consent of the major powers in order for such declarations to have permanent results.⁴⁰⁰ The issue of the annexation of Crete to Greece was not limited to the local dynamics of the island, but was also closely related to the instability in the Balkans. During this period, not only Crete but also Macedonia and its

398 Manchester Courier, 27 July 1906, 7; Nottingham Evening Post, 27 July 1906, 5

399 Morning Post, 8 November 1906, 7; Evening Mail, 28 November 1906, 2

400 Balkan 4: 26 July 1906, 4.

surroundings were in serious instability due to the activities of Greek gangs. The allegations that Greece supported Greek gangs in Macedonia threatened the Ottoman dominance in the region and also attracted the attention of the great powers. For this reason, although the Great Powers did not oppose the idea of the annexation of Crete to Greece in principle, they made their consent to this annexation conditional on the liquidation of the Greek gangs in Macedonia. While this attitude of the great powers can be interpreted as an effort to keep the developments regarding the Cretan issue within a limited framework, it can also be evaluated as part of a broader intervention strategy regarding the general security environment in the Balkans.⁴⁰¹ The annexation decision in question caused a serious crisis both legally and politically, as it was taken under the supervision of the great powers and in a region where the Ottoman Empire was still legally dominant. The Sublime Porte immediately protested this unilateral decision and declared that the decision was invalid in the eyes of international law. During this period, not only Crete but also the Balkan region, especially Macedonia, was the scene of intense activities by Greek gangs. The increasing activities of the Greek gangs not only led to regional instability, but also forced the Ottoman administration to take action against the Greek Patriarchate, which was considered to indirectly support these movements. The Sublime Porte warned the Greek Patriarchate in order to prevent elements encouraging Greek gangs; it expressed through diplomatic channels that the patriarchate should distance itself from these activities.⁴⁰²

After the Bulgarians gained their independence, one of the first steps they took to strengthen their national identity was to separate their church from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. This development constituted a significant blow to the historical and religious influence of the Greek spiritual circles in particular; therefore, this initiative of the Bulgarians created serious discontent among the Greeks. From this date onwards, the Greek elements did not refrain from expressing verbal and physical opposition against the Bulgarians whenever they found the opportunity in every geography they were present. In recent years, it has been observed that this rivalry and hostility has become increasingly violent. The Palikarya gangs, especially those formed in Athens, have now directed the acts of violence and intimidation they had previously carried out against the Muslim population in Crete, against the Bulgarian population living in Macedonia. These gangs caused significant damage in Macedonia and caused the Greek-Bulgarian ethnic rivalry in the region to reach the level of an armed conflict.⁴⁰³ According to a report in the Balkan newspaper, upon the temporary stance of the Great Powers that they would consent to the resolution of the Cretan issue in line with the wishes of the people on the island,

401 Balkan 5: 28 July 1906, 4.

402 Balkan 6: 29 July 1906, 3.

403 Balkan 8: 31 July 1906, 1.

the Council of Ministers in Greece convened an extraordinary meeting under the chairmanship of the King. News from Athens indicates that since Greece showed that the direct annexation of Crete would not be accepted, it was decided to prepare a joint note and submit it to the Great Powers in order to ensure that at least the military units belonging to the Great Powers on the island would be withdrawn and Greek military forces would be deployed in their place. On the other hand, the fact that no official approval has yet been received from the Great Powers regarding the annexation of Crete to Greece has led to rumors that the island's Prince George is considering resigning. However, concerns have been expressed that if the Prince resigns and a person from a European dynasty is appointed in his place, the Cretan elements will strongly oppose this development and will probably rebel.⁴⁰⁴

In some comments in the Ottoman press, the attitude of the Greek community towards political demands under Ottoman rule was evaluated as ambivalent. According to these comments, it was claimed that in the recent violent incidents in Crete, thousands of Muslims were massacred by Greek gangs, and even babies in their cradle were attacked. During this process, the fact that the Greeks did not make any demands for the punishment of those responsible for these attacks was criticized. Today, it is still stated that the Ottoman flag is being insulted in Crete and that the Muslim people are suffering serious victimization in the face of such attacks; despite this, the expectation of the protection of the Greeks in Bulgaria from the Ottoman administration is evaluated as a contradictory attitude.⁴⁰⁵

There is concern that the Christian elements in Crete are preparing for a massacre of the Muslim population, who have been deprived of their means of defense. The encouraging publications in this direction by some Greek newspapers are particularly noteworthy. In this context, it is recalled that the newspaper "Kehri Ezmine" published that the massacre of the Cretan Turks was a necessity, and that an explicit call to this effect was included in the same newspaper last year, and that the text in question was translated and published by an Ottoman newspaper. It is reported that the Greek newspaper "Omoniya" published in Egypt also wrote provocative articles against Muslims by associating the Cretan Turks with rebellious elements, and that this publication continues to this day. Although the Greek newspapers in Crete cannot directly publish articles against Muslims because they are under control, it is stated that they continue to use an aggressive language towards Muslims indirectly. It has been stated that some of the Christian population in Crete are trying to change the international status in force on the island, and that they are openly threatening Muslims if Prince Georgios withdraws from the island and a

404 Balkan 9: 1 August 1906, 3.

405 Balkan 18: 18 August 1906, 3.

foreign prince is appointed in his place. It has been reported that the consuls of the great powers in Chania are trying to dissuade the local council officials from the idea of annexation and are warning them that the current conditions are not suitable for annexation to Greece. However, it has been reported that the head of the Christian council of Crete reacted harshly to these warnings, is absolutely against giving equal rights to Muslims on the island and defends the continuation of the current administration. These statements of the head of the council caused serious concerns in the Ottoman public opinion about the future of the Muslims on the island. The letter states that the Christian elements in Crete are preparing for a possible mass attack on the Muslims and that these preparations are being carried out openly or secretly. It is stated that the Muslims are being left defenseless and are being made targets, and that the threat is put forward that the Greeks living in Ottoman lands could be retaliated in the same way if such a massacre takes place. It is also stated that Russia and the Greek communities are aware that they do not have the power to annex the Muslim elements of Crete, but they continue to target them with various accusations and propaganda, with the aim of either massacring them or forcing them to emigrate.⁴⁰⁶

A news report from the Balkan newspaper dated September 30, 1906 also summarizes the last years of the situation in Crete. Accordingly, the island of Crete, one of the most important trade centers in the Eastern Mediterranean, is also one of the largest islands in the Greek Sea in terms of history and strategy. Crete's withdrawal from Ottoman rule took place approximately ten years ago under the leadership of the famous Vasos, known as the leader of the Greek committees; it is claimed that around thirty to forty thousand Cretan Muslims lost their lives in this process. Then, through warships sent by major European states, the Greek Prince George was appointed as the international commissioner to Crete. With Prince George's arrival in Crete, a constitutional form of government was adopted on the island and administrative independence was declared. It was argued that this new administration meant freedom and prosperity for the Greek population, who had previously claimed that they were under "Turkish oppression". However, this administration created a serious security vulnerability for the Muslims; many Muslims were killed or attacked on the island every day without the intervention of public authorities. Despite this administrative autonomy, the Cretan Greeks continued to demand annexation by Greece. In the Greek public opinion, this process turned into great idealism for the capture of not only Crete but also Thessaloniki, Monastir and even Istanbul. In line with these dreams, the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War broke out. With the military successes it demonstrated in the first days of the war, the Ottoman army advanced to the Thessaly region and quickly captured

406 Tuna 278: 18 August 1906, 2-3.

places such as Minona and Domeke. While the Ottoman military force was heading towards Athens, a serious atmosphere of fear and panic was created on the Greek side, which had acted with great self-confidence at the beginning of the war. However, this military success could not be converted into a diplomatic gain. Although the Ottoman army took control of all of Thessaly, at the end of the war, it was forced to retreat as a result of international pressure and effectively give up its sovereignty over Crete. Although this situation showed that the Ottoman military power was still strong, it revealed that the political will was not at a level to support this power. In the post-war period, with the active intervention of Russia, the Greek Prince George was sent to Crete by Athens as a high commissioner. In this way, although the island was not legally annexed to Greece, it was *de facto* under Greek influence. The fact that a Greek prince was appointed to the head of the semi-independent administration established in Crete *de facto* confirmed the end of Ottoman rule on the island.⁴⁰⁷

The appointment of George, a Greek prince, as commissioner to the administrative autonomy system established in Crete, was a consolation and encouragement for those circles that desired Crete to join Greece. This appointment indirectly conveyed the message of “be patient a little longer, annexation is near.” Indeed, during Prince George’s eight-year term as commissioner in Crete, the political demands and exuberant attitudes of the Greeks on the island continued, and no decrease was observed in their desires and activities towards annexation to Greece. The main goal of the Cretan Greeks was for the European states to recognize the official annexation of the island to Greece. Prince George submitted his resignation for the third time in this process. This resignation should essentially be evaluated as a means of pressuring the European states to take the final step. However, in the current conjuncture, the European states have not yet deemed the official annexation of Crete to Greece appropriate in terms of their own political interests. Instead, in order not to completely disappoint the public and to prevent social unrest, another Greek prince was appointed as commissioner instead of Prince George. However, it is seen that such appointments are not enough to meet the expectations of the Greeks of Crete. Because of the constant postponement of the annexation by Europe, disappointment and internal debates have emerged on the island. The Greeks of Crete see the island as an inseparable part of Greece, while Europe, on the other hand, is delaying the process within the framework of different expectations and interests. It is known that each of the four major powers that undertake the protection of the island (England, France, Russia, Italy) has different ambitions for Crete. The current situation of Crete is an extremely important example for the Ottoman Empire. Because the official acceptance of the annexation of the island to Greece would mean not only a

407 Balkan 52: 30 September 1906, 1; Adıyeke, 1991, 51.

loss of territory, but also the approval of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the international level. However, Europe has not yet reached an agreement on this point. For this reason, the major powers prefer to maintain the current status quo and gain time. The historical past and current political situation of Crete constitute an exemplary example for the future of the Ottoman State. In the face of the tendencies of Europe and Russia to de facto connect Crete to Greece, it became necessary to establish a more determined and effective political administration in Istanbul. Such an administration, which will secure the future of the state, must be capable of learning from the mistakes of the past, analyzing current developments well and taking solid steps for the future. Otherwise, similar losses are inevitable. Indeed, Crete has taken its place on the stage of history as a striking example of such a lack of policy.⁴⁰⁸

After the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, the demands of the Cretan Assembly and the Greek nationalists on the island for unification with Greece caused serious discomfort in the Ottoman public and political circles. The Cretan issue was brought back to the forefront of the Ottoman agenda as of June 1909 and became a development followed on the front page of the press. The development that ignited this process was the decision of the protectorate states, which were responsible for maintaining the status quo on the island, to withdraw their military units from Crete. Although the Ottoman Empire was informed in a note dated July 13, 1909 that the sultan's rights of approval and sovereignty would be preserved despite the process of troop withdrawal, the Greek flag was raised at the entrance to the Castle of Chania on August 4, shortly after the withdrawal process. According to news in the press, it was stated that Greek officers also played a direct role in this initiative. The Ottoman government considered the incident in question as a clear violation of the status quo and protested this situation harshly through official channels. In this context, diplomatic contacts were initiated both with the protectorates and directly with the Greek government to lower the flag and recall the Greek officers on the island. These developments were not limited to diplomatic matters only, but also caused great indignation in the Ottoman public opinion. News that the Muslim population of Crete had begun to leave the island and the activities of the Greek bandits caused intense excitement and unrest, especially in the Macedonian provinces. The fact that calls for war against Greece began to be voiced among the public is remarkable in terms of showing the extent of these reactions. In his articles, Hüseyin Cahit emphasized that this agitation in the Ottoman public opinion should be taken seriously; he stated that the Cretan issue was perceived as the most important issue among the public in news reports from all over the country. Comments in the press pointed to Greece as the main responsible for the Cretan crisis; especially after July 27, information

408 Balkan 52: 30 September 1906, 2; Adıyeke, 1991, 52.

was shared with the public that Greek elements had directly played a role in disrupting the status quo on the island. In line with this information, the incident of hoisting the Greek flag on Chania Castle was perceived by the Ottoman public not only as a diplomatic violation but also as an attack on national honor, and it turned into an explosion of social anger towards Greece.⁴⁰⁹

The developments that have taken place in the Balkans in recent years indicate that the political disintegration in the regions under the rule of the Ottoman Empire is accelerating. The first step in this process was taken with the declaration of independence of Bulgaria a short time ago. Then, the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary was carried out, and expectations that these developments would be limited to these regions were soon disappointed. Because soon after, agencies reported that the Christian population of the island of Crete had also declared that it had joined Greece. The attempt to annex Crete to Greece is not a new situation. Because the Christian population of the island had expressed similar demands on various occasions since 1866; however, they have not been able to achieve these goals to date. The main reason for this is that the island, due to its geographical location and strategic importance, has attracted the attention of not only the Ottoman Empire but also other major powers and has been evaluated in terms of various interests. Every state that wanted to be influential in the Eastern Mediterranean closely followed the developments on Crete and shaped its own goals regarding this region. For this reason, since Crete effectively left the Ottoman administration in 1889 and began to be governed under the auspices of four major powers (England, France, Russia, Italy), the demands for annexation that were voiced on the island many times were not concluded due to conflicts of interest among these states. In other words, the long years of turmoil in Crete and its eventual exit from Ottoman rule were not only influenced by the demands of local elements but also by the calculations of major powers regarding this region. Although the latest news indicated that the Christians of Crete had declared annexation to Greece, the Greek government immediately took action to explain the situation to the Sublime Porte and, in order to avoid possible misunderstandings, stated that they had nothing to do with the declaration in question. The Greek government particularly emphasized that this movement was the result of the people's own will, that the government had not taken any initiative in this direction, and that no troops had been sent to the island. On the other hand, the commander of the foreign military units currently in Crete gave the order to lower the Greek flag, and the consuls serving on the island made an official protest to Commissioner Zaimis against these developments. These developments once again show that the Cretan issue should be evaluated not only in the context of Ottoman-Greek

409 Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr 67: 6 August 1909, 2; Tanin 333: 6 August 1909, 1; Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr 69: 8 August 1909, 2; Tanin 336: 9 August 1909, 2; Tanin 348: 21 August 1909, 2; Özbozdağlı 2022: 579-580.

relations, but also in the context of the struggles of European states for interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. The situation of Crete is a striking example of the multifaceted diplomatic pressures and the disintegration process that the Ottoman Empire faced.⁴¹⁰

After the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era, the feelings of the Ottoman elements regarding the “common homeland” began to be expressed more openly; the future of Crete, which was a part of the state, became a matter of common concern and attention. Following the derogatory and provocative news about Crete in the press, many people from different segments of society held a meeting at the Law School on the fifth day of the Eid al-Adha in 1909 in order to evaluate these developments. Thousands of Ottoman citizens who attended the meeting expressed their concerns about the future of Crete and showed deep sensitivity to the possibility of the island seceding from the Ottoman Empire. It was emphasized that the threats against Crete were not only a matter of honor, but also directly related to the integrity and survival of the Ottoman State: “*The preservation of Crete, unfortunately, is not only a matter of honor and dignity; it is an important vital issue that concerns the preservation of our existence and our right to perpetuity.*” For this reason, even the slightest possibility of an attack on Crete in Ottoman society created a widespread social reaction. In the speeches, attention was drawn to the sacrifices made for the protection of Crete throughout history, and it was stated that the island was not given up despite the expeditions of the Ottoman navy and the heavy wars that took place. This resistance was evaluated as an indicator of the will to protect not only territorial integrity but also political stability. In fact, it was reminded that Crete did not fall off the Ottoman political agenda despite the internal turmoil during the reign of Sultan Ibrahim or all the helplessness of the tyranny period. In this context, it has been emphasized that the Greek aggressions during the reign of Abdulhamid II strengthened the discourse of the pro-Constitutional Monarchy opposition and that the activities of some opposition societies were even temporarily disrupted when the government declared war on Greece. However, the fact that Crete first gained autonomy and then effectively emerged from Ottoman rule following the 1897 war created great disappointment in the public. Over time, this disappointment also fueled the anger felt against the despotic regime and became one of the elements of the social pressure that prepared the ground for the re-declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy. This meeting held in 1909 was not only a reaction against Crete, but also a clear indicator of the sensitivity of the Ottoman public opinion during the Constitutional Monarchy period to national issues. The historical memory and intensity of emotion carried by the participants reveal that Crete was perceived not only as an island, but also as the legacy of the past and the guarantee of the future. This feeling lies at the basis

410 Ahenk 3725: 11 October 1908, 1.

of the social resistance shown against the loss of the island; The people see themselves as a subject that bears the historical responsibility of this process.⁴¹¹

The annexation decision declared by Christian elements on the island of Crete was met with official surprise by the Greek government. The Athens administration stated that the issue was not directly related to them and referred the responsibility to the consulates in Chania of the four protectorate states located on the island. On the other hand, it is reported that the local administrators on the island have sworn an oath of loyalty to the constitutional order of Greece and have now begun to carry out the current transactions in accordance with Greek law. In addition, the Greek flag was officially raised opposite the port of Suda, and the Greek King George I was invited by the island's prime minister to invade Crete. However, the commander of the foreign military forces stationed in Crete gave the order to lower the Greek flag; upon this development, the consuls of the great powers stationed in Chania went to Commissioner Monsieur Zaimis, who had recently returned to Crete, and officially protested the annexation declaration. Meanwhile, the Greek ambassador in Istanbul, Monsieur Gribaris, went to the Sublime Porte and expressed that the Greek government was surprised by these developments and conveyed to the Grand Vizier that it was not desired for the Ottoman government to misinterpret the initiative in Crete. The Sublime Porte, on the other hand, was concerned that the issue could lead to more tension on an international level; for this reason, it was rejecting, for the time being, the proposals to hold a new international conference on the subject of Crete.⁴¹²

According to a report in the Ahenk newspaper, based on news published in Athens newspapers and based on telegrams received from Chania, the customs authorities in Crete implemented Greek customs tariffs and Greek laws effectively came into effect. The executive commission established in Crete officially notified the Greek Crown Prince Constantine of the island's annexation to Greece. Following this development, the same notification was also sent to the Greek King George I, who was currently in Copenhagen, requesting the implementation of Greek sovereign rights in Crete. On the other hand, local government officials in Crete swore an oath of allegiance to the Greek King in the presence of the island police. This oath effectively consolidated Crete's political union with Greece and showed that the administration on the island was now operating under Greek authority. These developments show that, in response to Crete's will to join Greece, the major powers are still inclined to evaluate the issue within an international diplomatic framework and continue to seek political compromise before the de facto situation is legally recognized.⁴¹³

411 Sırat-ı Müstakim 21: 14 January 1909, 6-7.

412 Ahenk 3725: 11 October 1908, 3.

413 Ahenk 3727: 13 October 1908, 2.

The Cretan issue seems to have temporarily lost its priority on the international agenda due to the common stance of the major powers in preserving the current status quo. In this context, the Greek government has also preferred not to officially recognize the attempts to annex the island to Greece. However, it has not yet been clarified whether the Cretan issue will be revisited at a possible international conference to be held in the future. Regarding the attempts towards annexation made by the Cretan people, the Ottoman Empire prepared a note addressed to the Greek government and forwarded this note to the Greek embassy in Istanbul through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the diplomatic document in question, it was clearly emphasized that Crete was still under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, that such attempts could not be accepted without prior notification to the Ottoman State, the legitimate owner of the island, and that the annexation attempt was null and illegitimate from the Ottoman Empire's perspective. On the other hand, some European and Greek newspapers published news that Cretan Muslims also supported the island's incorporation into Greece. However, the Ottoman press evaluated such news as a systematic propaganda activity originating from Athens; it was stated that these claims were deliberate statements aimed at creating division and distrust among the Muslim population on the island. The developments in Crete also attracted the attention of England, and the public opinion welcomed the sending of a fleet to the region in order to limit Greece's military initiatives. In this context, it was reported that the main task of the British fleet was to prevent the transfer of Greek troops to Crete and to ensure the maintenance of order in the Aegean islands. It was announced that some British warships, initially reported to be stationed in the port of Izmir, would be sent off the coast of Chania to take precautions against possible unrest. However, according to information received later, it was understood that the relevant fleet was currently anchored in the port of Marmaris.⁴¹⁴

According to statements in the Ottoman press, the Sublime Porte is preparing to make diplomatic efforts to re-attract the attention of the patron states to the issue of Crete. However, news in the European press shows that de facto Greek sovereignty has been established on the island and the term "status quo" is used to legitimize this situation. However, this status quo completely ignores the legal and legitimate sovereign rights of the Ottoman State and condemns the fate of the Muslim people living on the island to uncertainty. *"Because during the time of the Ottoman government, there were one hundred thousand Muslims. Since the ill-fated day of the Ottoman government's influx from the peninsula, 100,000 Muslims who have been left without a protector, those poor Muslims who are fed up with the promises made by the protective powers saying, 'The Crete issue is about to be resolved,' have migrated and today, 40-*

414 Ahenk 3729: 15 October 1908, 3; Adıyeke, 1991, 53.

50,000 Muslims are left in a state of mercy-seeking on the peninsula." These lines reflect the dramatic population loss of the Muslim population in Crete, the empty promises given by the protective powers (the protective powers) and the state of abandonment that emerged with the Ottoman withdrawal from the island. Since the withdrawal of the Ottoman administration from the island in 1898, only 40-50 thousand people remain from the hundred thousand Muslims living in Crete, and these people have been subjected to constant violence, insults and actual usurpation of their property. This situation, which is maintained under the name of the status quo, invalidates the assurances given by the protectorates in the past, and also causes the Muslims of the island to be systematically forced to emigrate. If these states truly desire a just solution, it is a necessary step in terms of international law and human rights for them to contribute to the solution of the issue in accordance with the proposal of the Ottoman State, the legitimate sovereign of Crete.⁴¹⁵ In addition, a news report from the *İstikbal* newspaper published in Chania addresses another dimension of the issue by revealing the systematic violence and intimidation policies faced by the Muslim population in Crete after the withdrawal of Ottoman soldiers from the island. It is stated that the Greek elements resorted to individual murders in order to force the small number of Muslim population remaining on the island to migrate, and that this situation was documented in the press with repeated cases and announced to the public. It is stated that the attacks on the settlements in Rethymno and its surroundings were systematically continued, and that the Muslims in the villages had no security of life and property, and therefore most of them migrated to the cities or to Ottoman lands. The fact that the perpetrators of the murders were mostly left unpunished and only occasionally passed over with symbolic punishments undermines trust in the justice system and further emboldens the Greek elements. *"It has been proven and is being proven by time and successive crimes and the known events that in a short time there will be no trace of the elements of Islam left in Crete."* It is stated that under these conditions, the Muslim presence in Crete was under serious threat and that the international guarantor states and the Ottoman government were inadequate in intervening in these grave developments. Accordingly, it is quite remarkable that despite the systematic targeting of the Muslims in Crete, the indifference of the international community and the protective states to this situation is quite remarkable. While the lightening of the sentences encouraged the Greek rebels, this situation was evaluated as not only about individual crimes but also as part of a wider and organized movement aimed at eliminating the Muslim population from the island.⁴¹⁶

415 Sırat-ı Müstakim 88: 12 May 1910, 19.

416 Sırat-ı Müstakim 101: 11 August 1910, 12-13.

The decision taken in 1908 to annex Crete to Greece was met with great satisfaction not only by the Greek communities within the borders of Greece but also by the Greek communities in the diaspora, and in this direction, material and moral support was provided to the Greek population on the island. The fact that the conflicts in Crete gradually turned into a nationalist struggle further reinforced this support. The long-standing Greek sympathy in the Western public opinion became evident again during the annexation process; the Greek side, taking advantage of this psychological and political environment, intensified its activities in the international arena.⁴¹⁷ In 1908, political developments in Crete reached a new turning point. The Cretan Chamber of Deputies was officially opened in the name of the Greek King and all foreign consuls serving on the island were present at this opening ceremony. The opening ceremony was met with great enthusiasm and joy among the Greek population on the island, and the joy experienced was described as difficult to describe. This symbolic ceremony was evaluated as a new indicator of the political and administrative integration effort between Greece and Crete. However, the issue of the annexation of Crete to Greece was not accepted as a legitimate solution not only by the Ottoman Empire but also by the major European powers. Both the international consensus to preserve the status quo and the need to observe the balances in the region led to a cautious approach towards such attempts. The Ottoman government continued its diplomatic response to attempts to annex Crete and submitted a note to Greece in 1908. This note clearly stated that Crete was still within the Ottoman Empire's sovereignty; it emphasized that the island's annexation to Greece would not be accepted and that such unilateral attempts would be considered null and void in the eyes of the Ottoman Empire. Despite the steps taken towards annexation and symbolic openings, the actual situation in Crete was restored after a while and no fundamental change was made to the island's status. Although annexation discussions flared up again with the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era, this process quickly faded away and was replaced by an international consensus to maintain the status quo.⁴¹⁸

In the Ottoman press, especially after the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, criticism of newspapers published in Greek increased significantly. It was argued that most of these publications were not run by Greeks who were Ottoman citizens, but by people of Greek nationality, and that they acted in line with the interests of Greece. It was claimed that newspapers such as *Proodos* and *Neologos* in particular ignored the moderate and egalitarian approach of the Ottoman government towards the Greek people and constantly published against Turkishness and Ottomanism; it was stated that this attitude "*poisoned public opinion*". The newspapers in question were accused of not only

417 Öksüz, 2010, 102.

418 Ahenk 3729: 15 October 1908, 4.

conducting a political debate but also damaging the social peace between the Ottoman and Greek peoples with their publications questioning the sovereign rights of the Ottomans over Crete and feeding the dreams of annexing the island to Greece. In response to this propaganda, the Ottoman press of the period emphasized that a distinction was being made between loyal Ottoman Greeks and those who “*bound their ideals to Greek ambitions*” were harming the Ottoman system. It was argued that Greek citizens who adopted the Ottoman identity with the Constitutional Monarchy regime would easily adapt to the new administration, but it was clearly stated that those who showed loyalty to Greek nationalism would not find a place in Ottoman society. In this context, it was stated that the Greek press abused the concept of freedom, sowed the seeds of hostility between peoples, and that this type of publishing threatened the unity and integrity of the state.⁴¹⁹

In his article titled On Crete, published on September 10, 1909, Süleyman Nazif harshly criticized Greece for ignoring its current political and social capacity and pursuing excessive goals. He emphasized that Greece, which had a history of independence for nearly eighty years and a state governed by a constitutional monarchy for more than half a century, needed to shape its dreams and ideals in proportion to its current borders in order to maintain its internal stability and maintain its political integrity. According to Nazif, only in this way could Greece continue its existence without being dragged into a new interregnum or social disintegration. In his article, Nazif also brought up a recent military uprising in Greece and evaluated this development as an indicator of the people’s level of political consciousness. According to him, the uprising in question was clear evidence that the Greek public could not distinguish between long-term benefit and short-term harm. In this context, with the statement “*The recent military uprising in Athens has proven once again how incapable the people are of distinguishing their own interests and harms,*” he has both drawn attention to the instability in domestic politics and revealed that the maximalist approach to the Cretan issue is based on these weak foundations. Nazif’s assessment shows that the Cretan issue is not only a foreign policy issue but also directly related to the internal dynamics of Greece. In addition to evaluating Ottoman-Greek relations in the context of Crete, the article also sheds light on the regional political fragilities of the period.⁴²⁰

The Greek rebellions that broke out in Crete at different times left the Muslim population of the island in a serious difficult situation in terms of both security and social structure. During the rebellions, many Muslims were forced to leave the villages where they lived and suffered losses of life and property due to attacks by rebel groups. In addition, the increasing dominance of Greek culture

419 Tanin 100: 10 November 1908, I.

420 Nazif, *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 10 September 1909; Baycan, 2019, 15.

in Crete posed not only a physical but also a cultural threat to the Muslim community. The increasing Greek influence in many areas from educational institutions to public authorities increased the assimilation concerns of the Muslim population and made it difficult for them to maintain their social identity. During this process, the Muslims in Crete had to wage a two-way struggle aimed at both protecting their physical security and maintaining their cultural existence. “Although they were sentenced to death, they were released from the amnesties repeatedly granted by the executive government of Crete because they were found to be Christians.” As can be seen, the lack of any criminal proceedings against the perpetrators of crimes against the Muslim population was also among the issues frequently discussed in the press of the period. The judicial and administrative vacuum on the island left the rebels’ attacks on the Muslim population unpunished, undermining confidence in legal justice and strengthening the perception that the Muslim community was left unprotected. These criticisms in the press drew attention not only to the current lack of security, but also to how administrative weaknesses threatened social peace on the island.⁴²¹ The diplomatic isolation experienced by the Ottoman Empire in the face of the political crisis on the island of Crete in the late 19th century and the interventionist policies of the great powers are discussed in terms of the violence and forced migration to which the Muslim population was subjected in the Ottoman public opinion. The indifference of the European states, despite the aggressive attitudes of the minority groups in Crete, raises questions about the international community’s claims of justice and intervention; this situation shows that the Ottomans’ efforts to defend their legitimate sovereign rights remained unrequited:

Why do a handful of Cretan fishermen and olive growers slaughter the Muslim people of the island and force them to leave to save their lives, while no one has the humanity to say “Stop!”? Why do a handful of Greeks not listen to the words of a whole Europe and, like children who have been disgraced, do not give anyone any peace, and yet no one raises a voice? Why is the conference proposal of the Ottoman government, which is ready to grant extensive privileges and autonomy to the island of Crete, not given due attention?

Despite the desire to pursue a peaceful foreign policy, it is emphasized that this approach has not been fruitful, and that the state may turn to more radical methods. Among the great powers, only Russia’s attitude is seen as constructive and open to cooperation; a critical distance is maintained against the interest-oriented approaches of the others. By emphasizing social sacrifice, trust in the army and the mobilization potential of the people, it is implied that the Ottomans have their own power of solution; it is pointed out that a power-based foreign

421 Sırat-ı Müstakim, 23 July 1908, 1; Tearûf-i Müslimin 21: 10 November 1910, 8-9; Babaoğlu, 2021, 56.

policy is necessary for the reestablishment of the international balance. This approach, which reflects a reaction against the hypocrisy and ineffectiveness of Europe, reflects the Ottomans' search for a strategic reorientation rather than desperation in the political atmosphere of the period. *"We fear that the Turks who have become so young that they will not fear living in a state of servitude rather than dying in a state of dominance; the armies that are not afraid of not one but five deaths; the women of today who sacrifice themselves for the nation down to their earrings in their ears will turn the Sublime Porte policy to another path."* The sentence is a very strong warning that the patience of the Ottoman public has reached its limit, and that if passive diplomatic initiatives no longer find a response, more radical, even militaristic solutions may gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people and the army. The emphasis on *"dying with domination"* in particular symbolizes the psychological breaking point of the period.⁴²²

5.2. Goudi Coup in Greece

The Gudi Military Movement, which took place in 1909 and is considered a turning point in Greek political history, emerged as a result of the country's administrative weaknesses and structural problems that lasted for about fifteen years. The heavy defeat in the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War was not only a military failure, but also caused serious turmoil in Greece's domestic politics. Following this war, the country was dragged into an economic crisis and due to financial bankruptcy, Greece's finances were left to the control of an international control commission. Along with political instability, the weak structure of the Greek army also drew the reaction of the public and especially the military personnel. Until that period, there were intense demands for the army structure, which consisted of irregular and gang-like units, to be transformed into a modern and disciplined structure. On the other hand, Greece, which gained its independence in 1830, adopted an expansionist foreign policy, especially against the Ottoman Empire, from its foundation; in this direction, it tried to establish influence in regions such as Thessaly and Crete. The defeat experienced after the war of 1897 and the economic collapse that resulted from this led to the failure of social reforms in Greece, the halting of infrastructure investments and the disruption of public services. The weakness of the military power also became apparent during this period; efforts were made to restructure the army after the defeat. All these developments paved the way for the accumulation of discontent in military circles against the current administration in 1909 and ultimately the emergence of the Gudi Military Movement. This military intervention was a significant turning point not only in terms of domestic politics but also in terms of Greece's regional policies and the balance of power in the Balkans. One of

422 Sirat-ı Müstakim 77: 24 February 1910, 18-19.

the most striking results of this process was that the Cretan politician Eleftherios Venizelos quickly became a decisive figure in Greek politics. Following the Gudi movement, Venizelos' rise led to the acceleration of domestic reforms in Greece and the adoption of a more aggressive and expansionist line in foreign policy. Accordingly, the expansion policies pursued by Greece within the framework of the Megali Idea after 1909 became more systematic and active; this process eventually paved the way for the Anatolian campaign, which would end in 1922 and was referred to as the "*Asia Minor Disaster*" in Greek historiography, and the beginning of a new era that would culminate in the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty.⁴²³

Although the assessments that the Gudi Military Movement was influenced by the Young Turk movement that developed in Ottoman lands during the same period and the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era are partially true, it is not accurate to establish a direct and holistic relationship between the two movements. Although both movements have similarities in terms of demands for reform and the involvement of military elements in the process, there are significant differences in terms of ideological framework and goals. The Young Turk movement developed against the centralized and authoritarian administration of the reign of Abdulhamid II in order to protect the unity and integrity of the multinational Ottoman Empire and aimed for a return to constitutional order in line with the ideal of Ottomanism. In contrast, the Gudi Military Movement did not initially have a directly anti-royalist stance; in fact, it received the support of monarchists at various times. In this respect, the structure and goals of the Gudi Movement differ from the Young Turk Movement. The fundamental motivation of the Gudi Movement is the demands for reform that emerged in the face of the weak structure of the Greek army of the period and its failure in wars. Therefore, the goals of this movement were focused on the restructuring and modernization of the military organization rather than social transformations. In this context, the Gudi Movement carried a more limited and technical reform agenda compared to the comprehensive social reforms that the Young Turks brought to the agenda with the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy. On the other hand, the fact that both movements had military support brought about some structural similarities. However, when the starting point, process and results of the Gudi Movement are considered, it is not possible to establish a direct parallel with the Second Constitutional Monarchy. The preparation process of the Gudi Military Movement began in October 1908 and the aims of the movement were determined during a meeting held at the home of Theodoros Pangalos, one of the leading military figures of the period. The formation that took shape as a result of these meetings was initially active within the land forces; in time, it also found support in the naval

423 Eser, 2017, 34-35.

units. The movement was led by General Nikolaos Zorbas, who would later rise to the post of Minister of War. Throughout the process, activities were carried out in secrecy, and support within the military structure was expanded to prepare the appropriate ground for intervention.⁴²⁴ In addition to his military career, Nikolaos Zorbas was also involved in political activities. In the elections held in Greece in 1892, he planned to be a candidate for parliament from Volos, one of the important port cities, but could not be a candidate from Harilaos Trikoupis' party because the necessary conditions were not met. Despite this, he participated in the elections as a pro-Tricopis independent candidate. At this point, the role of Harilaos Trikoupis in Greek history is remarkable. Trikoupis, whom Zorbas supported in the 1892 elections, is considered an important politician who initiated the breakthroughs of modern Greece. One of the most important aspects of Trikoupis that stands out in Greek history is that he laid the foundation for the political process that Eleftherios Venizelos, who came to power after the Gudi Movement, would try to complete. During the reign of Trikoupis, who served as prime minister seven times between 1875 and 1895, the process of imposing the "Megali Idea" policies on the people came to an end and in line with this, the goal of "Recovery of the Promised Lands" came to the stage of implementation. After losing the 1896 elections, Nikolaos Deliyannis, who replaced him, did not make any changes in Greece's foreign policy, although he opposed Trikoupis. During the Cretan Rebellion, the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War broke out as a result of Greece's expansionist policies and, although Greece was defeated, it showed that there was a significant change in the policies the country followed. During the reign of Trikoupis and Deliyannis, who continued his policies, Greece went beyond being a small maritime state and began to follow an expansionist policy against the Ottomans, especially acting towards the goal of capturing Crete, Thessaly and Thessaloniki, and in the following process, it demonstrated its intention to expand into Western Anatolia.⁴²⁵

Another important development that began with Harilaos Trikoupis and ended with Eleftherios Venizelos was Greece's expansion policy towards the Balkans. Trikoupis aimed to develop relations with the Christian states in the Balkans, especially Bulgaria, and if possible, to form an alliance, but these efforts were unsuccessful due to both international balances and developments in Greek domestic politics. Later, Eleftherios Venizelos developed this policy built on the foundations laid by Trikoupis and attempted to establish a Balkan Union with Bulgaria. The rivalry and hostility that had continued for many years between Bulgaria's Pan-Slavism policy and Greece's Hellenism policy gave way to cooperation, albeit for a short time. Bulgaria and Greece, which

424 London Evening Standard, 6 April 1901, 5-6; South Wales Daily News, 8 April 1901, 6; Eser, 2017, 35-36.

425 Eser, 2017, 36.

had united against the Ottoman Empire, formed an anti-Ottoman alliance in the Balkans with the participation of Serbia and Montenegro. This development strengthened the tendency of the Balkan states to act together against the Ottoman rule and significantly affected the political balances in the region.⁴²⁶

The military formation, which had been gradually gaining strength before the Goudi military movement, had become an important organization over time and had reached a capacity to mobilize large masses. This formation focused particularly on the Macedonian issue and argued that the Bulgarians would expand against Greece by seizing Ottoman lands piece by piece. This structure, which began to gain support not only in military circles but also in civilian circles through nationalist discourses, created a serious opposition against the Greek Royal Family and especially the statesmen it called the “old parties”, who had been influential in Greek politics for many years. The movement’s influence was also reflected in the media over time and the Hronos (Χρόνος) newspaper, which would become its official publication, published Eleftherios Venizelos’s photograph as the lead article in its June 20 issue. The newspaper drew attention to the need for Venizelos to come to the forefront in the country’s administration with the statement “*We want someone new for the struggle*”, thus making the political aspect of the movement clear.⁴²⁷ Until the action that would take place at the end of August, the Hronos newspaper frequently emphasized the Macedonian issue and made calls to the army. In its publications, it strengthened the perception that the army was a vital element in terms of Greek interests and adopted a discourse that prepared the ground for military intervention. In this process, the newspaper, which aimed to unite the army around a national cause, shaped the path leading to the Goudi coup by publishing publications that reinforced the necessity of a military action in the public opinion.⁴²⁸

In this context, on the night of August 14/27 to August 15/28, a remarkable march was held at the Goudi military barracks near Athens with the participation of 446 officers, 2,546 non-commissioned officers, 67 gendarmerie personnel and 135 civilians. Some officers from the Greek Navy also supported the movement. The operation was not limited to the land forces alone, but expanded to include various elements of the armed forces. However, despite this comprehensive support, the military movement encountered some objections within the Greek political elite. The current government experienced a serious legitimacy crisis in the face of this organized opposition within the army, and the Prime Minister of the period, Dimitris Rallis, was forced to resign. This development revealed that the military intervention should not only be considered a coup attempt, but also as an element of pressure aimed at reshaping the political structure. Before

426 Western Daily Press, 29 March 1905, 10; Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, 9 March 1905, 6; Eser, 2017, 37.

427 Eser, 2017, 37.

428 Eser, 2017, 37-38.

considering the purpose, scope and results of the Goudi Military Movement, the attitude of Eleftherios Venizelos, one of the important actors of the process, towards the movement and the reactions of the Athens press of the period should be evaluated with special attention. Because Venizelos' approach to the events and the discourses of the press organs that played a role in shaping public opinion played a decisive role in the legitimacy of the movement. Following the Goudi Coup, internal turmoil prevailed in Greece. When Venizelos' attitude is examined, it is seen that he was a follower, supporter and advisor of the movement from the very beginning. The clearest information on this subject is found in the ten articles he published in the Crete-based Kiriks (Κήρυξ) newspaper between August 26, 1909 and October 27, 1909. When the relevant articles are examined in general, it is seen that Eleftherios Venizelos, just like the leading figures of the movement, adopted a critical attitude towards the existing political structure and especially the practices of the old parties, rather than a direct opposition to the crown.⁴²⁹ For example, in his second article dated August 26, Venizelos emphasized that popular support should be provided for the military movement by using the expressions, *"If the parties cling to old policies, it is necessary to turn towards dictatorship... The people should be called to elections within the framework of a previously determined program."* In his third article dated September 20, he stated that *"contrary to what has been said many times, the movement does not contain any opposition to the dynasty."* In his views on the Cretan issue, he drew attention to the fact that *"Cretan deputies should take part in the parliamentary work"* and advocated that Crete be represented in parliament in order to ensure its political integration with Greece.⁴³⁰

In his fifth article dated September 16, Venizelos stated that personal interests should be put aside and emphasized that reaching an agreement between the king and the supporters of the movement would be the most appropriate solution for the Greek people. Venizelos did not generally display an anti-dynasty and anti-monarchy stance, on the contrary, he expressed hope that a successful administration would be possible if the parties and the leading figures of the movement cooperated. In his sixth article, he proposed that Greece be taken to elections through a provisional government of 6 to 9 months. In his tenth and final article, he criticized the European press, especially The Times newspaper, and drew attention to the fact that the movement was not merely a military initiative but had broad popular support behind it. From this date on, Venizelos changed his views on the Cretan issue. According to Venizelos, who had previously participated in various rebellions and advocated the unification of Crete with Greece, the real problem was no longer Crete, but Greece's

429 Evening Irish Times, 1 September 1909, 1; Birmingham Daily Gazette, 2 September 1909, 4; Leicester Chronicle, 4 September 1909, 11; Eser, 2017, 38.

430 Eser, 2017, 38.

acceptance of Crete. Accordingly, the island should be annexed to Greece, if necessary through a war. However, in this unification process, it was vital that European states, especially England, supported Greece. Venizelos argued that the 1909 Gudi movement was in Greece's best interests and defined his relationship with the movement as "*providing regulatory services*". When he was later asked in parliament whether he was "the implementer or trainer of the 1909 coup", he used the same expression and stated that the movement had a regulatory role. Following these developments, Venizelos argued that the Gudi movement, together with the Greek people, served their true interests.⁴³¹

The lowering of the Greek flag in Crete was interpreted by the Ottoman public as a diplomatic success of the government. This development was evaluated, especially in the Ottoman press, as a diplomatic victory that could gain the support of the great powers on the Cretan issue. On the other hand, the fact that the Rallis Government in Greece did not actively support the annexationist elements in Crete led to a reaction among the young officers of the army. This dissatisfaction soon turned into a political crisis; the Military Alliance (Stratiotikós Sýndesmos), led by Colonel Nikolaos K. Zorbas, started a rebellion against the government in the Gudi suburb of Athens on the night of 14/15 August 1909. As a result of this military uprising, Prime Minister Dimitrios Rallis was forced to resign; thus, there was another change of government in Greece due to the Cretan issue. King George I gave the task of forming a new cabinet to Kiriakoulis Mavromikhalis. The Gudi Incident is notable not only for revealing the instability created by the Cretan issue in Greek domestic politics, but also for revealing the way in which demands for reform within the army interfered with politics. In general, Athens-based newspapers, despite their reservations, gave the military movement wide coverage and displayed a positive attitude. The Nea Imera newspaper, stating that the movement was based on a broad social base, drew attention to the fact that it was not a superficial initiative and had a specific political purpose. The newspaper emphasized that the main purpose of the movement was to save Greece from disaster. Similarly, the Athine newspaper focused on the movement's aims and included an interview with the leader of the military wing, Nikolaos Zorbas. In this interview, Zorbas stated that they only demanded the implementation of austerity measures and the reformation of the army; he emphasized that how these reforms would be carried out was the responsibility of politicians. These statements reveal that the Gudi movement, contrary to what was thought at least in its initial stages, did not have social or political aims, and that its primary goal was to reform the army. Considering the statements in Nikolaos Zorbas' interview, it is understood that although the 1909 Gudi military operation showed similarities with the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy in the Ottoman

431 Birmingham Daily Gazette, 6 September 1909, 5; Crewe Guardian, 3 November 1909, 4; Eser, 2017, 38-39.

Empire in terms of its implementation, it had different goals in terms of purpose and program.⁴³²

5.3. The Elections of 1910 and the Expulsion of Muslim Deputies from the Cretan Parliament

The Cretan Assembly, which convened in its first session in 1910, presented a program aimed at determining the political orientation that the government on the island would follow. Considering the political developments of the period, this program was considered a preliminary step towards the annexation of Crete to Greece and a precursor to this process. Even during the period when the assembly had not yet convened, not only the issue of the oath but also the possible decisions that the assembly would take in the future led to public debate. Especially while the election process was ongoing and before the first session of the assembly had taken place, news appeared in the press that the Cretan Christian deputies intended to send deputies to the Greek parliament and that they planned to inform the consuls of this desire in a special report. Such developments show that, despite the clear and restrictive attitudes of the great powers on the subject, the expectations of union with Greece still remained strong among the Cretan Greeks.⁴³³

Elections were held for the Cretan Assembly on March 7. Along with the political party led by Venizelos, other Christian parties also participated in these elections. The Muslim population, on the other hand, organized itself and participated in the elections as a separate political group. According to the election results, Venizelos' party reached a representation power equal to the total number of deputies of the other three Christian parties and thus gained an effective position in the assembly. In addition, news appeared in the press that circles close to this party aimed to attract Muslim members to their side. On the other hand, it was stated that some Cretan circles wanted to participate in these elections since the parliamentary elections to be held in Greece coincided with the same date. However, it was reflected in the press that Venizelos preferred to act more cautiously considering the current attitude of the major powers and therefore the initiatives in this direction were postponed. Despite this, it was also among the assessments in the press of the period that there were many in Venizelos' party who were in favor of participating in the Greek elections.⁴³⁴

The decision taken on October 5, 1908 for the annexation of Crete to Greece, although not officially recognized by any state including Greece, introduced a regulation requiring all administrative and judicial officials in Crete to take an oath in the name of the King of Greece. While this practice initially covered a small number of Muslim officials working in various departments, it was

⁴³² Eser, 2017, 39-40.

⁴³³ Tasvir-i Efkar 301.; 1 April 1910, 5; Adıyeye, 1991, 56.

⁴³⁴ Tasvir-i Efkar 301.; 1 April 1910, 5; Sada-yı Millet 124.; 3 April 1910, 2; Sağun, 2023, 117.

later directed to Muslim deputies serving in the Cretan General Assembly. This situation brought up discussions that the 16 Muslim members of the Assembly could not participate in the activities of the Assembly unless they took the oath. The officials who refused to take the oath were subjected to various sanctions. However, despite all the pressure, the Muslim deputies refused to take the oath in the name of the King of Greece; as a result, the Cretan Assembly was adjourned for four months in early 1910. Later in the process, the Assembly decided to remove the deputies who refused to take the oath of loyalty to King George of Greece from their membership and, similarly, to consider the duties and titles of the officials invalid. Information about these developments was included in the Novoe Vremya newspaper dated 18 June 1910. In a letter dated 11 July 1910 and sent to the US State Department by the American Embassy in Athens, the following statements were made regarding the developments in Crete: *“The situation in Crete has become extremely sensitive since the first session of the new parliament due to the Muslim deputies’ refusal of parliamentary seats.”* This assessment shows that the political tension on the island was closely followed by international circles and that the previously reported situations were confirmed. On 9 May 1910, the Cretan Parliament was officially opened in the name of the Greek King and the Greek members, one by one, swore that they would show loyalty to the King and work towards the unification of the island with Greece. This development posed a serious problem because the Ottoman government considered the oath issue as a violation of their sovereign rights and protested it with diplomatic initiatives in the eyes of Western states. In addition, the Ottoman government decided to boycott Greek goods in response to this development. In Crete, in line with the proposal of Eleftherios Venizelos, the Cretan National Assembly declared on May 30, 1910 that Muslim members would not be accepted to the parliamentary sessions.⁴³⁵ According to the evaluations in the international press regarding the 1910 Cretan Assembly elections, it was observed that the Muslim population’s interest in the elections was quite limited. In contrast, it was stated that the Christian candidates showed more intense activity during the election process and carried out extensive campaigns in order to gain voter support. There were even reports in the press that some candidates paid bribes in order to gain votes. According to the election results, 114 Christian and 16 Muslim members were elected to the assembly, filling 120 of the 130 seats in total. Of the elected members, 54 belonged to the political party led by Venizelos, and this group achieved a majority in the assembly by cooperating with some other political formations. Thus, Venizelos’ political line became a determining factor in the direction and administrative form of the new government to be established.⁴³⁶

435 Sada-yı Millet 124:, 3 April 1910, 2; Tasvir-i Efkar 301:, 1 April 1910, 5 Öksüz, 2010, 99.

436 Sada-yı Millet 124:, 3 April 1910, 2; Tasvir-i Efkar 301: 1 April 1910, 5; Tasvir-i Efkar 305: 5 April 1910, 4; Sağun, 2023, 117.

Following the 1910 elections, the issue that occupied the agenda of the Cretan Assembly the most was the question of the conditions under which Muslim deputies could participate in the assembly. While some Christian members argued that Muslim deputies should be accepted into the assembly without any oath requirement, another group suggested that instead of the oath taken in the name of the Greek King, a more neutral oath formula be adopted, stating that “*the homeland will be served conscientiously and honorably*”, in order to facilitate the entry of these members into the assembly. It is understood that the background of the discussions on the oath, which were handled in such detail, was the concern that the Ottoman Empire could make diplomatic efforts with the guarantor states if the Muslim deputies did not participate in the assembly. This situation shows that the issue was not only a domestic political issue but also directly related to international diplomatic balances.⁴³⁷ While the discussions on whether or not the oath should be taken in the name of the Greek King continued, some Christian sects argued that Muslim deputies should not participate in the parliament under any circumstances. This view was supported especially by those who evaluated Crete’s political future in terms of unification with Greece. Developments in Crete were closely followed by both the Ottoman government and the Ottoman press. During this process, differences of opinion on the subject were also observed among the press organs representing the Ottoman public opinion. While some newspapers argued that Muslim deputies should be represented in the parliament no matter what, others argued that participating in the parliament before the oath issue was resolved would create a weakness of principle. Therefore, no clear consensus was formed on this issue in the Ottoman press, and the issue was discussed in a controversial context in public opinion. In contrast, the Greek press displayed an attitude of trivializing the discussions on the oath crisis, which had received extensive coverage in the Ottoman press. While the developments in Crete were making headlines almost every day in the Turkish press, Greek newspapers reflected the issue as a secondary agenda and accused the Ottoman press of unnecessarily straining Turkish-Greek relations over the Cretan issue. This attitude also reveals the difference in the approach of the two presses towards the Cretan issue and the political meaning attributed to the issue.⁴³⁸

The first action of the new government established after the elections in Crete was to prepare a memorandum and take steps to forward it to the consuls of the guarantor states. The memorandum in question highlighted two fundamental points in particular: the claim that Crete was an independent political structure and that the Ottoman Empire had no right to intervene in the internal affairs of the island. These two emphases would later become fundamental arguments in

437 Tasvir-i Efkar 301: 1 April 1910, 5; SaĖun, 2023, 117.

438 Tasvir-i Efkar 301: 1 April 1910, 5; Sada-yı Millet 155: 7 May 1910, 4; SaĖun, 2023, 118-119.

the diplomatic notes presented to the great powers and would form the main framework of the Cretan Assembly's political stance. This development shows that the executive board of the Cretan Assembly did not intend to back down, especially on the issue of the oath, and planned to take steps to legitimize this stance in the international arena. Indeed, the Ümit newspaper published in Chania drew attention to the fact that political developments on the island could evolve in a different direction with the opening of the new assembly and warned of a possible new annexation attempt.⁴³⁹ Following the elections held in March 1910, the Cretan Assembly held its first session on May 9, 1910 at 10:00 a.m. under the presidency of Michelidakis. The opening session was attended by the head of the provisional government, İskolodis, the newly elected deputies and a large crowd of people who had come to watch the official ceremony. Assembly President Misalidakis proposed that the decision taken in previous periods to annex Crete to Greece be reaffirmed by taking an oath in the name of King George of Greece. Immediately after the name of the Greek king was mentioned in the assembly, the Christian deputies present in the session and the people attending the ceremony chanted slogans such as "*Long live the unity of the Cretans with Greece*" and the oath was taken in the name of the Greek King, accompanied by loud applause and cheers.⁴⁴⁰

Following the oath crisis in the Cretan Assembly and the developments towards annexation, Muslim members of the assembly began to voice their reactions. Within this framework, one of the Muslim deputies, Naimbeyzade Hüseyin Bey, planned to submit a protest letter on behalf of himself and other Muslim deputies. The document in question stated that a kind of independence status could be accepted on condition that Crete remained under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, but that annexation to Greece was rejected. However, during the submission of this protest letter to the assembly, the document was taken from Hüseyin Bey's hand and torn up by the intervention of one of the Christian deputies, Daskaloyanis, and then another Christian deputie, Manosakis, physically assaulted Naimbeyzade Hüseyin Bey. This brawl resulted in the Muslim deputies being forcibly removed from the assembly; the fact that these members were not later re-admitted to the assembly caused the current political crisis to deepen even further.⁴⁴¹ According to another report, in a session held in the Cretan Assembly, the Christian member Monsieur Michelidakis proposed that an oath be taken in the name of the Greek King, thus officially approving the decision regarding the annexation of the island to Greece. Naım Beyzâde, one of the Muslim members who opposed this proposal, stated that he and the other Muslim representatives did not accept annexation to Greece

439 Sada-yı Millet 139: 18 April 1910, 2; İkdâm 49: 1 May 1910, 1; Ümid, February 1910, 1; Ümid, 6 April 1910, 2; Ümid, 18 May 1910, 2; Adıyke, 1991, 56; Sağun, 2023, 119-120.

440 Hikmet, 11 May 1910, 1; Sada-yı Millet 162: 11 May 1910, 3.

441 BOA, HR.SFR.3... 615/11, (H-04-05-1328); Sırat-ı Müstakim 89: 19 May 1910, 17; Sağun, 2023, 120.

in any way, and only found it appropriate to grant Crete autonomy under the sovereignty of the Ottoman State. “*While he was about to put a second protest on the table, the Christian member Daskaloyanis took the protest and tore it up, and the other Christian member named Manusakisi slapped Naîm Beyzâde in the face.*” While he was about to put a protest document on the table with this statement, the Christian member Daskaloyanis tore up the protest document, and another member Manusakis physically attacked Naîm Beyzâde and slapped him in the face. Thus, it has been revealed that Muslims in Crete were deprived of their right to express their opinions not only politically but also in an institutional area such as the parliament, and that this was suppressed with actual violence. In addition, this incident is the strongest symbol of how the annexation process proceeded with oppressive, polarizing and anti-democratic methods. Following the incident, other deputies intervened and the aggressor members were removed from the parliament. Although the situation ended with the intervention of the parliament members, this situation clearly shows that the political will of Muslims in Crete was not seen as legitimate, but was met with hostility and an attempt was made to silence them with actual tyranny. This situation represents not only an individual attack, but also a systematic violation of the Muslim community’s right to representation in the political sphere. Therefore, this incident is an important example documenting that the annexation process of Crete proceeded with the domination of power and the majority rather than a democratic parliamentary decision. In other words, it can also be used as direct evidence that the annexation was not carried out by a legitimate popular will, but by means of oppression and force.⁴⁴²

The Muslim deputies who were beaten and taken out of the assembly because they opposed the oath issue in the Cretan Assembly, shortly after this incident, expressed their reactions to the annexation process and the oath crisis experienced in this context in a written protest text they wrote to the consulates of the guarantor states. This text, signed by 16 Muslim deputies from Crete, is the same protest text that Naimbeyzade Hüseyin Bey wanted to present to the assembly on May 9, 1910, but could not be presented due to physical intervention. In the text in question, the Muslim deputies in Crete stated that they did not give up the island’s sovereignty over the Ottoman Empire and that they only recognized the “*independent local administration*” status established with the approval of the guarantor states. They declared that they rejected any political formation that went beyond this status, and especially steps towards annexation to Greece. They also declared that they protested on behalf of the Muslims of the island that the opening of the assembly should be held within the framework of Greek laws and protocols and that the Christian deputies should take an oath in the name of the Greek King; They also requested that

442 Sırat-ı Müstakim 89: 19 May 1910, 17.

these protests be recorded in the official parliamentary records and forwarded a protest to the Ottoman Parliament.⁴⁴³

Following the elections for the Cretan Assembly in March 1910, developments in the first session of the new assembly that convened took the crisis regarding the annexation of Crete and the oath issue to an international dimension. During this process, a letter written by Muslim members of the Assembly, detailing both the annexation attempt and the physical intervention against them, was submitted to the consulates of foreign states serving on the island. In the written protest in question, the Muslim deputies opposed the attempts to eliminate Ottoman sovereignty on the island and requested the intervention of the international community on this issue. Following the submission of the protest, the consuls of the major states approached the issue positively and brought the issue to their own governments. After the issue was discussed in the decision-making bodies of these states, the decisions taken were reported to the administration on the island through the consulates in Crete. At the same time, it was officially communicated to the Ottoman Government through the representatives of the major states serving in Istanbul. Thus, political developments in Crete ceased to be merely a local crisis and became an issue addressed within the international diplomatic relations of the period.⁴⁴⁴ Currently, the Ottoman government only aimed to implement the decisions taken regarding the granting of autonomy to the island. However, the fact that some Christian Cretans swore an oath of loyalty to a foreign sovereign and insulted the sacred values of the Muslim population on the island was considered to be behaviors that contradicted Ottoman law and violated the constitutional obligations of these people, who were subjects of the state. Therefore, the right to punish these actions belonged solely to the Ottoman government. The Hague Arbitration Court was an institution for the resolution of disputes between states, and it was unacceptable to resolve a problem related to the internal functioning of the Ottoman Empire, such as the Cretan issue, in this way. Otherwise, the foreign status of the Cretan people would be implicitly accepted by assuming that their Ottoman subjecthood had been terminated. The Ottoman government, as the legitimate owner of the island, was obliged to establish its sovereignty and punish the rebellious elements. If the great powers interested in the protection of Crete had anything to say during this process, this issue could only be addressed through the Hague Arbitration Court if Ottoman sovereignty was not recognized. However, trying to resolve an issue that was primarily about internal problems through international arbitration was a suggestion previously put forward by Russian conservative circles, and such attempts were considered as an element that would encourage rebellion among

443 Yeni Gazete 620: 17 May 1910, 2; Sadayî Millet 184: 2 June 1910, 2.

444 Yeni Gazete 620: 17 May 1910, 2; Sağun, 2023, 121.

Christian subjects. In this context, publications such as the *Novoie Vremia* newspaper published in Russia saw this suggestion as an opportunity to weaken the Ottoman Empire and eventually pave the way for its disintegration. Setting such an example was considered as part of the effort to continuously interfere in the internal affairs of the state in the future and to bring Ottoman lands under the control of European states, as in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt.⁴⁴⁵

The oath crisis increased the interest in the Cretan Muslim deputies; the political pressures they were subjected to both inside and outside the parliament attracted the public's attention. As a reflection of this interest, a special interview written by Monc, a reporter for the *Freyye Presse* newspaper, conveyed these developments to the public in detail. Monc's interview was conducted during a journey with Muslim deputies traveling from the towns on the eastern and southern coasts of Crete to Chania on an Istanbul ferry belonging to the Luid Company. The interview is a remarkable document in that it presents to the public the political tensions experienced by the Muslim representatives, together with personal impressions and testimonies. *Freyye Presse* reporter Monc's observations provided a remarkable perspective to the public. This special interview written by Monc includes the impressions he gained during a journey with Muslim deputies traveling from the towns on the eastern and southern coasts of Crete to Chania on a ferry departing from Istanbul. One of the people he talked to during the trip was Doctor Ali Rasih Bey, a Muslim deputy from Crete. According to the information in the interview, Rasih Bey first mentioned the pro-Austrian public opinion in Turkey, and then touched on the political developments in Crete. He recalled the insult a Muslim deputy had received in parliament last May, and stated that this was why he had reluctantly gone to Chania. Rasih Bey stated that most of the members of parliament were of peasant origin and were unaware of the real danger, and that they were also under the influence of foreign influence. He emphasized that the Speaker of the Parliament and opposition leader Misalidakis was in favor of the expulsion of Muslim deputies from parliament, and that the political environment had become unpredictable for this reason. Speaking on behalf of the Muslim deputies, Rasih Bey recalled that they would not attend parliament unless they received an official invitation from the interim Cretan government, and that the incident of being forcibly removed from parliament the previous year had been met with public cheers and insults. He stated that they would not go to parliament without the government's invitation and that they would follow the attitude of the guarantor states. He also stated that in the note given to the provisional government by the four great powers in June, there was a provision stating that Muslim deputies could not be accepted without an oath. Another

445 *Kürsi-i Mîlîl* 7: 24 June 1910, 5.

opinion included in the interview belongs to a person who was understood to be one of the Cretan Christian deputies and who was on the bridge. This person criticized the fact that the Cretan deputies did not take an oath to the Greek king and said that they were Greeks and that they would act accordingly. He claimed that Crete was not Turkish territory and that they would not accept loyalty to the Ottomans and would retreat to the mountains if necessary. Reporter Monc, while reporting these meetings, drew attention to the continuation of the nationalist and rigid attitudes of some Cretans. However, he emphasized the need for sensible people to intervene in the process and move the issue to a more constructive ground. While the interview received a wide coverage in the Ottoman press, it also referred to the unresolvability of the Cretan problem. It is also an important source in terms of being a first-hand observation reflecting the political atmosphere of the period.⁴⁴⁶

The oath sworn in the name of the Greek King at the opening of the Cretan Assembly and the announcement of the annexation decision along with this oath caused a great reaction in the Ottoman public opinion. This development became not only a diplomatic crisis regarding the Cretan issue but also a legitimacy issue in terms of the constitutional regime of the Ottoman State. In this context, the outcome of the situation in Crete in favor of the Ottoman Empire was evaluated as one of the fundamental elements not only of foreign policy but also of domestic political stability. The intensity of the discussions on this issue in the Chamber of Deputies and the press reveals the weight of the issue in the general politics of the state. It was not considered politically possible for the Ottoman government to step back in the face of developments regarding Crete, especially because it could damage the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Second Constitutional Monarchy regime declared in 1908. The basic message that the Sublime Porte wanted to give to the international public opinion in this process was that constitutional administrations, as a state governed by a constitutional regime, had the capacity to produce peaceful solutions. Accordingly, in the diplomatic discourse on the Cretan issue, both the sovereign rights of the Ottomans and the reputation of the government system based on the constitutional order were prioritized. According to the news, the participation of Muslim deputies in a parliament opened in the name of the Greek King and whose members began their duties by taking an oath in the name of the Greek King was not considered possible in terms of the political interests of the Ottoman State. This situation is not limited to the issue of whether Muslim deputies will participate in parliamentary deliberations, but also reveals the need to clearly determine the future political status of Crete. In order for politics regarding Crete to take shape, it should be determined in

446 Yeni İkdam 113: 4 July 1910, 2; Yeni Gazete, 4 July 1910, 1-2; Sabah 7467: 4 July 1910, 21; 1-2; Tanin 661: 4 July 1910, 1-2; Sağun, 2023, 121-122.

advance and clearly what kind of diplomatic stance will be taken towards the islanders and Greece. In this context, the issue should be addressed not only as a local dispute, but also within the framework of the double-standard approach of the international community. Because the Cretan issue has become an example that makes one question whether European states apply principles such as “law” and “*constitutional monarchy*” only in favor of Christian elements. These kinds of questions, voiced in the Ottoman public opinion and especially in the press, are shaped by the way Europe approaches the developments in Crete; they create a perception that the treatment of Muslim subjects is not evaluated within the framework of the principles of justice and equality in the Islamic world. In this context, the final outcome of the Cretan issue is seen as determining not only the position of the Ottoman Empire but also the position of the Islamic world in general within the international system.⁴⁴⁷ For this reason, the issue was narrated in relation to the hypocritical attitudes of the European states and continued to remain on the agenda of the Ottoman public. The news reports show that there was a deep disappointment regarding the Cretan issue, and that the double-standard approaches of the European states in particular were met with great anger and helplessness by the public. In the discussions that developed around the issue of deputies, the fact that some people in Crete were appointed as deputies despite not being Ottoman subjects is presented as a great scandal, both legally and politically. The article emphasizes that the European states knew about this unlawful situation but turned a blind eye for a long time, and then tried to silence the Ottoman public with superficial interventions. The news reports evaluate this situation as the final stage of the process of the Ottomans being constantly deceived and losing Crete. At the same time, it criticizes that the Ottomans were wasting time with national discourses but never followed a decisive and conclusive policy. “*Everything has become Greek in Crete. However, this issue of deputies is the last link that connects Crete to us. If this is broken, Crete will also say goodbye to the Turks. We will die all the time. We will go. We will not give it away. We spent our time with nonsense. We swore oaths. But we never kept our word. May the poor porters and boatmen who help us a little during the boycott*” are dramatic and sharp observations in which the news report states that the Ottoman rule over Crete has now decreased to a symbolic level and is only maintained through apparent ties such as deputies, and that this link is also about to be broken. In addition, the news report warns the Ottoman public opinion and states that if this last link is not protected, Crete will be de facto and legally separated from the Ottomans. At the same time, it also states that the Ottoman administration and public opinion are wasting time with national slogans such as “*we will die, we will not give it away*”, but they are not taking real and effective steps.

447 İkdâm 90: 11 June 1910, 1; Sada-yı Millet 189: 7 June 1910, 1-2.

While the news implies that the public should support not only with words but also with action, it also states that in this process, only the poor and ordinary citizens, namely the porters and boatmen, are fighting for some measure of honor with the boycott movement.⁴⁴⁸

It was thought that with the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, the image of the Ottoman State in the eyes of the European public opinion would be strengthened and that this situation would “*contribute to the preservation of Ottoman law in Crete.*” In this context, the Ottoman government frequently emphasized its trust in the great powers and its search for a solution in harmony with them. The European public opinion also evaluated the Ottoman State’s “*peaceful attitude based on international consensus as a positive development.*” For this reason, the Ottoman government preferred to first obtain the support of the great powers and intervene in the issue through them in resolving the Cretan issue. This approach reflects not only the government’s but also “*the fundamental attitude of the Ottoman intellectuals of the period.*” Because the expectation of a solution to the issue was often linked to the understanding of justice and diplomatic intervention of the Western states rather than the Ottomans’ own political and institutional means. The belief that a solution to the Cretan issue could be achieved with the support and cooperation of Europe has become a generally accepted approach in the public opinion. This situation made it necessary not only to gain the support in question, but also to maintain the international favor that had been gained. However, “*in the face of the uncompromising attitudes of both the government and the opposition circles after the oath crisis in Crete, the Ottoman government demanded that the great powers take more effective and effective measures.*” There was also an expectation in the Ottoman public opinion that the great powers should call on the Ottomans to intervene if necessary, and there was even news in the press that the Ottoman fleet was ready to set off for the Mediterranean.⁴⁴⁹ From the perspective of the great powers, the solution to the Cretan issue was essentially limited to the acceptance of Muslim deputies to the Cretan Assembly. These states considered the participation of Muslim deputies in the assembly sufficient to resolve the issue and assumed that the crisis was over within this framework. “*On the other hand, the Cretan administrators suspended the issue by suspending the assembly for four months, thus aiming to temporarily calm the issue and remove it from the international agenda.*” The Ottoman government was aware that the number of Muslim deputies elected to the Cretan Assembly was quite limited. Therefore, it was of the opinion that the participation

⁴⁴⁸ Sırat-ı Müstakim 106: 15 September 1910, 17-18.

⁴⁴⁹ İkdâm 49: 1 May 1910, 1; Sada-yı Millet 163: 11 May 1910, 2; İkdâm 109: 30 June 1910, 1; Tanin 631: 4 June 1910, 1; Tanin 655: 28 June 1910, 1-2; Yeni Gazete 676: 22 July 1910, 1-2; Sada-yı Millet 189: 7 June 1910, 1-2; Sada-yı Millet 165: 13 May 1910, 3; Tanin 636: 9 June 1910, 1-2; Sabah 7462: 29 June 1910, 1-2; İkdâm, 109: 30 June 1910, 1; Sabah, 7460: 27 June 1910, 1; Sabah, 7478: 15 July 1910, 1-2; Yeni Gazete 676: 12 July 1910, 1-2. Sağun, 2023, 124; The Times 39346: 9 August 1910, 5.

of this small number of deputies in the assembly would not be sufficient to protect Ottoman sovereignty and legal status on the island. For this reason, the Ottoman administration primarily resorted to diplomatic means against the developments in Crete; it effectively used various diplomatic channels, primarily sending notes and informing the international public. Within this framework, Minister of Foreign Affairs Rıfat Pasha established direct contact with his European counterparts, especially the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, via telegraph; and later, in the notes given to the relevant Great Powers, it was clearly stated that the oath incident that took place in the Cretan Assembly was an open attempt at rebellion against Ottoman sovereignty and that this situation could never be accepted by the Ottoman State. According to Sağun, although the Great Powers first made a joint decision to admit Muslim deputies to the assembly, they stated that the issue could not be resolved by admitting Muslim deputies to the assembly.⁴⁵⁰

The Ottoman government aimed to draw the attention of the great powers to this development with the note policy it carried out regarding the oath taken on behalf of the Greek king in the Cretan Assembly. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular, had intensive contacts with the diplomatic representatives of the great powers, especially England, during this process and regularly shared information about the developments. Rıfat Pasha's efforts to defend the rights and laws that the Ottoman state had over Crete were also appreciated in the press of the period. In the diplomatic notes sent by the Ottomans to the addressee states, it was emphasized that the act of oath taken in Crete lacked legal grounds, that through this oath, the Muslim elements on the island were excluded from official duties, that their daily administrative work was disrupted, and that this situation was considered by the Sublime Porte as a political development that could not be ignored. So much so that a Muslim had to go from Candia to Chania in order to handle official business. In this context, the Ottoman government declared that it desired to act in harmony with the great powers; at the same time, it once again expressed the necessity of a solution within the framework of the previously envisaged autonomy regarding the status of Crete. In response to the diplomatic initiatives of the Ottomans, the great powers rather than directly resolving the issue, adopted an approach that aimed to prolong the crisis over time and appease the Ottoman government. In this context, the oath taken by the Cretan Assembly on behalf of the Greek king was deemed invalid; the Ottoman sovereign rights and status on the island were once again confirmed by the great powers. The guarantor powers informed the Sublime Porte of the decisions they had taken in this direction through their

450 BOA, HR.SFR.3... 615/20, (H-16-05-1328); BOA, HR.SFR.3... 616/11, (H-28-11-1328); Ertuğrul Gazetesi 12: 10 June 1910, 1; Ertuğrul Gazetesi 17: 17 July 1910, 1; Sada-yı Millet 163, 11 May 1910, 2; Sada-yı Millet 164, 12 May 1910, 2; Sada-yı Millet 175, 21 May 1910, 2; Sada-yı Millet 145, 26 April 1910, 2; Sağun, 2023, 124-125.

ambassadors in Istanbul and provided the Ottoman State with the necessary diplomatic guarantees.⁴⁵¹

In order to reach a definitive and permanent solution to the Cretan issue, the Ottoman government prioritized direct diplomatic contacts in addition to written protests. Within this framework, during his visit to Europe in 1910 to attend the funeral of King Edward VII of England, Foreign Minister Rıfat Pasha took the opportunity to bring the Cretan issue to the agenda. Holding a series of meetings with British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey in London and French Foreign Minister Stephan Pichon in Paris, Rıfat Pasha emphasized that the recognition of the Ottoman Empire's sovereign rights over Crete was an indispensable precondition for the solution process. Rıfat Pasha also stated in an interview with the Paris-based newspaper *Le Petit Parisien* that the Ottoman government now demanded a definitive result that would eliminate uncertainty regarding the Cretan issue, but that this result would only be possible with the confirmation of the Ottoman Empire's legitimate sovereignty over the island. These statements show that Ottoman diplomacy followed a multifaceted strategy aimed at influencing both public opinion and the interlocutor states. Following Rıfat Pasha's meetings with Grey and Pichon, the most frequently voiced solution proposal regarding the Crete issue and one that the Ottoman government also insisted on in the following period was autonomy. Indeed, as can be understood from the content of the diplomatic notes sent to the Great Powers and the contacts made with these states, the Ottoman government determined its basic demand regarding Crete as that the island should remain under autonomous administration. However, at this point, the boundaries and content of the autonomy desired by the Ottomans became a new topic of discussion for the issue. Within this framework, the Ottoman government attempted to clarify the scope of the autonomy proposed for Crete in order to eliminate the misunderstandings that had arisen; it emphasized in particular that autonomy should be understood as a regime that did not exclude the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire but granted local administrative autonomy to the island. At the same time, the Ottoman press of the period adopted a supportive stance towards this approach in the eyes of the public; In order to gain the support of both the great powers and the Ottoman public, articles were written advocating that autonomy was the most appropriate form of government for Crete.⁴⁵²

In a speech he made in the Chamber of Deputies regarding the Cretan issue, Grand Vizier Hakkı Pasha explained in detail how the autonomous regime

451 BOA, HR.SFR.3... 615/5, (H-21-04-1328); BOA, HR.SFR.3... 615/6, (H-27-04-1328); BOA, HR.SFR.3... 615/7, (H-29-04-1328); BOA, HR.SFR.3... 615/8, (H-01-05-1328); BOA, HR.SFR.3... 615/10, (H-03-05-1328); Sada-yı Millet 168: 17 May 1910, 3; İkdâm 70: 22 May 1910, 1; İkdâm 74: 26 May 1910, 1-2; İkdâm 79: 31 May 1910, 2; İkdâm 81: 2 June 1910, 1; Lyttelton Times, 3 June 1910, 7; Tanin 631: 4 June 1910, 1; Yeni Gazete 640: 6 June 1910, 1-2; İkdâm 86: 7 June 1910, 1; İkdâm 96: 17 June 1910, 1; Yeni Gazete 651: 17 June 1910, 2; Western Times, 24 June 1910, 16.

452 İkdâm 77: 29 May 1910, 1; İkdâm 79: 31 May 1910, 1; Yeni Gazete 635: 1 June 1910, 1; İkdâm 86: 7 June 1910, 1; Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal, 3 June 1910, 16; Dublin Daily Express, 27 June 1910, 5; Sabah 7462: 29 June 1910, 1-2; Tanin 657: 30 June 1910, 1-2.

was designed within the framework of the solution the Ottoman government envisaged for the island. According to Pasha's statement, this proposed solution included the presence of small-scale Ottoman military units in every region of Crete, the construction of an Ottoman naval station in the Port of Suda, and the Ottoman government having the right to intervene in the event of a violation of the rights of the Muslim population. In addition, this conception stated as a fundamental condition that Greece would not interfere in the internal affairs of Crete in any way. These explanations show that the Ottoman government's sovereignty over Crete had not been completely eliminated and that an attempt was made to shape the autonomous formula in a manner compatible with the Ottoman state sovereignty.⁴⁵³

In addition to the diplomatic contacts he made regarding the Cretan issue, Rıfat Pasha also held meetings with members of the press in every city he visited and made an effort to convey the Ottoman government's position directly to the public. In his interviews, the Pasha emphasized that the Cretan issue constituted an internal matter for the Ottoman Empire; he stated that the government had to act in line with national goals on this issue, regardless of the political structure in power. In this context, it is observed that the great powers generally agreed on the idea of granting autonomy to Crete, but there were differences of opinion on the implementation method and administrative details of this autonomy. However, all of the states in question displayed a common stance against the idea of annexation. On the other hand, the strongest opposition to Rıfat Pasha's diplomatic efforts came primarily from England; and the closest support for England's position was provided by its ally France. Indeed, in the news in the British press of the period, comments were made that Britain viewed the annexation of Crete by Greece positively and that the time had not yet come for this country to bring a final solution to the Cretan issue.⁴⁵⁴

During his European trip, Rıfat Pasha had the opportunity to meet with the Russian and Italian ambassadors and in these contacts he detailed the policy adopted by the Ottoman government regarding the Cretan issue. The Pasha emphasized that the solution envisaged for Crete was a type of independent administration under Ottoman protection, namely autonomy. The autonomy model advocated by Rıfat Pasha included the preservation of the validity of Ottoman law on the island, the continuation of the Ottoman military presence and the preservation of the current status quo. However, the expression "*status quo*" in Pasha's statements was interpreted in different ways both by the addressee states and the Ottoman public opinion, and this concept was also a subject of discussion in the press. Over time, the term "*status quo*" became

453 Sabah 7461: 28 June 1910, 1; Yeni Gazete 669: 5 July 1910, 1-2; Yeni Gazete 670: 6 July 1910, 1-2.

454 Morning Leader, 3 June 1910, 1; Morning Leader, 10 June 1910, 1; London Evening Standard, 3 June 1910, 8; Evening Mail, 20 June 1910, 2;

an issue that the Ottoman government felt the need to make a statement about. This situation shows that the Cretan issue constituted a specific language not only at the political and diplomatic level, but also at the discursive level, and that in this context, each concept was loaded with different layers of meaning. Indeed, it has been understood that over time, there were significant differences between the meanings attributed to the concepts of “*autonomy*” and “*status quo*” by the Ottoman Empire and the approaches of other major powers to these concepts. Although the major powers advocated the preservation of the status quo in the Cretan issue, there were significant differences in meaning among the states regarding the content of the concept of “*status quo*”. In this context, “*status quo*” did not only mean the preservation of a legal or political situation, but also became a concept that each state interpreted and shaped in line with its own interests. This flexible and ambiguous structure of the concept also highlighted the skills of Western states in using diplomatic language. The Ottoman press, on the other hand, claimed that the term “*status quo*” was used particularly by England to legitimize annexation attempts. This view was based on historical examples, especially the policies pursued by Western states during the Serbian and Montenegrin rebellions of 1876-77. Therefore, the comments in the press also reveal the existence of a level of awareness that the West instrumentalized similar concepts for its own political goals.⁴⁵⁵ In his assessments of the Cretan issue, Grand Vizier Hakkı Pasha stated that the concept of “*status quo*” constituted a serious source of uncertainty and discomfort for the Ottoman government. Drawing attention to the uncertainty of what this concept meant, the Pasha raised the question of whether it meant “*the preservation of Turkey’s legal and sovereign rights or an oath taken in the name of the King of Greece.*” According to the Grand Vizier, the indecisive and ambiguous attitude of the great powers regarding the issue made the solution of the issue even more difficult. Hakkı Pasha also stated that the local actors in Crete were also encouraged by this indecisiveness and that the hesitant policies of the great powers were effective in furthering the Cretans’ demands. According to the Pasha’s assessments, the Cretan issue served neither the direct interests of the Ottoman Empire nor Greece. Therefore, a permanent and comprehensive solution to the issue became essential for both states.⁴⁵⁶

The issue of Crete continued to be at the forefront of diplomatic agendas in London, Paris, Rome and Petersburg during the same year. In the negotiations in these cities, it was observed that the foreign ministers of the relevant countries made evaluations on possible solutions and administrative arrangements regarding Crete. In the statements made by the French Ministry of Foreign

455 Sada-yı Millet 189: 7 June 1910, 1-2; İkdâm 86: 7 June 1910, 1; Evening Irish Times, 20 June 1910, 7; Londonderry Sentinel, 21 June 1910, 3; Overland China Mail, 25 June 1910, 17; South Wales Daily News, 27 June 1910, 7; Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 27 June 1910, 7.

456 Sada-yı Millet 175: 24 May 1910, 2.

Affairs, it was stated that the project developed regarding Crete was still in the discussion phase and therefore it was emphasized that it was too early to reach a definitive conclusion. It was also not clear from the perspective of the governments of the major states how the autonomous regime to be established in Crete would take shape. However, it was particularly emphasized that the administration to be established would not bear any resemblance to the example of "*Eastern Rumelia*". This emphasis indicates that the states were seeking to create an administrative model specific to Crete and that the issue should be addressed within a different legal and administrative framework.⁴⁵⁷

After the oath crisis, the Ottoman government continued its search for a solution through different diplomatic channels and remained in constant contact with the major powers. However, the ways in which the major powers addressed the issue during this process often presented an inconsistent and contradictory appearance. Among the solutions proposed by the Ottoman government were the use of the Suda Port as a mobilization point for the Ottoman navy, the keeping of a military detachment on the island to ensure the preservation of the Ottoman flag, the recognition of the Sublime Porte as having the right to protect the Muslim population, the prevention of any intervention by Greece in Crete, and the collection of weapons from the Cretan population. However, the major powers intervened to a more limited extent in response to these suggestions; they were content with only advising that Muslim deputies be admitted to the parliament without taking an oath and that the Ottoman government act calmly. Rifat Pasha's visit to Europe, although it had a limited effect, enabled some initiatives to bear fruit on the part of the major powers. In this context, in the telegrams sent to the consuls in Chania, it was requested that the necessary notification be made by the executive committee of the parliament for Muslim deputies to be able to participate in the parliamentary discussions. However, the foreign ministers of the states that Rifat Pasha contacted preferred to conduct diplomacy aimed at calming the parties rather than taking concrete steps towards the solution of the issue. In the messages they sent to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the foreign officials of these states stated that there was no development that would require the Ottoman public opinion to react and that trust should be felt in the guarantor states in this process. Another criticism that touched on the reasons that mitigated the public reaction was made regarding the disorganization of Ottoman foreign policy and its tendency to be preoccupied with details. He particularly stated that issues such as the Crete issue, the Balkan balance and external borrowing were secondary developments related to the positioning of the Ottoman Empire among the great powers. According to the news, the Ottoman foreign policy orientation should become clear by

457 Manchester City News, 12 Mar 1904, 2; Lancaster Standard and County Advertiser, 2 October 1908, 2-3; İkdâm 94: 15 June 1910, 1;

becoming part of one of the great power blocs in Europe; for developments such as the Greek loyalty oath in Crete or the Greece-Bulgaria alliance gain importance because the Ottoman Empire is not integrated into larger balances of power. The news emphasizes that foreign policy should be conducted with fundamental strategic orientations and argues that getting bogged down in minor issues harms the country. *"We have been dealing with details for the last year and a half: the Balkan balance, the Cretan issue, the phases of the borrowing issue, all of these are beyond details. All of them –in our opinion– are subject to the influence of general politics and are bound to the position we hold or will hold in that politics,"* it is stated that the Ottoman Empire got lost in details in foreign policy issues, and that what it should really focus on is which bloc it will take its place in the international political arena formed by the great powers. Developments in Crete or the Balkans are secondary issues according to the news; the main issue is whether the Ottoman Empire has gained a strategic place among the great powers. This emphasis is a realistic and stern warning for the future of the state. If general politics is ignored and only secondary issues are dealt with, the legal and political interests of the Ottoman Empire will not be protected.⁴⁵⁸ According to another news item, while the Crete issue was a subject that was constantly discussed and emphasized by the Ottoman public, the press constantly reported developments in foreign policy, statements by statesmen and minor changes in international relations on this issue, but most of the time these news items remained superficial and limited in content. For this reason, the same press became the target of various criticisms:

"It was always Girid, Girid, Girid, 'So and so dignitaries said this, so and so politician supports this idea, the Minister of Foreign Affairs convinced so and so, he achieved this success.' These are the stories that occupy almost all of our newspapers. One day, they get up and say, 'It seems that so-and-so state from the protective powers is supporting Greek affairs,' and a few days later, they applaud, 'The foreign minister of so-and-so state has pledged sovereign rights to Ottoman sovereignty in Crete in a public speech.' Time will show us how free these words are from superstitious nonsense and, consequently, how beneficial they can be for the Islamic world and the Ottomans. Consequently, for our press, they are also a bit concerned with the discussions concerning the future of the east of Islam. I think that dedicating a column to important things would be a more honorable service of patriotism."

According to these lines written by Halil Halid Efendi, the press only occupies the public with temporary excitement, and in reality, does not make the public aware of important issues. In particular, the defense of opposing views on the same issue within a few days reveals the inconsistencies of the press.

458 Sirat-ı Müstakim 117: 1 December 1910, 14-15.

For example, the news that the great powers had a negative attitude towards the Cretan issue one day, and the news that the same states defended the rights of the Ottomans a few days later, shows the contradiction and deficiency that the Ottoman press had fallen into. Halid states that such news only attracts the public's attention, but does not offer a real solution, and that the meaninglessness of such news will be understood in time. According to him, the Ottoman press should include more serious, in-depth and meaningful content on the subject, and thus inform the public on more important and comprehensive issues such as the future of the Islamic world.⁴⁵⁹

5.4. The Question of Judges and the Participation of the Greek Deputies of the Island in the Greek Parliament

Following the oath crisis in Crete in 1910, the issue of the appointment of judges became a new area of tension between the Ottoman administration and the people of the island. In 1911, the Ottoman government attempted to appoint judges to the cities of Candia, Chania and Rethymno in an effort to maintain its administrative authority in Crete. However, this decision drew the reaction of the Christian population on the island. When this decision of appointment was reflected in the public opinion, some newspapers, especially the Greek press, stated that the lives of the judges to be sent to the island were in danger. In some publications published in May, threatening statements were encountered that the judges to be sent would be massacred. These developments indicate the extent to which Ottoman authority was actually accepted in Crete and the extent of the socio-political tension in the region. Again, this situation shows that disagreements regarding the use of administrative and legal authority on the island continued and that the Ottoman State's authority to appoint had become controversial in the context of the actual situation of Crete. The judges sent to Crete by the Ottoman Government were not accepted by the island administration and were sent back. The Cretan Greeks claimed that these appointments were contrary to the Cretan Constitution, which had been approved by the Great Powers.⁴⁶⁰

The appointment of judges by the Ottoman government was considered not only a religious but also a legal guarantee for Cretan Muslims. These appointments were seen as one of the last symbols of Ottoman sovereignty on the island and gained significance as one of the reflections of the Ottoman ideology at the local level. In this context, the appointment of judges was an indication of the religious and legal ties of the Cretan Muslims to the Ottoman administration. Therefore, the rejection of judges led to a serious reaction among the Muslim population of the island; in meetings held in Chania, Rethymno and Candia, the

459 Sırat-ı Müstakim 95: 30 June 1910, 14.

460 Adıyeke and Adıyeke, 2002, 42; Adıyeke, 1991, 63-64.

people openly demonstrated their support for the Ottoman government, arguing that these appointments were in accordance with the Cretan Constitution.⁴⁶¹ In 1911, when the issue of the appointment of judges became increasingly more tense, the Great Powers intervened and requested the Ottoman Government to postpone the decision to send a judge to the island. This development was received negatively by the Muslim community in Crete and caused strong reactions. As a result of ongoing diplomatic contacts, negotiations between the Great Powers reached an agreement that the judges would be elected by the Muslims of the island rather than being appointed directly from Istanbul and that they would begin their duties without being sworn in by the Cretan Government. This decision was also officially communicated to the Cretan Government by the relevant states.⁴⁶² In the first months of 1910, the Cretans' attempt to send deputies to the Greek parliament came to the agenda, and this situation brought about new tension in the Cretan issue. When Cretan political actors insisted on this demand, the Ottoman government took the issue to an international level and informed the great powers that were involved in the process as guarantors. The Ottoman side emphasized that this attempt was not only against their own sovereign rights, but also against the rights and authorities of the guarantor states within the framework of the international regulations that determined the status of Crete. This development should be evaluated as a reflection of the diplomatic struggle that the Ottoman State was trying to continue on the grounds of international law regarding the status of Crete. At the same time, it shows that the actual situation of the island was gradually beginning to take shape outside of Ottoman rule and that this process was being supported by efforts to gain international legitimacy.⁴⁶³

Despite the warnings of the Ottoman Empire and the major powers, the Cretan government continued its determination to hold elections simultaneously with Greece. The national parliamentary elections in Greece were expected to begin in August 1910 and the parliament to open in September. The insistence of Cretan political actors to send deputies to the Greek parliament led to a strong protest by the Ottoman government; this accelerated the diplomatic interventions of the major guarantor powers. The major powers continued their stance of preserving the status quo on the Cretan issue and issued separate warnings to both the Cretan authorities and Greece. The warnings made clearly stated that if the initiative in question was implemented, the island would be occupied and a military intervention would be made. Following these developments, the Greek government adopted a cautious stance and pursued a dual policy. On the one hand, it approached the Cretans' demands positively, while on the other hand, it tried to observe international reactions. On the other

461 Adıyeke and Adıyeke, 2002, 42; Öksüz, 2010, 107

462 Adıyeke and Adıyeke, 2002, 2002, 42-43; Adıyeke, 1991., 64.

463 Vicdan 25: 21 January 1911, 4; Hatipoğlu, 1988a, 52.

hand, the Greek public opinion supported the demands for the Cretans to be represented in the Greek parliament. However, there have been warnings in the Athens press that this approach could harm Greece's foreign policy and general interests. This situation reveals the tension between public desires and the state's foreign policy balances.⁴⁶⁴

5.5. Annexation of Crete by Greece

According to agency telegrams dated June 1, 1910, the Provisional Government of Crete, in its official response to the note sent to it by the consuls of the protectorates (England, France, Russia and Italy), declared that it was acting with the utmost effort and determination to ensure the security of the Muslim population in order to maintain order and security on the island. However, the aforementioned government stated that the current situation was not sustainable and requested material and moral support from the protectorates. In the continuation of the response, it was asserted that it was not possible for Crete to exist with an administrative regime outside of Greece and that it could only achieve stability under the Greek administrative system. In line with these statements of the Provisional Government of Crete, it was stated that the protectorates would approximately approve the annexation of the island to Greece without violating the current status quo and that Crete would remember them with gratitude in this regard. According to another telegram reported from Chania, the Cretan Executive Council submitted a detailed response to the consuls general of the protectorate states regarding the note previously communicated to them. In this response, various dimensions of the issue were discussed, the unsustainability of the current situation was reiterated, and the rapid annexation of Crete to Greece was requested. According to a report from Rome, the removal of some German deputies from the Cretan National Assembly from their membership in the assembly was on the agenda after they refused to take an oath in the name of the Greek king. However, the accuracy of this report has not been confirmed and it has been understood that the news is not new. According to reports from Paris, diplomatic talks were taking place between the Ottoman Foreign Minister Rıfat Pasha and the French Foreign Minister Monsieur Hanotaux on the Cretan issue; that France was continuing to exchange ideas with the governments in London, Rome, and Petersburg on this issue. According to information received from the Italian front, the Cretan Executive Council presented a declaration to the military representatives of the four major powers in Chania, stating that the situation in Crete needed to be clarified as soon as possible, and that they wanted this to happen through the annexation of the island to Greece. It was reported that a decision was made in the Cretan National Assembly to re-admit some German elements, and that

⁴⁶⁴ BOA, HR.SFR.3... 628/87, (H-11-12-1328); BOA, HR.SFR.3... 628/82, (H-05-11-1329); Yeni Gazete 688: 17 July 1910, 1; Yeni Gazete 698: 5 August 1910, 2; Beşâret-ül Maşrik 100: 28 October 1911, 4; Sağun, 2023, 203; Adıyke, 1991, 58.

the allowances of some officials had been cut, but that their official documents had not been tampered with. This situation, which was brought to the attention of the protectorates, was expressed through Ottoman ambassadors that the allowances of the relevant officials should be provided in any case. Finally, although there were reports that Greece had made any military preparations, the accuracy of this news could not be confirmed and was not found reliable.⁴⁶⁵

Le Temps, one of France's leading newspapers, generally follows a publishing line parallel to the French government's foreign policy and at times acts as a spokesperson for this policy. Indeed, in an article titled "European Unity," the newspaper made a striking appeal to Germany and Austria-Hungary regarding the Cretan issue. The article argued that these two states, which had chosen to remain neutral on the Cretan issue in 1900, should now act in line with Europe's common interests and intervene in the issue in a spirit of alliance. In the same article, *Le Temps* stated that the Cretan issue could probably turn into a serious crisis and that in the event of a war breaking out in this context, the European states would claim the right to intervene in the island by asserting their "guarantor" status. Such a style clearly shows that a threatening language is being used and gives the impression that the newspaper is trying to force Germany and Austria-Hungary to choose sides within the existing balance of power.⁴⁶⁶ However, it is observed that *Le Temps* was trying to create public opinion not only with its written statements but also with its visual materials. Indeed, on page 99 of the Atlas published by the same newspaper, a clear visual message is given that Crete does not belong to the Ottoman Empire. While the lands under Ottoman rule are shown in a certain color on the maps on pages 99 and 101 of the Atlas and their belonging to Turkey is marked with the letter "T", the island of Crete is excluded from this classification and shown with a different color as an independent status. This situation is not only a cartographic choice, but also includes a propagandistic approach that questions and delegitimizes the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire over Crete. Such publications are noteworthy in that they show that the Cretan issue in the international press of the period was shaped not only by diplomatic negotiations but also by perception management in the eyes of the public.⁴⁶⁷

The potential rebellion capacity of the Muslim communities in India and Egypt is not the only factor behind the policy pursued by the United Kingdom in the resolution of the Crete issue. Although some circles claim that these communities would not pose a serious threat to the powerful armies of Europe despite the possibility of an uprising, the issue is not limited to military power balances. Because the Muslim communities in question also have a position that directly affects the economic and commercial interests of the British and

465 Tanin, 2 June 1910, 3; Adıyke, 1991, 55.

466 BOA, Y.PRK.HR. 30 – 95 (1901).

467 Kürsi-i Mîlî 7: 24 June 1910, 1.

other European states in the geographies where they are located. In this context, it is also known that a possible widespread social movement could seriously shake European investments and economic infrastructure in the region in the long term. Ahmed Tâceddin Efendi, the director of “*Cerîde-i İslâmiyye*” (The authority and publication organ of fatwa in the Ottoman Empire), drew attention to this situation in his article titled “*Blockage*” and stated that the Crete issue is not only a regional crisis but also of vital importance in terms of the unity of the Islamic world and the integrity of the caliphate. Taceddin Efendi emphasized in his article that Islam had spread to the most remote corners of India, and argued that Crete was one of the central elements of this structure, and that leaving the island to Greece would mean the disintegration of the foundation stones of the “*Kürsî-i Hilâfet*” (Caliphate Office). According to Taceddin Efendi, England took advantage of the internal problems experienced on a social and political level, opened up room for maneuver for Greece through the Crete issue, and in this way tried to strengthen its influence over the Ottoman Empire. According to him, this initiative should be evaluated as an intervention directed not only at Crete but also at the entire Islamic world. In this context, Ahmed Taceddin Efendi called on Muslim communities to boycott British influence and stated that this attitude could begin most simply by not using British goods. He particularly indicated the abandonment of British fabrics as the first step to be taken in this direction. Taceddin Efendi emphasized that the Islamic world as a whole should unite around the caliphate and that it was necessary to take a common stance on the Crete issue and give an effective response to British policy. This discourse is important in that it shows how the idea of “*Islamic unity*”, which was widely seen in the Islamist press of the period, was tried to be transformed into a concrete political line, especially in the Cretan crisis. It also reflects the use of the institution of the caliphate as a tool of legitimacy and mobilization in Ottoman foreign policy.⁴⁶⁸

The Ottoman government has decided to follow the developments of the issue of dissolving the Cretan National Assembly and appointing a new commissioner to the island. The Sublime Porte plans to send a note to the Four Protectorate States regarding the granting of administrative autonomy to Crete, provided that it remains under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Sultan. However, this step will be shaped according to the course of developments and the final decision will be made according to the diplomatic dimension of the issue.⁴⁶⁹ The Ottoman press once again reveals the weakening authority of the Ottoman Empire in the region and the increasing acts of violence by Christian elements against Muslims through the recent events in Crete in February 1911. While the targeting of Muslims in the attacks in Chania and Rethymno reveals the point

468 Kürsî-i Mîlîl 7: 24 June 1910, 2.

469 Türkiye 22: 17 November 1910, 3.

that the security crisis in Crete has reached, the passive attitudes of the great European powers known as the “Great Powers” are also criticized in the article. The article reminds us not only of the current violent incidents but also of the Ottoman claim of sovereignty over Crete and its obligation to protect the Muslim population as a requirement of this sovereignty; thus, it is implied that the Ottomans themselves should fulfill this duty without waiting for international intervention. *“However, every incident that occurs on Crete should be a bloody lesson for us Ottomans. Our sacred sovereignty over the peninsula, first and last, is due to us, as is the protection and protection of our oppressed Muslim brothers.”* It is emphasized that every bloody incident that takes place in Crete is not only a tragedy for the Ottomans, but also a painful warning and lesson. The expression “*sacred sovereignty*” here highlights the Ottomans’ sacred right to sovereignty over Crete, and indicates that this sovereignty includes not only political but also moral and religious responsibilities. The protection of Muslims is at the center of this responsibility. Therefore, the news is a shocking warning and reminder against the passivity of the Ottoman state. Accordingly: if the state does not fulfill this duty, both the land and the people will be lost visibly.⁴⁷⁰ Another news item is a reflection of the territorial losses experienced in the final period of the Ottoman Empire and the psychological and political effects of these losses. The news item dramatizes the loss of territories such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Eastern Rumelia as “*limbs torn from the body*”, drawing attention to the helpless state the state has fallen into. The issue of Crete is seen as a continuation of this fragmentation, implying that if this area is lost as well, it will no longer be possible to speak of a unity regarding the existence of the Ottoman Empire. The news item also reveals how the loyalty of the Greek population in Ottoman lands was systematically attempted to be changed through the activities of societies such as the Ethniki Eterya, supported by Greece. It is argued that the Ottomans should wage an honorable struggle against this situation within the framework of rights, justice and humanity. *“We will not work like Etniki Eterya; because that humanity works without knowing conscience, heart, seeing every means as legitimate, without hesitating to commit murders and commit monstrous atrocities. We will work in a way that honors Ottomanism by keeping rights, justice and humanity in mind.”* With these words, he defines the methods of activities carried out by the Etniki Eterya society, which represents Greek nationalism, in Crete as immoral and barbaric. This organization acts with an understanding that considers every means permissible in order to achieve its goals; it incites the Greeks, who are Ottoman subjects, against the state by using violence, oppression and propaganda. In contrast, the struggle of the Ottoman side should be based on justice, humanity and conscience. This comparison contains not only a political but also a moral

470 Sirat-ı Müstakim 126: 2 February 1911, 16.

claim of superiority. Accordingly, it emphasizes that the Ottomans should defend their existence not only as land but also as a civilization and system of values in a “civilized struggle.”⁴⁷¹ The political chaos that the Ottoman Empire was in and the issues shaped by external interventions are discussed in a historical context in various news articles. Accordingly, the current situation is not only the result of that moment but also of problems that have accumulated over the past. In one article, while the Tripoli issue is still hot, it is predicted that the Cretan issue will be added to it and that other issues will emerge in the future. The article emphasizes that it is wrong to see Crete as a conflict between the Ottomans and Greece alone; because the great powers, especially England, have long-term interests and policies in this matter. “*The issue of Crete is not an issue only in the minds of the Sublime State and the Greeks. Let’s not be so simple. Because 12 years ago, one of the British diplomats said, ‘Even if the Cretan Peninsula were to go under the sea, the British Government would surround that area with buoys and plant the British flag in the middle of it.’*” The geopolitical value of the island of Crete was symbolized with these expressions. Even if the island were to sink, Britain would not abandon its interests in that region and would maintain its sovereignty. This expression shows how passionate and calculated imperialist policies are. It is also a warning that the Ottomans’ current foreign policy approach may be inadequate in the face of such deep and planned strategies. The future of Crete depends on the calculations of the great powers; therefore, the Ottomans must act by taking this fact into consideration. It also points out that the future of the island in question cannot be determined without Britain’s permission. Here, the Cretan issue is seen as part of a pre-planned development that has not only regional but also international dimensions.⁴⁷² Another news item in the newspapers strongly criticizes the insensitivity of Ottoman society and the political weakness of the state through the tragic migration story experienced by Cretan Muslims. Along with the Tripoli immigrants, 285 Cretan Muslims also reached Istanbul. These immigrants had previously migrated to Tripoli due to the anti-Islamic persecution and insults they were subjected to in Crete, but now they were forced to move to Istanbul after facing similar pressures there. This wave of migration that started in Crete shows that the Muslim people were systematically excluded in different geographies. The phrases, “*If the disasters we have seen and experienced so far and are still seeing and experiencing have not been able to open our eyes to the lesson, shouldn’t the migration disasters of our Cretan brothers bring us to our senses?*” also emphasize that these migrations should now be a means of awakening. These tragic migrations experienced by Cretan Muslims one after the other are a social alarm. The implied idea in the news is:

471 Sirat-ı Müstakim 133: 23 March 1911, 14-15.

472 Sirat-ı Müstakim 162: 12 October 1911, 1.

“If even this much pain does not cause a stir, then when will we wake up?” This statement is a strong call and a shocking questioning directed at both the decision-makers of the period and the public. It is also stated that the incident should not be seen as a simple number but as a warning with deep meaning. While the aim of the Second Constitutional Era was to prevent such disasters, these events show that there were deficiencies in achieving the goals.⁴⁷³ The President of the Executive Committee of Crete, Monsieur Mihalyakis, expressed in a letter to the Times newspaper the desire of the Cretan people to join Greece based on their traditions. He also stated that the Cretans wanted to send a deputy to the Greek National Assembly. During the same period, political violence began in Chania, and a Muslim named Halil Piperaki was injured by Christians for no reason and later lost his life. Due to the tension in Crete, the government recruited 500 reserve soldiers, but due to the lack of military uniforms, they had to obtain them from Athens. On the 22nd, about 50 Muslim families emigrated from Chania to various Asian regions of the Ottoman lands on an Austrian steamer. The main reason for this emigration was the 14-year-long threat to the lives, property and honor of the Muslims. The statements, *“The sole reason for the migration is that the honor, life and property of the Muslims in Crete have been in great danger not just now, but for the last fourteen years. Although the world knows this today, the victims cannot speak out because they are Muslims.”* emphasize that the oppression that the Muslims in Crete are subjected to is not a temporary or sudden situation, but a fourteen-year systematic oppression process. Even more striking is the criticism that these injustices are known by the world public opinion, but no one speaks out because the victims are Muslims. Although the whole world knows this situation, the victims who are experiencing the *“silent oppression”* cannot make their voices heard because they are Muslims.⁴⁷⁴ According to another news, the attitude that England has recently taken on the Cretan issue is giving signals of a return to its historical traditions. Separatist movements in Crete gained momentum with the aim of achieving annexation to Greece by taking advantage of the Ottoman-Italian War. The Cretan Revolutionary Government made official announcements on behalf of the Greek king and held the Assembly meetings on his behalf. They also attempted to send deputies from Crete to the Greek Assembly. The Ottoman Government protested these developments and drew the attention of the allied states to the dangers that these actions could create. With the expressions, *“..It was obvious that the Ottoman army would also cross the Greek border. England confirmed beforehand that the following considerations put forward by the Ottoman government were true in the context of the government of patronage.”*, it was especially stated that if Greece turned a blind eye to these actions, it would be inevitable for the Ottoman army to cross the Greek border. England

473 Sırat-ı Müstakim 174: 4 January 1912, 13.

474 Sebilü'r-Reşad 3: 21 March 1912, 20.

initially approved these warnings of the Ottomans, finding them justified, and then, together with the other allied states, they took a common stance against the revolutionary government in Crete and announced that if such actions continued, they would land troops in Crete and reoccupy the island. England's support is the strongest expression emphasizing the diplomatic weight of the issue and the acceptance of the rightfulness of the Ottomans at the international level. The Ottoman State clearly stated that it was ready to respond in any way, including military intervention, regarding the Cretan issue; and for the first time, England supported this stance of the Ottomans, finding it "justified" (muhik). This was presented as a diplomatic victory for the Ottomans, who had been isolated for a long time, in the international arena. This support is important in terms of showing that the Cretan issue was no longer just an Ottoman-Greek conflict, but a broader issue in which the great powers were involved.⁴⁷⁵ The same news continued with Russia's preparations for Crete. The Russian government gave instructions to keep a military unit of one thousand people ready to be sent to Crete if necessary. "...permission was granted by the Ottoman government for the passage of the aforementioned forces through the Straits." This line strikingly shows how complicated the diplomatic dimension of the incident had become and the weak position the Ottomans were in. The Ottoman state was forced to allow the troops of another state to pass through its own straits and intervene in Crete, which it considered its own territory. This situation shows how much its claim of sovereignty over Crete had eroded in practice and how it had become open to external interventions. Not only Greece, but also major powers such as Russia were now preparing to have a say in Crete. The Ottoman government also allowed the passage of the Russian units in question through the Straits. Other protectorates, except Italy, decided to take similar military measures. These developments show that the situation in Crete directly concerns not only the Ottomans and Greece, but also the European states. On the other hand, the revolutionary government in Crete accelerated its efforts to send representatives to the Greek Parliament, and it was stated that approximately 25 candidates were nominated by different groups. The Cretan Christians seem to have made a definite decision to join Greece. During this process, the British newspaper Times praised Greek Prime Minister Venizelos, presenting him as "*the leader who saved Greece from chaos and brought it into a new era of prosperity.*" The newspaper praised Venizelos's success so highly that it stated that he could even be preferred over Greek philosophers and scholars.⁴⁷⁶ The news report states that the commander of the British warship Parmot took down the Ottoman flag along with all the state flags on a small island in Crete and raised the Greek flag instead. The flags were delivered to the relevant consulates, and the Ottoman flag was given to the German Consulate.

475 Sebilü'r-Reşad 5: 4 April 1912, 14.

476 Sebilü'r-Reşad 5: 4 April 1912, 18.

This action was carried out on the grounds that it was done on behalf of other major powers. The news report also states that this incident caused intense public demonstrations and that the public celebrated in favor of Greece. The statement, “...they lowered the Ottoman flag along with the flags of the aforementioned powers there on behalf of the Protectorate Powers.” The lowering of the flag, one of the last symbolic elements of the Ottoman Empire’s sovereignty on the island, and the raising of the Greek flag in its place symbolically confirms that the island has effectively passed to Greece. It also means an excess of authority and a violation of sovereignty in terms of international law. The statement that the British commander acted “on behalf of all major powers” shows that an attempt is being made to legitimize a unilateral action.⁴⁷⁷ The news item conveys the process of Crete’s annexation to Greece. The Greek King came to Crete with his delegation, performed a ceremony, and then hoisted the Greek flag on the castle. This event symbolically shows that the annexation was completed. The news item interprets this development not only as a political process, but also as a change with religious and cultural implications. The sentence “...He personally drew the Greek flag with the salibli (cross) on it on the fortress of Farka.”, in other words, the Greek King personally hoisting the flag on a castle in Crete, is a symbolic expression of the actual change of sovereignty. The description “salibli”, meaning crusader, goes beyond the objective limits of the news item and makes a religious reference. Such an expression shows that the loss of Crete was perceived by the Ottoman public opinion of the period not only as a political loss, but also as a religious and identity loss. This does not only mean a loss of territory, but also a loss of prestige for the Ottomans, the center of the caliphate. While the news describes this situation as the loss of a “whole continent”, it ends with a call for the Muslim people not to be forgotten, not to lose their morale, and to work with the hope that the island can be regained in the future.⁴⁷⁸ The annexation of Crete to Greece was officially announced in Athens on December 21st, and on this occasion, the consuls of the major powers serving in Crete visited the island. This visit was interpreted as the de facto recognition of Crete’s accession to Greece by the various states represented by the consuls. This development had significant effects both in Crete and in other regions. It is understood that some circles in Macedonia followed this process closely, especially during the period when the decision regarding the annexation of Crete was put into practice, and that they were uneasy about the postponement of other annexation possibilities. The annexation day fell on a Sunday, and ceremonies were held in churches in Crete for about a month regarding this development. The Cretan gendarmerie and students from some public schools also attended the official ceremonies.

477 Sebilü’r-Reşad 50: 20 February 1913, 18.

478 Sebilü’r-Reşad 276: 25 December 1913, 17.

However, it was stated that the celebrations held immediately after these ceremonies were quite dull and that the public did not show significant participation in these demonstrations. It was reported that after the ceremony, around ten Cretan gendarmes carrying lanterns in their hands, together with some local elements, paraded through the streets of the city and shouted “Zito” (long live), disrupting the general calm in the city. However, the local Cretan people were disturbed by such outbursts and felt great embarrassment due to this situation. Indeed, some of these people began to act more moderately and carefully during their duties. In general, it is stated that the excitement towards the annexation soon gave way to calm and that there was not much expectation in the public opinion regarding this development. It is seen that these events have been interpreted in different ways over time and continue to be evaluated from various perspectives.⁴⁷⁹ By 1914, Crete had been annexed by Greece. News reports indicating the structural discrimination and violations of religious freedoms faced by Muslims under Greek rule in Crete continued to circulate in the Ottoman public. When examined in the context of modern minority rights, cultural pluralism, and religious tolerance, the news reports provide important historical testimony. The increasing Greek influence on the island manifested itself particularly in discriminatory and assimilationist practices against the local Muslim population. One news report provides an example of the religious and social pressures faced by Muslims under Greek rule in Crete. Accordingly, the report recounts the events that developed when one of the three mosques in Crete was intended to be converted into a church. Local Muslim leaders were invited to discuss this request, but they stated that they could not respond without consulting among themselves. As a result of the negotiations that followed, it was decided that such an allocation could not be accepted because the mosque was the house of Allah. The news also stated that “...*Muslims who open their shops and shop on Sunday [...] were notified by the government to close their shops...*”, indicating that the issue was not only about property or administration, but also an intervention in religious lifestyle. The Greek administration is trying to impose a public order based on Christian religious practice on the entire island population, namely Muslims. Such practices show that the area of movement of Cretan Muslims in public life is narrowing and that their religious freedom is under threat.⁴⁸⁰

479 Tasvîr-i Efkar 949: 23 December 1913, 4; Adıyke, 1991, 67-68.

480 Sebilü'r-Reşad 280: 22 January 1914, 18.

CONCLUSION

The idea of nationalism, which gradually gained influence in Europe from the beginning of the 19th century, also opened the door to many political and social problems in the multi-national Ottoman State. This ideological orientation, which gained momentum especially after the French Revolution, also found a response among the non-Muslim communities living in the Balkans and Aegean islands under Ottoman rule; this situation paved the way for the emergence of uprisings against the central authority in these regions over time. In this context, the first group to achieve concrete political success in line with the goal of establishing a nation-state in the modern sense was the Greek people; after the rebellion process that started in the 1820s, they became the first element to separate from the Ottoman State by gaining their independence in 1830. When the process of separation of the Island of Crete from the long-term rule of the Ottoman Empire is examined in a historical context, it is seen that Crete, which was annexed to the Ottoman lands in 1669, has been the scene of different political, demographic and cultural transformations for approximately two and a half centuries. Ultimately, the island was separated from the Ottoman Empire as a result of nationalist movements that gained momentum in the last quarter of the 19th century, international interventions, and the inadequacy of Ottoman administrative reforms. The multi-actor, multi-layered, and dynamic nature of this process makes the Cretan issue a meaningful example within the general dissolution dynamics of the late Ottoman period, rather than being merely a regional conflict. The limits of the Ottoman administration, the breaking points in center-province relations, the determining influence of the international balances of the period, and the increasing influence of the modern nation-state imagination are clearly seen in both the British and Ottoman press. In addition, this separation process points to a structural problem area regarding the sustainability of the Ottoman multinational structure; it shows that the state's capacity to integrate different ethnic, religious, and cultural identities is running out. The separation of Crete should not be evaluated only as a loss of territory, but as a threshold in the transformation of the state structure and, ultimately, its dissolution.

During the two and a half centuries that Crete spent under Ottoman rule, the policies implemented by the central government were parallel to the general Ottoman provincial administration approach of the period. However, increasing social tensions, the rise of nationalist movements and the increase in international interventions from the 19th century onwards transformed Crete into a special problem area for the central authority. During this period, the Ottoman Empire developed both reformist approaches and intervened by using military force when necessary, in order to maintain its control over the island and

prevent disintegration. The reforms that came into effect within the framework of the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts aimed to establish political equality between the Muslim and Christian populations in Crete and aimed in particular to strengthen the loyalty of the Christian population to the state. In this context, regulations were made for the establishment of local councils and the education and justice systems; the administrative structure of Crete was also reorganized. The Cretan Regulation, which came into force in 1868, was an important step towards providing the island with an autonomous administrative structure and ensuring more active participation of Christians in the administration. According to the regulation, the administration of the island was left to a mixed assembly composed of both Muslim and Christian representatives; although the governor was appointed by the center, his powers were limited. The main aim of these reforms was to modernize the traditional “millet system” of the Ottoman Empire and keep the different religious and ethnic groups on the island under the same administrative roof. However, these practices fell far from meeting social expectations; they were perceived as a transitional step by the Christian population and as a concession by the Muslim population in which privileges were granted to Christians. This situation weakened both the internal integrity of the reforms and eroded trust in the central Ottoman authority in the eyes of both groups. The responses of the Ottoman Empire to the political crises in Crete were not limited to administrative regulations only; At times, harsh military interventions were also used. During the Great Cretan Revolt of 1866-1869, a serious military operation was carried out against the ongoing uprisings throughout the island; however, this intervention, although completely suppressing the rebellion, did not solve the root causes of the problem. Moreover, such harsh interventions caused the spread of anti-Ottoman propaganda in the international community; an anti-imperial discourse, shaped especially by the oppression of the Christian people, gained strength in the European press.

The Ottoman policies in Crete also reveal the transformation in the state’s central-provincial relations. The fundamental problem of the 19th century Ottoman reforms, the limited capacity to produce “localized solutions,” has been embodied in the example of Crete. Although reforms and military interventions provided temporary stability, they were not enough to transform the political aspirations of the islanders. In this context, it can be said that the Ottoman policy in Crete was reactive; rather than a strategic integration policy, it produced temporary solutions aimed at preserving the existing order. For example, in order to prevent disintegration in Crete, the Ottoman Empire tried to establish legitimacy through reforms on the one hand, while on the other hand, it aimed to establish order by using military force. However, this dual

approach could neither create a basis for consensus among the islanders nor eliminate the effects of international pressures. The Crete issue can be shown as a striking example of the erosion of the administrative boundaries and solution-producing capacity of the Ottoman Empire during the late modernization period. In the second half of the 19th century, the increasingly weakened central structure of the Ottoman Empire not only caused internal problems, but also created a ground open to external interventions. In this context, the Cretan issue became one of the areas where the conflicts of interest of the European states in the Eastern Mediterranean materialized. Both the rebelliousness of the Christian population on the island and the oppressive measures implemented by the Ottomans attracted the attention of the European public opinion and paved the way for the direct involvement of the great powers in the issue. By the end of the 19th century, Crete was no longer just an internal Ottoman issue, but a complex file that occupied a priority place on the agenda of international diplomacy.

The revolts that flared up again in Crete in 1896-1897 gained a different dimension when the islanders organized themselves around the demand for Enosis. During this period, the Kingdom of Greece began to follow an interventionist policy by using the developments on the island to its advantage; in 1897, it initiated a de facto unification by sending military forces to Crete. This initiative provoked a harsh reaction from the Ottoman Empire and led to a short-term war between the two states. Although the Ottoman army won this war militarily, the resulting diplomatic picture prevented the victory on the battlefield from turning into a political gain. The Ottoman state, which was the victor on the battlefield, left the table as a diplomatic loser. The Great Powers (England, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany) directly intervened in the Cretan issue immediately after the Ottoman-Greek War in the context of the classic "Eastern Question" of the late 19th century. The European powers, while not supporting the complete annexation of Crete to Greece, sought an interim solution that would not allow the Ottomans to maintain absolute control. In this context, an international intervention regime was established in Crete, and the island's administration was granted an autonomous status in 1898. According to this status, Crete would continue to be officially affiliated with the Ottomans but would be fully autonomous in its internal affairs. Prince George, the son of the Greek King, was appointed to head the administration; this situation was considered an important psychological threshold in line with the Megali Idea (Enosis) goal.

The autonomous administration of Crete in 1898 caused significant ruptures not only in the diplomatic level between states but also in the perception of public opinion. During this process, both the Ottoman and British publics

evaluated the developments within the framework of their own political and ideological perspectives; public pressure sometimes shaped the official policies of the states.

The British public, under the influence of increasingly strong liberal humanist values in the late 19th century, closely followed the situation of Christian elements living in Ottoman lands. News of the oppression of the Christian population in Crete under Ottoman rule was widely reported in the British press, especially after the rebellions of 1866 and 1897, and this reinforced the public's anti-Ottoman attitude. Following the declaration of autonomy, the steps taken towards the unification of Crete with Greece were generally welcomed; the new administration on the island was considered to be progress towards "civilization." The appointment of Prince George and the establishment of a mixed parliament were presented in British newspapers as the beginning of a "progressive" order; this discourse also coincided with Britain's interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, this support was not based solely on humanitarian concerns but was also linked to the strategy of increasing British influence in the region by weakening the Ottomans. In the last quarter of the 19th century, the British public's perception of the Ottoman Empire took on an increasingly negative frame. There are three main elements behind this perception. The first of these is liberal humanist sensibilities, the second is the "civilizing" discourse towards the East, and the third is Britain's geopolitical interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. During the uprisings in Crete in 1896–1897, the British press, especially in *The Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Chronicle* and similar newspapers, frequently reported news about the oppression of the islanders under Ottoman rule. These reports focused on the theme that Cretan Christians were "living under oppression"; narratives about Ottoman soldiers using violence were frequently used. Protestant missionary networks, especially in Britain, turned the Cretan issue into a kind of "moral obligation" and mobilized public opinion in this direction. This discourse also found an echo in the British parliament; the Foreign Office of the period increased its diplomatic pressure on the Ottomans in line with both public pressure and strategic interests. Indeed, after the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, Crete's autonomy despite the Ottoman victory was interpreted by the British public as a "gain for the civilized world." The appointment of Prince George, who was appointed to the island after autonomy, was frequently presented in British newspapers as a "guarantee of peace" and "the beginning of modern governance." Of course, this attitude was not only influenced by the protectionist approach, but also by Britain's aim to maintain its strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Greek influence of Crete meant that the Ottomans lost power in the region, while it strengthened Britain's influence against France and Russia. Therefore, this "conscientious pressure" shaped by

the British public opinion actually served to legitimize imperial interests.

The Ottoman public, on the other hand, approached the Cretan issue from a much different and contradictory perspective. The military victory in the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War was reflected as a source of great pride, especially in the Istanbul press, with an intense sense of nationalist enthusiasm and unity; the victory of the war was presented as a great success. In the Ottoman press, especially in newspapers such as *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, *İkdam*, *Servet-i Fünun*, *Sabah* and *Osmanlı*, the victory of the Ottoman army was extensively covered, and the public perception that the state was still strong was created. However, the fact that Crete was granted autonomy immediately after this victory and was effectively removed from Ottoman control created great disappointment and contradiction. This situation was interpreted as the diplomatic weakness of the state administration. The discourse that military victory resulted in diplomatic defeat was frequently emphasized, especially in intellectual circles and in the press. Thus, criticism was also made in the Union and Progress circles that the central government had bowed to external pressures. After the declaration of autonomy, although the Ottoman administration continued to maintain its “nominal sovereignty” over the island, the majority of the public viewed this development as a form of surrender and loss of prestige for the state. This period also represents a period when the public began to establish a more intense relationship with concepts such as “independence” and “sovereignty.” Despite the censorship of the press, the Cretan issue became a political agenda item that spread by word of mouth; especially among the ulema class and conservative public circles, the “loss of Crete” was interpreted as a great loss within the framework of the concepts of the caliphate and the ummah. In contrast, some Ottoman intellectuals after the Tanzimat argued that ignoring the complaints and demands of the Christians in Crete could lead to greater crises for the state. In this context, although autonomy was seen as a “belated but necessary solution” by some segments, this approach did not represent the general tendency of the public. In the years when the Committee of Union and Progress began to gain power, the Crete issue was turned into a “symbol of the weakness of the old administration”; the passivity of Abdulhamid II’s foreign policy was frequently criticized in this context. With the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era in 1908, the role of public opinion in political matters became more visible, and reactions to Crete’s de facto annexation to Greece were more openly expressed. The fact that Crete continued to be shown as Ottoman territory despite the decision to grant autonomy can be considered an indication of the state’s efforts to appease public opinion and maintain its legitimacy. Even during the period when the press was censored, news about Crete was widely discussed among the public, and especially in nationalist and conservative circles, the

loss of Crete was seen as a symbolic example of “the state weakening”. This emotional reaction in public opinion strengthened the idea that the Ottomans were losing ground not only militarily but also politically. In this context, the autonomy period comparatively reveals how two different publics approached administrative solutions and political legitimacy. For the British public, Crete was an area representing Western values against the Ottoman “backward eastern despotism”; for the Ottoman public, Crete was a symbol of the state’s surrender to external pressures and loss of reputation.

The appointment of the Prince to the island, along with the autonomy in question, meant a serious loss of political prestige for the Ottomans. The *de facto* administration on the island came under Greek influence, and the Ottomans only had nominal sovereignty. During this process, the attitudes of the European states also differed: While England and France advocated the preservation of the status quo by observing a policy of balance, actors such as Russia and Italy supported a more direct intervention. Thus, Crete became the scene not only of Ottoman-Greek relations but also of the power competition in European diplomacy. Crete’s transition to autonomy is a remarkable example in terms of international law and diplomacy. Because the direct intervention of external powers in the administration of a sovereign state, that is, a state that had the insignia of sovereignty on the island, brought into question the limits of application of the concept of “sovereignty” at that time. Within this framework, the Cretan issue can be evaluated as a model reflecting both the crisis of classical state structures and the birth pangs of the modern international system. Thus, the interventions of the European states in Crete accelerated the political transformation process on the island; It provided ground for the demands for the Megali Idea and almost completely eliminated Ottoman control over the island. While this situation left the future of Crete to the initiative of international powers, it also clearly revealed the Ottoman Empire’s gradually disintegrating provincial sovereignty. In 1908, the Cretan political elites, taking advantage of the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era in the Ottoman Empire and the administrative vacuum experienced throughout the Ottoman Empire, *de facto* declared the Megali Idea. Although this declaration was not immediately recognized internationally or by the Ottomans, *de facto* control of the island passed to Greece from that date on. Finally, with the signing of the London Treaty in 1913 and the subsequent Treaty of Athens, Crete was officially annexed to Greece. This development emerged as a result of the weakening position of the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars; the Cretan issue thus became an area of foreign policy in which the Ottomans could no longer intervene. The striking point in Greece’s Crete policy is that it has followed a long-term, patient and multi-faceted strategy. This strategy, which ranges

from direct military intervention to diplomatic pressure, from an emphasis on cultural unity to supporting political movements within the island, has been decisive in the process of Crete's separation from the Ottoman Empire. This process also reveals how a small nation-state can gain geopolitical advantage from the dissolution of large states and empires.

The difference between the British and Ottoman public opinions regarding the Cretan issue is not only cultural or ideological; it is also related to the differences in the functioning of the political systems. While the British public opinion was a structure with strong civil organizations that could directly put pressure on the government, the Ottoman public opinion was an area that was limited by censorship and authoritarian structure and found expression mostly in indirect ways. However, in both examples, the public opinion was not just a passive observer; it functioned as an active element affecting political decision-making processes. Accordingly, the period of Cretan autonomy was a multidimensional process shaped not only by diplomatic and military developments but also by the perceptions, values and reactions of the public opinions. The liberal discourse developed through the British public opinion and the national pride and fear of collapse that emerged in the Ottoman public opinion determined both the way this process was perceived and managed.

The issue of Crete was addressed from different perspectives by both the British and Ottoman publics, not only as a political and military issue, but also with many dimensions such as freedom, nationalism and Ottomanism, which were the most magical concepts of the period. In England, especially in the humor press, the turmoil on the island and the weakness of the Ottoman administration were frequently presented in a sarcastic and sometimes tragicomic manner, and this approach led the British to adopt a condescending attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman public opinion, the loss of Crete was seen as a national shame and an expression of anger towards foreign interventions. The separation of Crete from Ottoman rule was seen not only as a loss of territory, but also as a sign of the empire's damage to its international prestige and its inability to cope with internal turmoil, creating a deep sense of disappointment and betrayal among the Ottoman people. The most obvious common point between the perspectives of these two publics was that they approached and examined the issue of Crete as a political and social problem.

For the British public, Crete was more a part of geopolitical interests, the Mediterranean balance and the "Eastern Question". The weakening of Ottoman rule over the island was not seen as a tragedy by the British public, but as an indicator of an expected and sometimes even "deserved" collapse. For this reason, the British press and public approached the Cretan issue with a more reserved, cool-headed and often sarcastic eye. Their emotional reflexes were not

shaped around a lost territory or a wounded national honor; instead, they were formed around more strategic concerns such as the interests of their empire and the balance of power in the Mediterranean.

For the Ottoman press, the loss of Crete opened a deep wound regarding the empire's power, identity and even its future. Every Cretan rebellion or intervention fed the Ottomans' increasing sense of helplessness against external pressures and their fear of disintegration within. Moreover, Crete was a place where Muslim and Christian populations lived together, which led to the conflicts on the island being felt as a "betrayal" or "rupture" not only in political but also in religious and cultural terms. For the people, the loss of Crete meant not only a change in borders, but also the loss of something from the common memory, common values and the former power of the Ottoman world forever. For this reason, the issue turned into a much more personal pain in the Ottomans, one related to honor and existence.

In this holistic context, it cannot be considered a coincidence that the great powers trying to determine the balance of power in the Mediterranean focused on the Cretan issue and put pressure on the Ottomans not only diplomatically but also strategically. The Ottomans' efforts to dominate this island eventually exhausted both their economic resources and strained their political resistance.

When all these developments are taken into consideration, it is clear that the separation of Crete from the Ottoman Empire was a multi-layered process that cannot be explained by a local secession movement or external intervention alone. This event is located at the intersection of intra-state transformation crises, the limits of modernization efforts, the impact of foreign policy on domestic politics, and international balances of power. The loss of Crete is a symbolic example of how the Ottoman Empire's efforts to modernize on the one hand and preserve its classical state structure on the other hand historically turned into a contradiction. Similarly, the process of Crete's separation from the Ottoman Empire is a specific example that embodies the multi-faceted dissolution processes that the state experienced at the beginning of the 20th century, both with its causes and its results.

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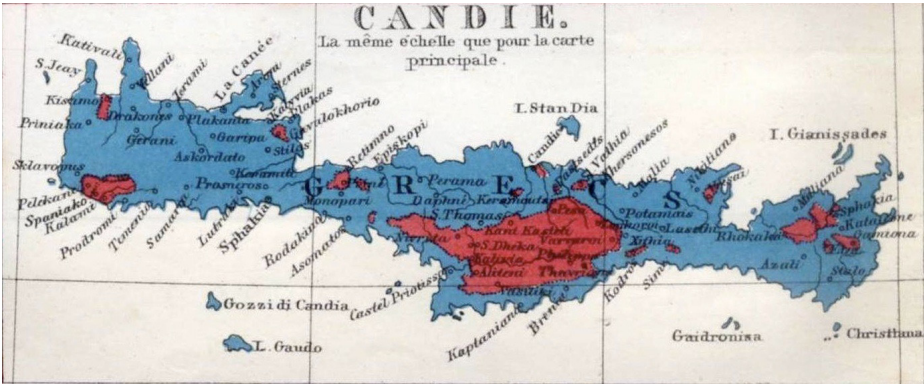
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APPENDIX



Graphic 1: Distribution map in Crete in 1861 - Red: Turks - Blue: Non-Muslims (non-copyrighted)



Graphic 2: Plan of the Island Divided by the Four Great Powers (non-copyrighted)



Graphic 3: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 27 February 1897, s. 103.

A cartoon published in Punch magazine about the Cretan crisis of 1897 reflects the foreign policy perception of the British public of the period and the ambivalent attitude of the Great Powers in an ironic language; the attitude of John Bull, representing England, in “forced neutrality” towards the Ottoman and Greek figures but sympathetic towards Greece, reveals both the concern to preserve the status quo and the emotional support for Greek expansion, while at the same time criticizing the contradictory nature of the interventionist diplomatic understanding of the European states..⁴⁸¹

481 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 27 February 1897, 103.



Graphic 4: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 6 March 1897, s.115.

The cartoon titled “The Bone of Contention” published in Punch magazine on March 6, 1897 satirizes the pro-Greek and ambivalent attitude of the European great powers during the Crete Crisis, while also revealing how the competition in the British imperial press affected foreign policy discourse; through a dog holding Crete in its mouth and the figure of “Europe” telling it “Good, doggie! Give it up – let missis have it!”, it is allegorically conveyed that the island has become an object open to international intervention and diplomatic manipulation, like a “bone” in the Ottoman-Greek conflict; and

that the European approach that excuses or encourages Greek aggression is interpreted as a tendency to marginalize Ottoman sovereignty in both the press and the public.⁴⁸²



Graphic 5: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 13 March 1897, 127

Another cartoon published in *Punch* in the context of the Cretan Crisis of 1897 satirically reflects how Europe intertwined the discourse of humanitarian intervention with the reflex of preserving the political status quo; when the figure of “Dame Europa” presents the armed and threatening Ottoman soldier

⁴⁸² *Punch, Or The London Charivari*, 6 March 1897, 115.

as a gentle protector to the weeping “Little Crete” and Lord Salisbury’s speech characterizing the Ottoman military presence as a guarantee of order, the cartoon stands out as a powerful visual text criticizing both Britain’s interest-based foreign policy and the moral hypocrisy of European public opinion; this representation symbolically reveals how power politics was prioritized over the security of the local population in the Cretan issue.⁴⁸³

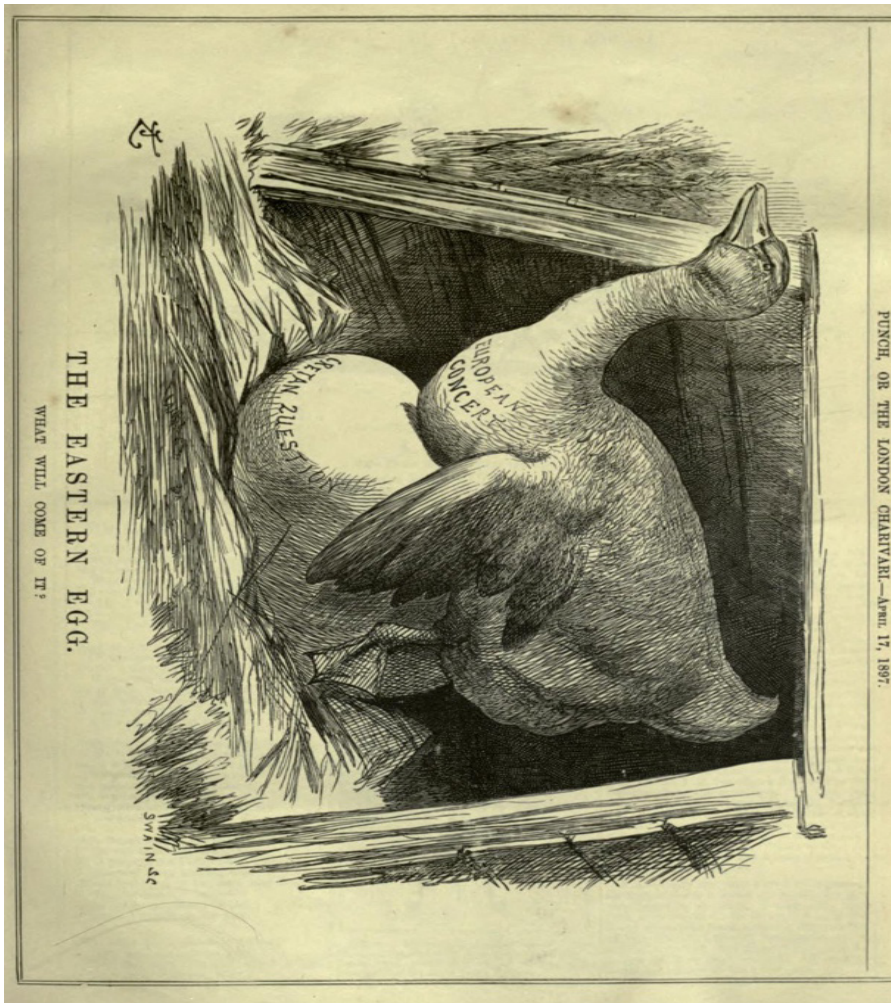


Graphic 6: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 20 March 1897, 139.

Another Punch cartoon published during the Cretan Crisis of 1897 presents the possibility of a conflict between Ottoman and Greek forces as a stage play, while mockingly criticizing the attitude of European states that were

⁴⁸³ Punch, Or The London Charivari, 13 March 1897, 127.

unwilling to intervene and assigned responsibility to each other; while Ottoman and Greek figures hiding their weapons imply that the parties were ready for conflict behind their apparent cautious stance, the European representatives in the background on the boat called “Europa” saying “You go first!” symbolize the collective inertia of the great powers and their tendency to evade diplomatic responsibility; thus, the cartoon strikingly demonstrates the contradiction between the rhetoric of humanitarian intervention and real political interests, and how Europe avoided taking real responsibility for the conflict.⁴⁸⁴

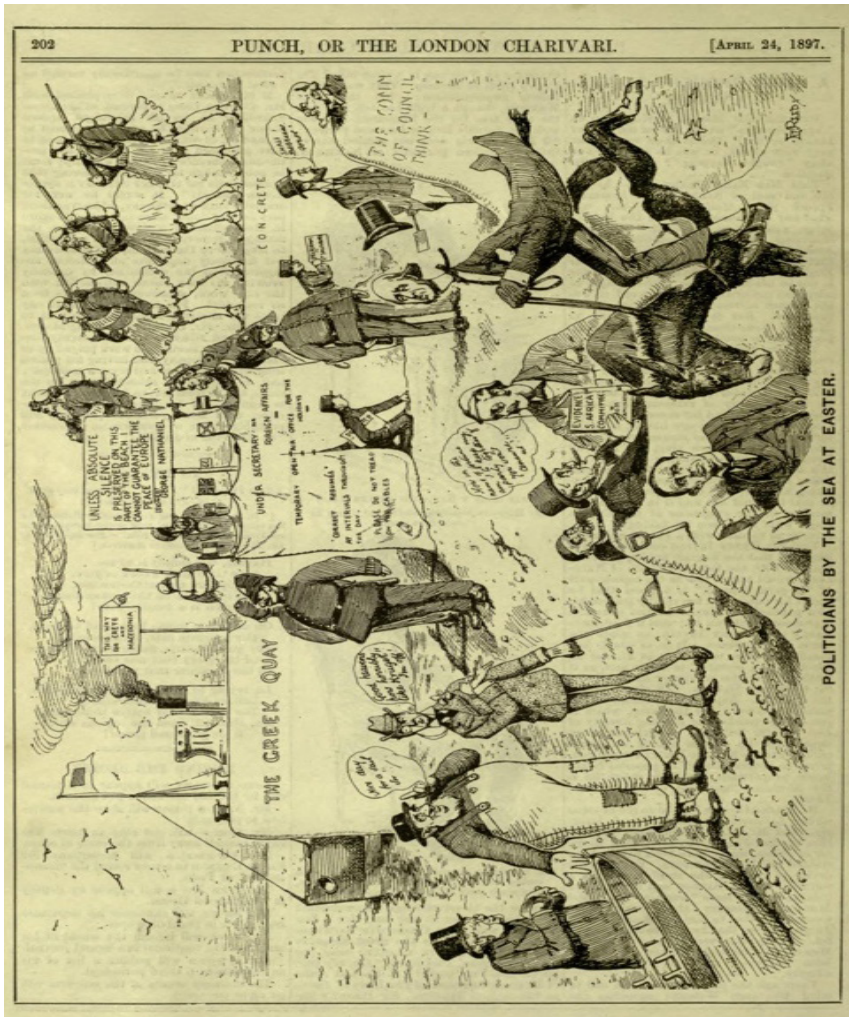


Graphic 7: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 17 April 1897, 187.

Another Punch cartoon about the Cretan Crisis of 1897 allegorically addresses the interventions of European states in Ottoman lands, and with a goose with the inscription “Council of Europe” hatching on an “Eastern

484 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 20 March 1897, 139.

Question” ostrich egg bearing the phrases “Greece” and “Turkish Supremacy in Crete”, it associates the great powers’ claim to manage the crisis with a passive but controlling strategy; while the uncertainty about what will hatch from the great egg is emphasized with the question “What will come of it?” at the bottom of the cartoon, this image makes visible through satire the real intentions behind Europe’s diplomatic rhetoric, the conflicts of interest between the powers, and the public’s concerns about the long-term consequences of the interventions.⁴⁸⁵



Graphic 8: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 24 April 1897, 202.

A Punch cartoon published at the peak of the Cretan Crisis in 1897 criticized the interventions of European states in the Eastern Mediterranean, while depicting the complexity and chaotic structure of the diplomatic process in an

⁴⁸⁵ Punch, Or The London Charivari, 17 April 1897, 187.

ironic manner. In the cartoon, a donkey representing the “Eastern Question” symbolizes the efforts of each diplomat to solve this problem in line with their own interests, while the failure and contradictory attitudes of each actor in the face of this effort emphasize the futility of the diplomatic process. The great powers representing the multilateral interventions in Crete were depicted with frivolous expressions and absurd behaviors, which expressed Punch’s criticism of the inconsistent and complicated diplomatic moves of the Council of Europe. While reflecting the efforts of the European powers to remove the Ottoman presence in Crete, the cartoon satirizes the ineffectiveness and uncertainty of these interventions, ironically revealing that multilateral interventions would end in fruitless conflicts.⁴⁸⁶



Graphic 9: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 1 May 1897, 211.

⁴⁸⁶ Punch, Or The London Charivari, 24 April 1897, 202.

A Punch cartoon published during the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 allegorically depicts the role of Europe in intervention and the legitimating nature of this intervention. In the cartoon, the figure of “Europa”, dressed in classical Greek armor and raising her hand instead of a sword, symbolizes her interventionist position by saying “Enough!” This gesture reflects Europe’s power to intervene in the course of the war and its claim to achieve peace, despite its apparent neutrality. The Greek warrior is shown kneeling, defeated, while the Ottoman soldier assumes a strong stance, emphasizing his superiority. The destruction and smoke in the background symbolize the immediate consequences of the war. The cartoon criticizes Europe’s efforts to stop the war by controlling both sides, and reveals the ambivalent and contradictory nature of the discourse of “peaceful intervention”, as a reflection of the West’s desire for control over the East. The feminine image of Europe also symbolizes the West’s desire to control the outcome of the war while asserting its moral superiority. This cartoon displays a structure that criticizes the imperial politics of the period and the British public’s approach to the conflict.⁴⁸⁷



Graphic 10: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 8 May 1897, s. 223.

⁴⁸⁷ Punch, Or The London Charivari, 1 May 1897, 211.

In a cartoon published in the context of the 1897 Greco-Turkish War, King George I of Greece is depicted in Hamlet costume as an indecisive and helpless figure. The reference to Shakespeare's famous tirade emphasizes the king's being caught between political pressures and foreign interventions. The chaos in the background symbolizes the political uncertainty in Greece and the lack of control of the nationalist agenda. This representation reflects the criticisms in the British public opinion and provides an allegory for the instability of Greek leadership and the civilizing discourse of Europe.⁴⁸⁸



Graphic 11: *Punch, Or The London Charivari*, 15 May 1897, 235.

488 *Punch, Or The London Charivari*, 8 May 1897, 223.

In a cartoon about the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, Abdulhamid II is presented as a powerful and victorious figure, in contrast to the traditional “Sick Man” image. The figure, carrying a sword and a document with the words “To Athens”, mocks the Western discourse on the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. While the cartoon emphasizes the Ottoman military power and its challenge to the West, *Punch* magazine reflects this situation ironically by reversing the usual representational patterns. Accordingly, it also includes a warning to both the British public and other European powers, such as “the Ottomans are still a military power and should not be underestimated”.⁴⁸⁹



Graphic 12: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 22 May 1897, 247.

⁴⁸⁹ Punch, Or The London Charivari, 15 May 1897, 235.

In another cartoon in *Punch* magazine, after the Ottoman-Greek War, Sultan Abdulhamid II thanks a Greek figure who has surrendered, implying that the Ottomans have regained their power. This representation, which reverses the “Sick Man” discourse, conveys the message that the war was not only a military victory for the Ottomans, but also a symbolic and diplomatic one. While the ruins in the background remind us of the devastating effects of the war, doubts about the permanence of peace persist in the European public.⁴⁹⁰

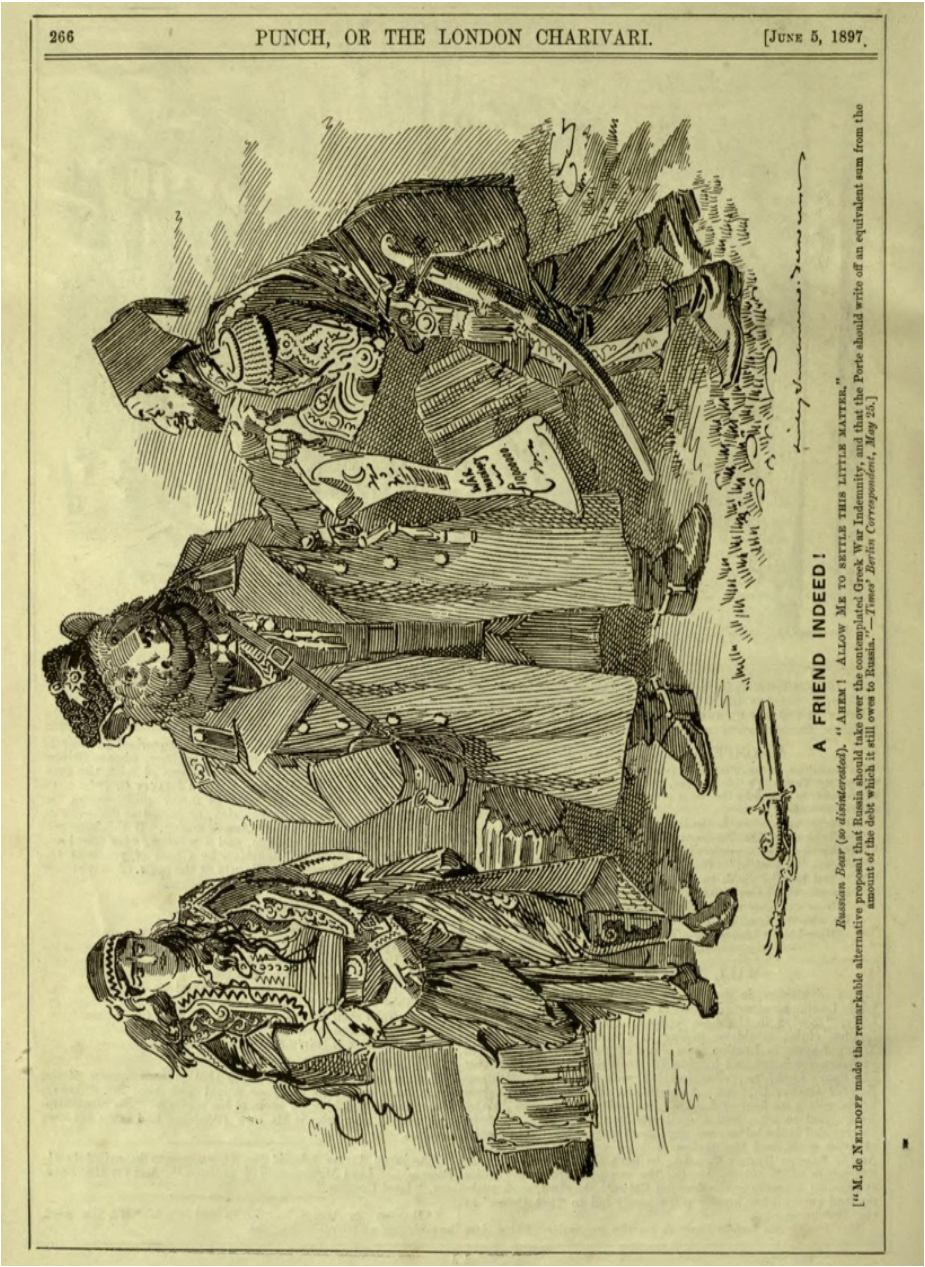
490 *Punch, Or The London Charivari*, 22 May 1897, 247.



Graphic 13: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 29 May 1897, 259.

In a Punch cartoon, Abdulhamid II is presented as a ruthless figure in the context of post-war Ottoman demands, equated with Shakespeare's Shylock. The European figure opposite him represents diplomatic intervention and international law. While the cartoon criticizes the diplomatic restrictions that followed the Ottoman military victory with a literary metaphor, it also reinforces an anti-imperial discourse with orientalist and anti-Semitic imagery.⁴⁹¹

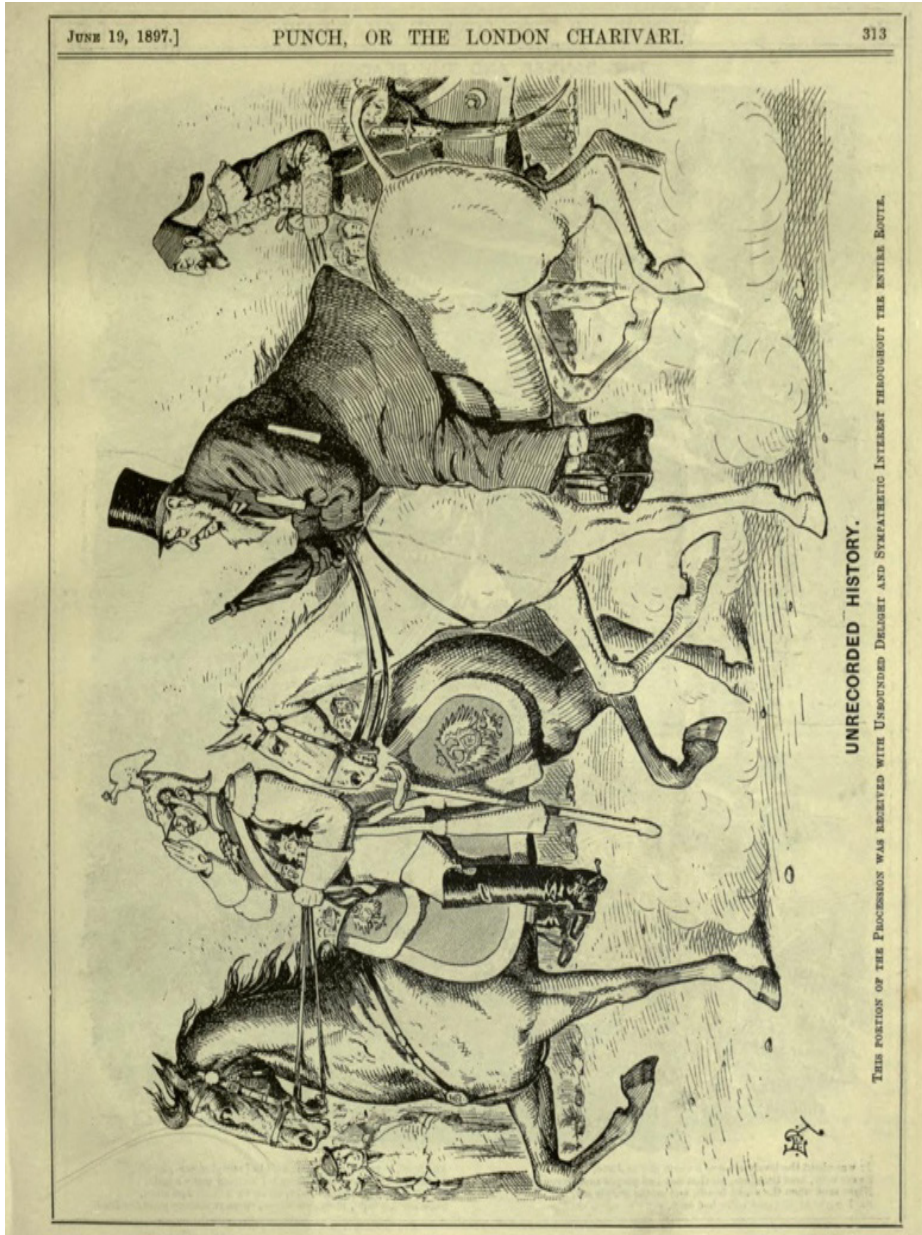
491 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 29 May 1897, 259.



Graphic 14: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 5 June 1897, 266.

The cartoon, published after the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, emphasizes that the Ottomans, despite their brief gains in power, were unable to achieve lasting stability in international politics. While Sultan Abdulhamid II, adorned with symbols of victory, shows sarcastic gratitude to Russia, Russia is satirized as an ally based on interests under the title “A Friend Indeed!” The cartoon presents a

narrative that balances the Ottomans' military success with diplomatic fragility, drawing attention to the pragmatic nature of power relations.⁴⁹²

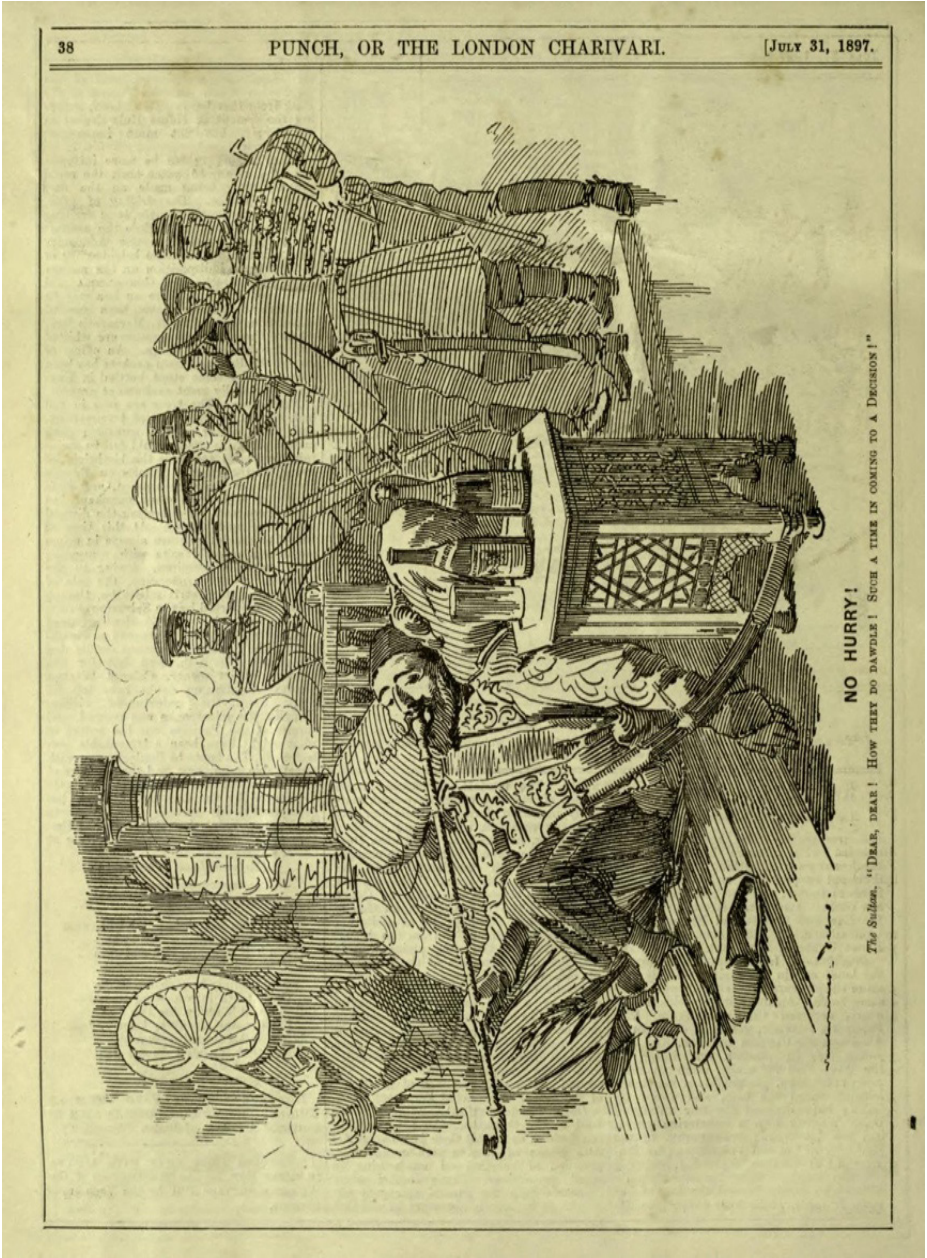


Graphic 15: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 19 June 1897, 313.

A cartoon published after the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War satirizes the selective and distorted official narratives created in the aftermath of the war. A parade is centered around the Ottoman Sultan, with the defeated Greek figure

⁴⁹² Punch, Or The London Charivari, 5 June 1897, 266.

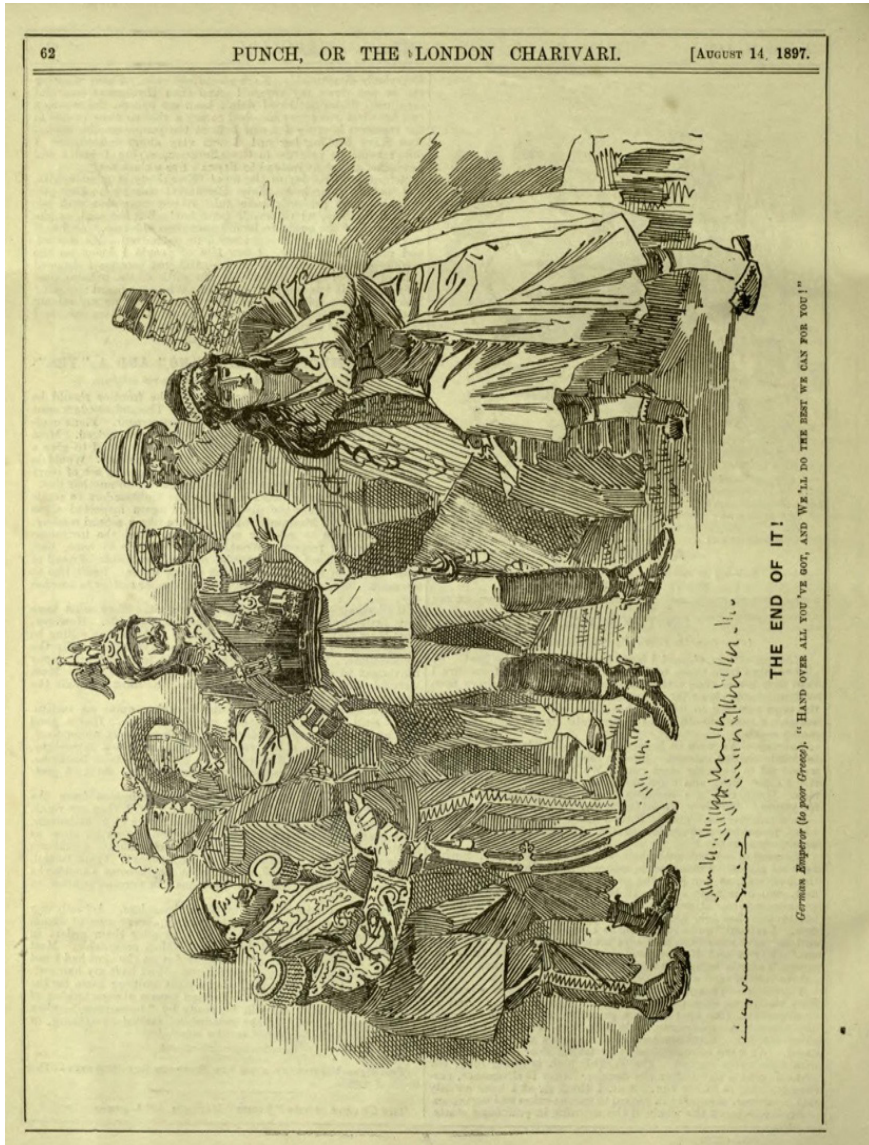
being portrayed in a derogatory manner. The cartoon critically reflects how international powers interpreted the victory in their favor, presenting the public with a false narrative of victory, and ignoring the complex reality of the war.⁴⁹³



Graphic 16: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 31 July 1897, 38.

493 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 19 June 1897, 313.

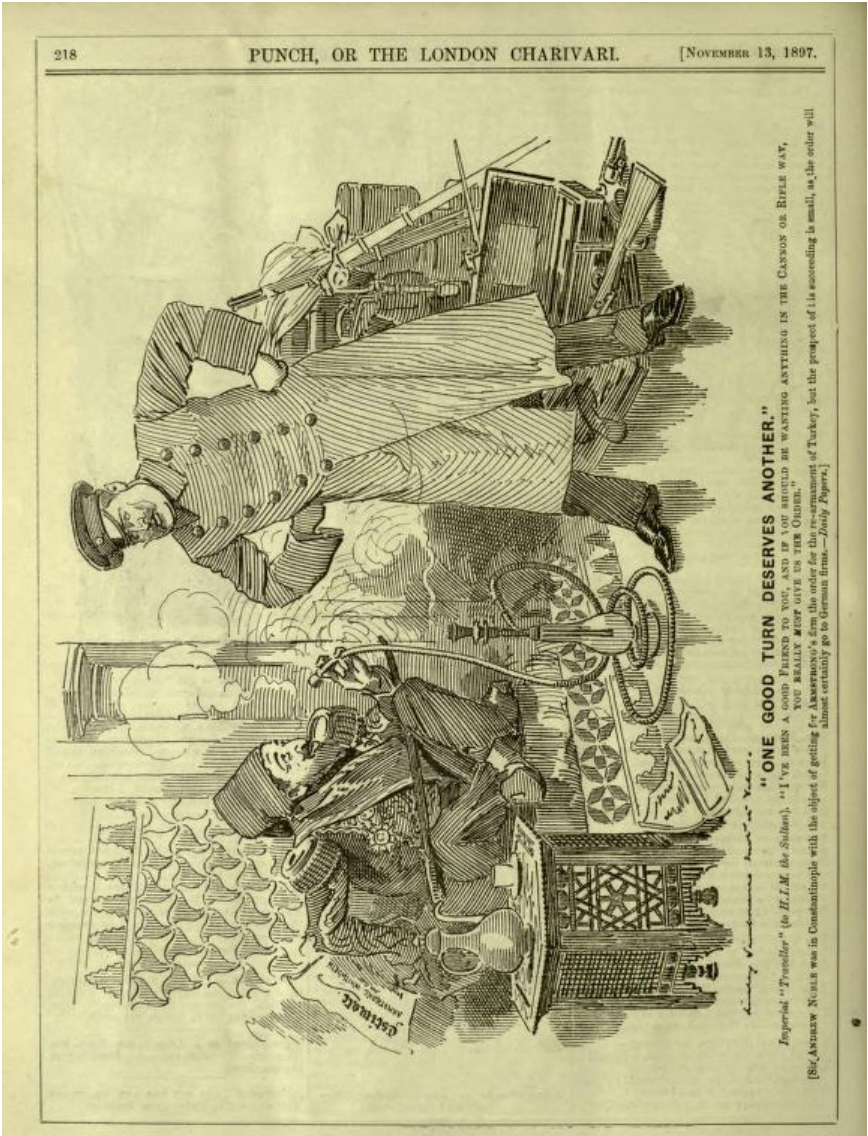
A Punch cartoon titled “No Hurry!” published after the 1897 Greco-Turkish War criticizes the international inconsistency regarding the Cretan crisis. The Ottoman Sultan is depicted in a relaxed pose smoking a hookah, while indecisive and ineffective European representatives wait in the background. The cartoon satirically reflects Europe’s delayed diplomatic intervention and the passive but cunning stance of the Ottomans taking advantage of this process.⁴⁹⁴



Graphic 17: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 14 August 1897, 62.

494 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 31 July 1897, 38.

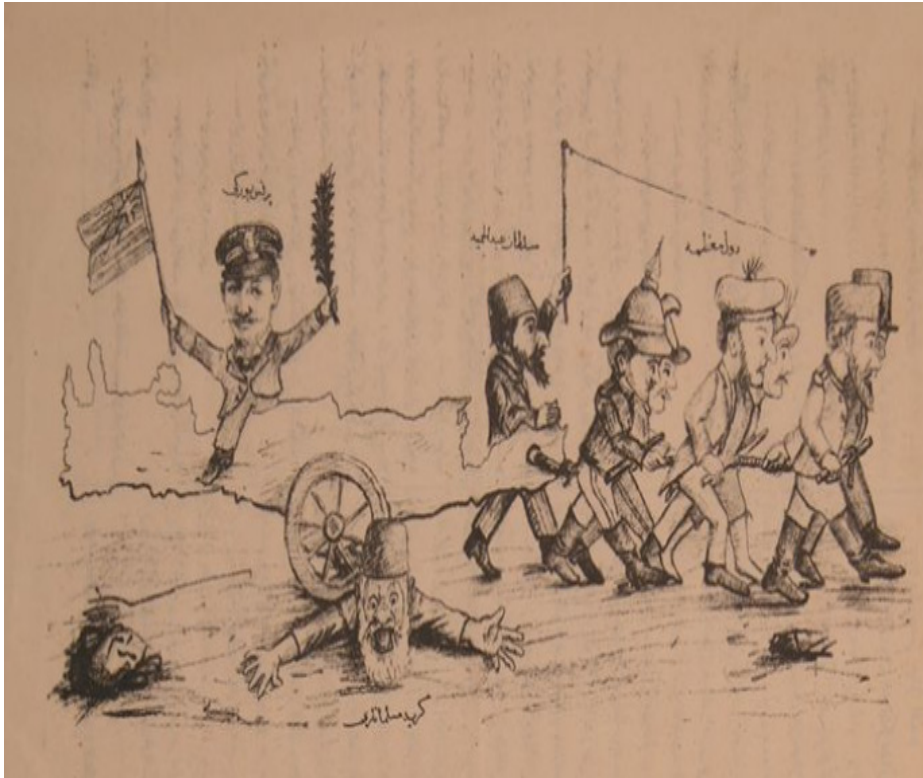
The cartoon titled “The End of It!” critically reflects the intervention of the great powers regarding the Cretan issue after the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War. While the passive female figure in the middle symbolizes Crete, the military figures around her, drawn to represent the European powers, emphasize their own interests with the claim of producing a solution. The cartoon satirizes this interventionist process in which Crete was rendered helpless from both an imperial and sexist perspective.⁴⁹⁵



Graphic 18: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 13 November 1897, 218.

495 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 14 August 1897, 62.

The cartoon titled “One Good Turn Deserves Another” satirizes Ottoman-British relations as interest-based diplomatic bargaining. England, represented by the John Bull character, is depicted as the dominant party expecting various concessions from the Ottomans under the pretext of aid, while Abdulhamid II is drawn as a passive, indebted figure. The cartoon emphasizes that imperial diplomacy is based on pragmatic rather than moral grounds, and that the Ottomans are identified with backwardness through orientalist elements.⁴⁹⁶

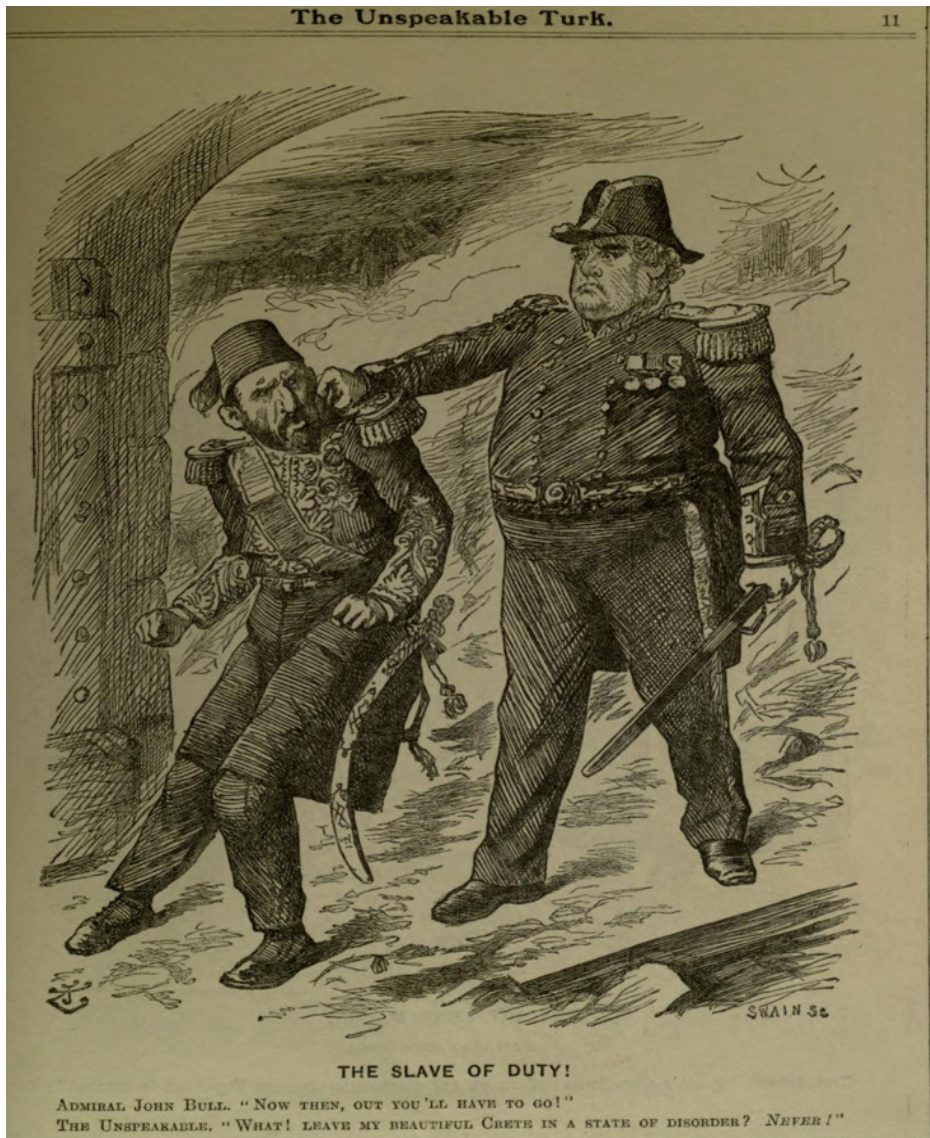


Graphic 19: Beberuhî 2: 1 March 1898, 5

In the cartoon of Beberuhî magazine dated March 1, 1898, the Cretan issue was addressed through a car metaphor, satirizing Prince George’s settlement on the island with the support of European powers. While the figure of Abdulhamid II passively carries a “Great Powers” banner, the figure crushed under the car represents the victimization of the Cretan Muslims. The cartoon criticizes the passive position of the Ottomans and the injustices suffered by the Muslim people in a humorous style.⁴⁹⁷

496 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 13 November 1897, 218.

497 Beberuhî 2: 1 March 1898, 5; Menekşe, 2018a, 457-458.



Graphic 20: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 24 September 1898, 11.

The figure representing the Ottomans (referred to in the cartoon as “The Unspeakable Turk”) is being forcibly removed from Crete by John Bull, representing England. There were frequent uprisings against Ottoman rule in Crete, and the island became a major conflict area between the Greeks, who wanted to unite with Greece, and the Ottoman administration. The cartoon denigrates the Ottoman rule in Crete, emphasizing the pressure from the West to remove the Ottomans from the island. The captions below also sarcastically portray the Ottoman resistance to giving up Crete.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁸ Punch, Or The London Charivari, 24 September 1898, 11.



Graphic 21: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 16 May 1906, 34.

The Ottoman figure, represented as the "Grand Turk", retreats in a frightened and powerless manner, while a British sailor (British Tar) stands in a threatening position opposite him. The expression in the cartoon ("Touch but a single hair of my head and i submit!") sarcastically depicts the Ottoman weakness and the rapid retreat rather than resistance against any external threat. This drawing from 1906 offers a critical commentary from a British perspective on the Ottoman's crumbling authority in the international arena.⁴⁹⁹

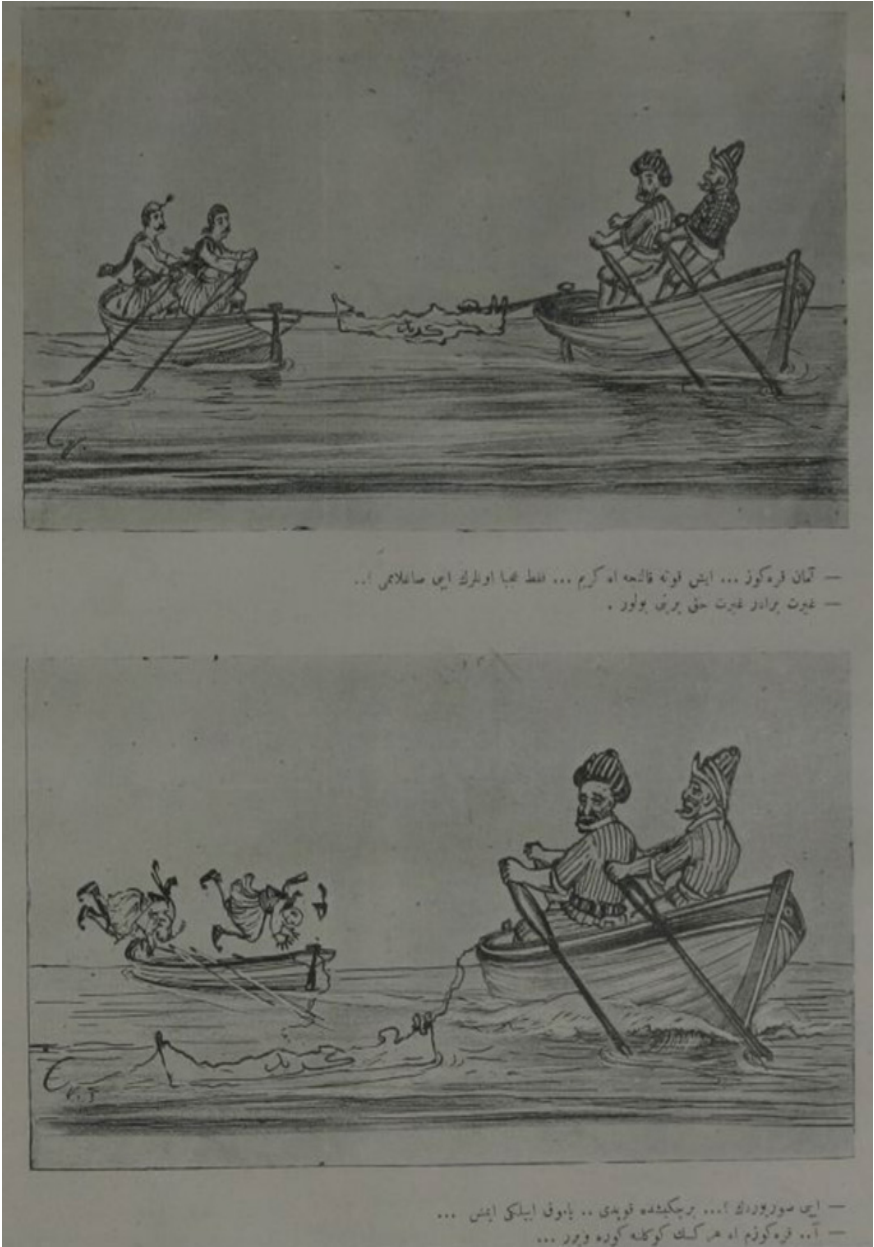
⁴⁹⁹ Punch, Or The London Charivari, 16 May 1906, 34.



Graphic 22: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 10 February 1909, 31.

It was published in Punch magazine and humorously addresses the weakening situation of the Ottoman Empire within the scope of the "Eastern Question". In the cartoon, the Ottoman ("The impecunious Turk") is represented in a warrior costume but powerless, while a bear (representing Russia, here called "Fairy Bruina") is shown trying to broker peace in the form of a fairy. There are other figures representing Austria and Bulgaria in the background. The dialogues in the drawing are also quite important: Russia is trying to prevent war in Eastern Europe and create an environment in its own interest; but financial restrictions

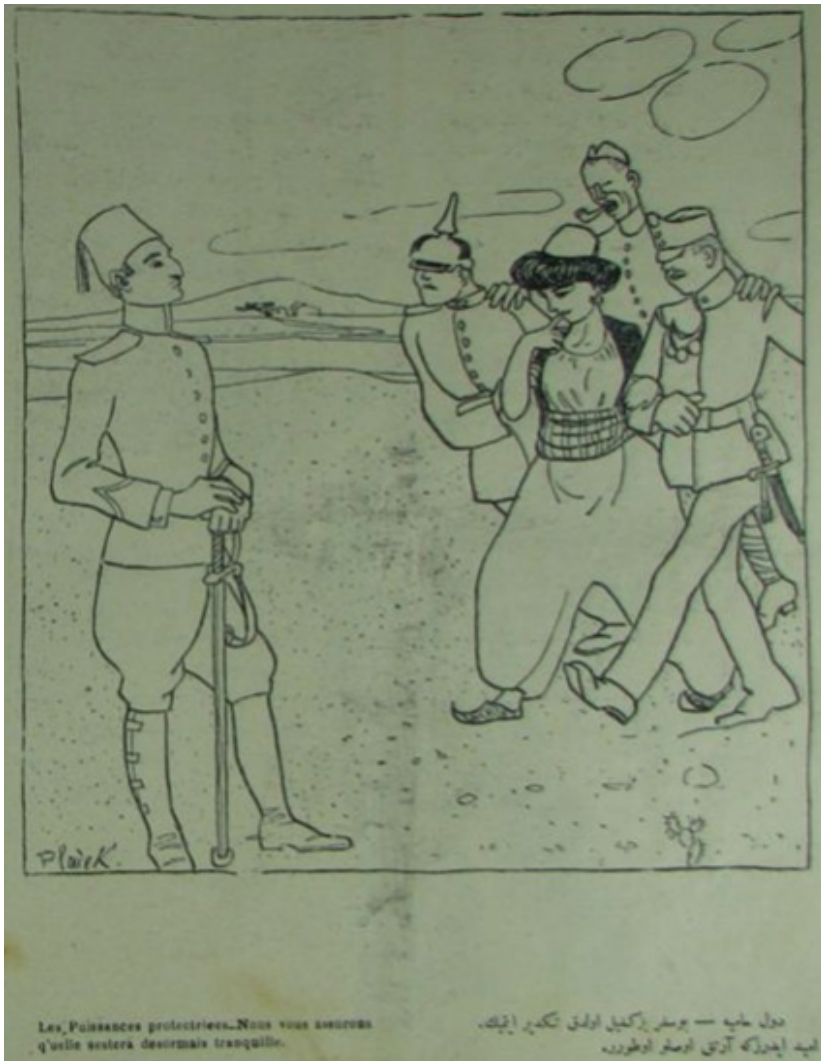
(“Small Cheque”) disrupt these plans. This symbolizes Russia’s financial and political tightness. We see that the Ottoman is also shown as a powerless, ineffective actor.⁵⁰⁰



Graphic 23: Karagöz 111: 19 August 1909, 4.

500 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 10 February 1909, 31.

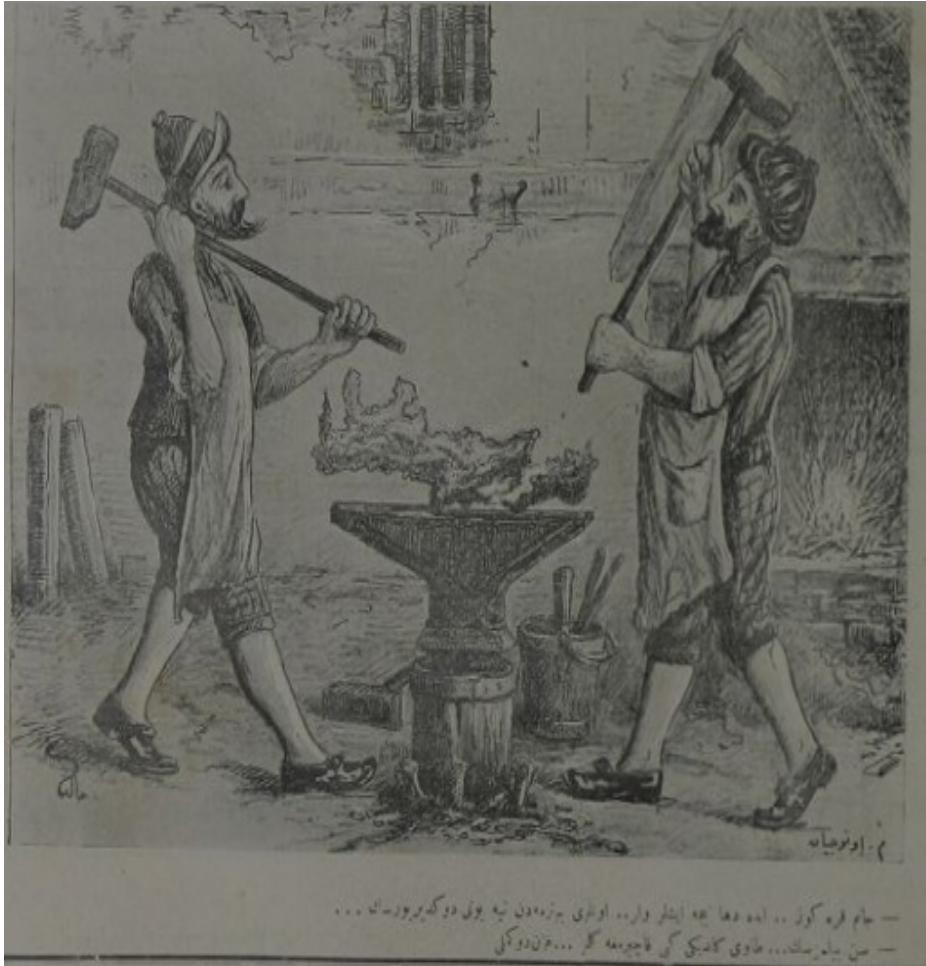
The Ottoman cartoon criticizes the efforts of the European powers to manipulate the island according to their own interests in the Crete Question. In the upper scene, it is stated that while the European representatives and the Ottomans are trying to pull an object symbolizing Crete from both sides, the Europeans in the boat resist and it becomes difficult for them; in the lower scene, it is explained that while the Ottoman representatives wait calmly, the Europeans' rope is broken, that is, their attempts are unsuccessful. This cartoon emphasizes the ineffectiveness of the Western interventions in the Ottoman press, and conveys the message that the Ottomans are exhibiting a calmer and more resilient attitude.⁵⁰¹



Graphic 24: Kalem 52: 9 September 1909, 8.

⁵⁰¹ Karagöz 111: 19 August 1909, 4.

Kalem Magazine symbolically deals with the issue of Crete through the relationship between an Ottoman man and his wife, Kreta. The role of Europe as “protective powers” is criticized; it is emphasized that these interventions are temporary and ineffective. In the cartoon, Crete (Kreta) is brought back after fleeing to Greece, but she is in a state of unreliable guilt. The subtext implies that the public believes that Crete will eventually join Greece again. While Kalem portrays Crete as a living and independent character, other publications (Karagöz, for example) portrayed her as an inanimate object.⁵⁰²

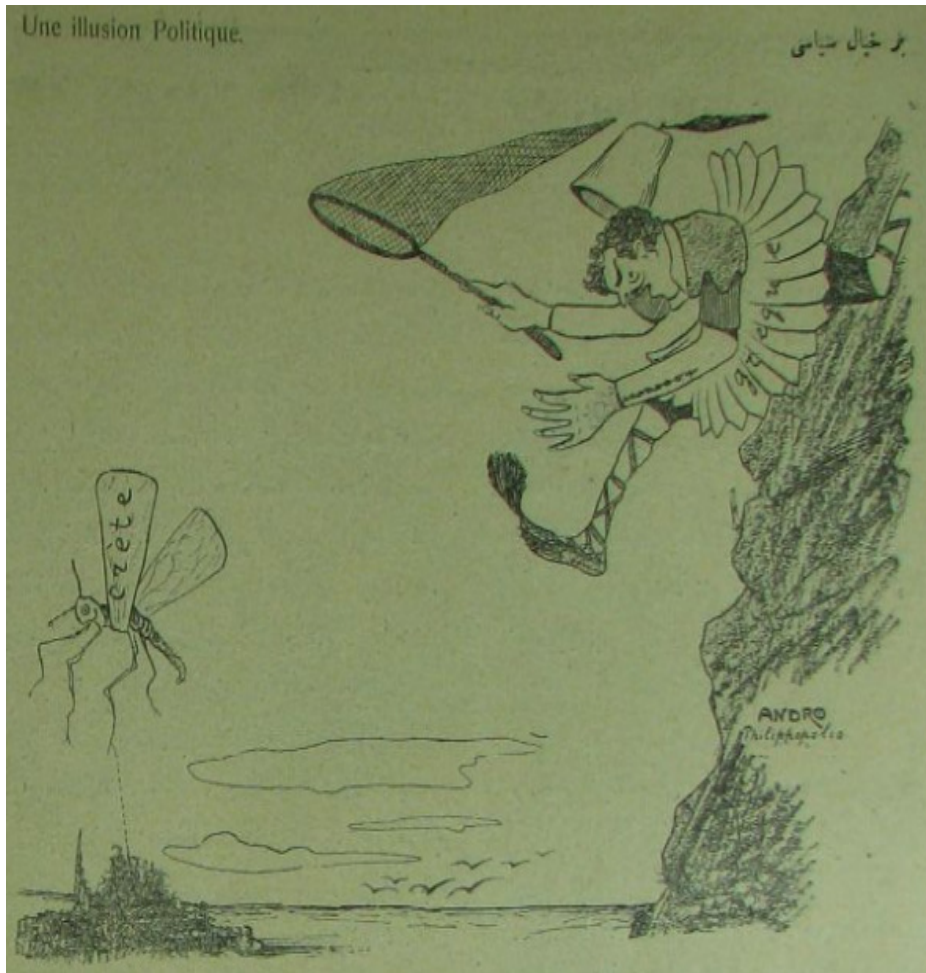


Graphic 25: Karagöz 142: 20 November 1909, 1.

Another cartoon discusses the importance given to the Cretan issue in Ottoman domestic public opinion. While Karagöz argues that the issue must be resolved urgently, Hacıvad adopts a more cautious approach. Karagöz’s statement “it is not right to let it pass as it comes” indicates that action must be

502 Kalem 52: 9 September 1909, 8; Heinzelmann 2004, 136.

taken when the time is right. Hacivad's objection implies that other domestic issues must also be taken into consideration, that is, that there are other priorities as well as the solution of Cretan. The cartoon satirically criticizes the fact that the Cretan crisis led to different perceptions of priorities within the Ottoman Empire and the indecisiveness experienced in the search for a solution.⁵⁰³



Graphic 26: Kalem 67: 23 Aralık 1909, 4.

The Greeks' attempt to wrest Crete from the Ottomans is depicted as an unrealistic dream. The Greek figure, who tries to catch a small butterfly named "Creta", falls from the rocks into the sea without success. The cartoon criticizes Greece's Cretan policy on the grounds of strategic weakness and wishful thinking, and emphasizes the futility of this effort from the Ottoman perspective. Accordingly, it shows that the Greeks' attitude towards the Cretan issue was underestimated by the Ottomans, and that the Greek side took a hasty

⁵⁰³ Karagöz 142: 20 November 1909, 1.

and careless approach to the issue. Pursuing a political illusion will not bring them any gain and will only lead to their downfall.⁵⁰⁴

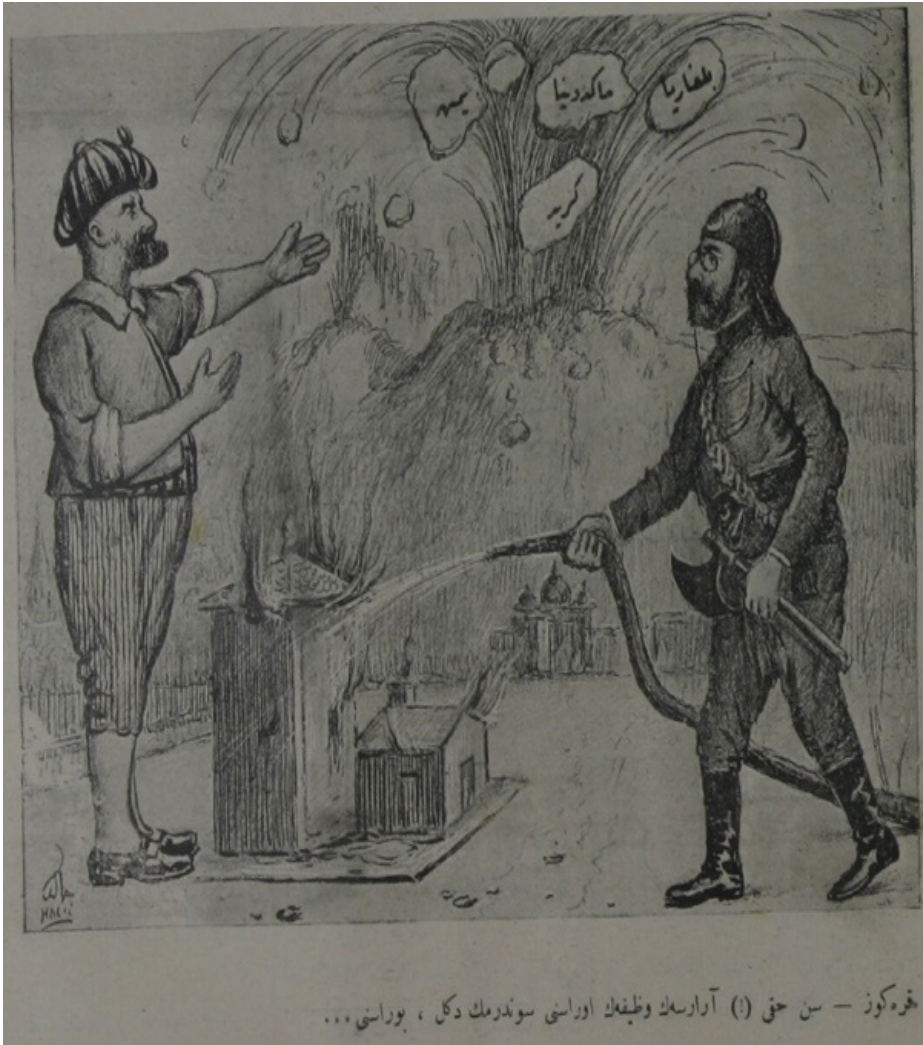


Graphic 27: Kalem 71: 20 January 1910, 4.

It satirizes the fragility of the Ottoman Empire in the face of multiple internal and external crises. The state's problems are referenced through the suitcases carried by the Grand Vizier, the cat symbolizing budgetary difficulties, the figure representing the Yemeni rebellion, and the character referring to the Balkan crisis. The Cretan issue is depicted as a child's toy, criticizing the government's indifference to this issue. Therefore, the cartoon reveals the indecision and difficulties experienced by the Ottoman government, which was faced with numerous problems, in terms of which issue to focus on and what solution strategy to follow. Although the Cretan issue is visually portrayed as a less serious issue compared to other crises, this indifference is actually criticized as a dangerous tendency.⁵⁰⁵

504 Kalem 67: 23 December 1909, 4; Heinzelmann 2004, 137.

505 Kalem 71: 20 January 1910, 4; Heinzelmann 2004, 134-135.



Graphic 28: Karagöz 163: 2 February 1910, 1.

Another image in Karagöz magazine shows Grand Vizier İbrahim Hakkı Pasha dealing with small-scale fires, satirizing the Ottoman Empire's lack of importance in major crisis areas such as Bulgaria, Macedonia, Yemen and Crete. The volcano metaphor emphasizes the magnitude of these problems, while criticizing the government's inadequacy and error in priorities in solving them. The fact that the fire is treated as a bigger event than the regions in question conveys the Ottoman administration's underestimation of domestic political problems or its inability to fully solve these problems.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁶ Karagöz 163: 2 February 1910, 1; Heinzelmänn 2004, 134.



Graphic 29: Karagöz 166: 10 February 1910, 1.

Another visual in Karagöz satirizes the exaggeration of the discussions on the Cretan issue through Ottoman figures trying to pull Crete on a rowboat, and that external interventions could be eliminated with a stronger stance. The cartoon criticizes the Ottomans' inadequate strategy for a solution and their vulnerability to external pressures. Here, the Ottoman sovereignty over Crete is explained with military and diplomatic strategy, and this solution (a strong response) is suggested against external interventions. The cartoon satirizes the Ottomans' anxiety and internal conflicts against the increasing external pressures for the loss of Crete, and at the same time criticizes the state's failure to follow a clearer and more effective strategy for a solution. This is a meaningful comment that emphasizes the Ottoman Empire's weak stance on the point of losing Crete amidst external interventions and internal rebellions.⁵⁰⁷

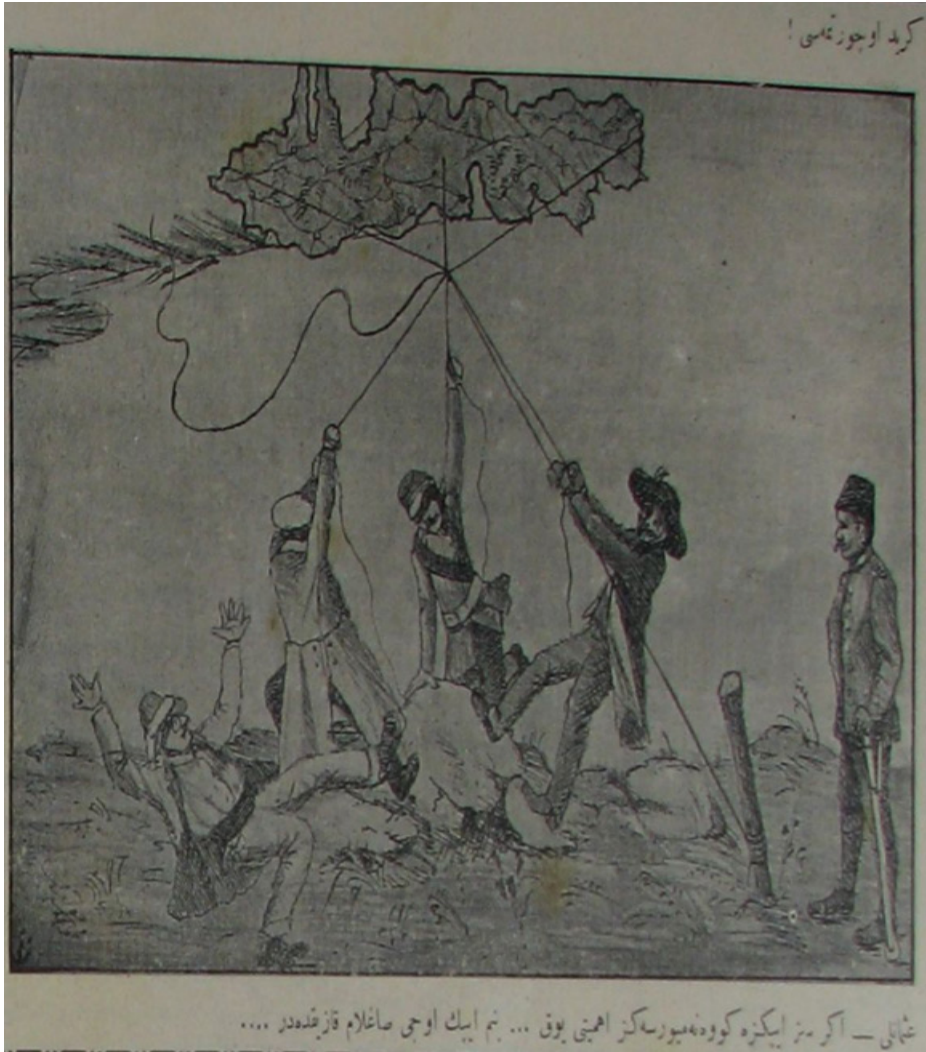
507 Karagöz 166: 10 February 1910, 1.



Graphic 30: Kalem 8: 12 Mayıs 1910, 1.

Another cartoon by Kalem magazine points to the efforts of the Ottoman Empire to maintain its sovereignty over Crete and especially to the intervention policies of Europe in the late 19th century. There is also a meaningful representation representing the hypocritical interventions of France in this process. The rebels on the island, who see that a French ship with the Ottoman flag on its ship agrees with the Ottomans on the issue of Crete, prepare to cast another anchor against France in order to protect the island's course towards annexation to Greece. Therefore, while the cartoon objectively addresses the conflicts and balance of power of the period, it is also a visual reflection of the political struggle in the region.⁵⁰⁸

508 Kalem 8: 12 May 1910, 1.



Graphic 31: Hayâl-i Cedid 17: 14 May 1910, 4.

A visual of Hayâl-i Cedid is an important cartoon representing the intervention of international powers for the control of Crete. The British, French and Italian delegates made extraordinary efforts to control Crete, but the message was given that the Ottomans had a determined stance and solid foundations here. In the visual, the kite of Crete is symbolized and this kite functions as a representative of external powers that want to determine the fate of the island. While the delegates pull the rope to keep Crete in their hands, the stake to which the Ottomans are safely attached and their attitude towards the delegates symbolize the Ottomans' strong will to maintain their sovereignty on the island. The cartoon shows the Ottomans' resistance against external interventions and the balance of power in international political relations. This

situation reflects the Ottomans' determination to maintain their sovereignty over Crete and their power to resist international interventions in the region.⁵⁰⁹



Graphic 32: Hayâl-i Cedid 21: 28 May 1910, 1.

In another visual of Hayâl-i Cedid, Crete was seen as one of the most valuable lands of the Ottoman Empire. Here, Crete was presented on a platter to Venizelos, one of the Greek leaders who was effective in the loss of Crete. However, Venizelos was unable to eat this dessert due to the Ottoman soldier next to him. It is a metaphor that emphasizes the difficulties of the Greek leader and European interventions against the Ottoman determination to maintain its sovereignty over Crete. Venizelos not eating the baklava symbolizes the difficulties he experienced in separating Crete from the Ottomans; while Crete

509 Hayâl-i Cedid 17: 14 May 1910, 4.

was a very valuable land for the Ottomans, both strategically and culturally, it was a difficult process to lose the island due to the influence of external powers and local rebellions. The visual stands out as a satirical narrative of the tension in international relations of the period and the Ottomans' determined stance in the region.⁵¹⁰



Graphic 33: Kâhya Kadın 1: 17 June 1910, 1.

A visual in Kahya women's magazine is a call that reflects the attitude of the Ottoman Empire and especially the politicians of the period in the context of the Cretan issue. The visual aims to transform an economic action into a national struggle tool and to protect the mighty Ottoman heritage of the past. Here, the expression "boycott Greece" expresses a proposal for an economic response against Crete's efforts to break away from the Ottomans. The boycott

510 Hayâl-i Cedid 21: 28 May 1910, 1.

is used as an economic tool to prevent external intervention, especially the intervention of the Greeks. In the continuation of the cartoon, the members of parliament are addressed, calling for the protection of the heritage of the past against the separation of Crete from the Ottomans. The boycott is presented not only as an economic but also as a national resistance; the desire to preserve Ottoman sovereignty over Crete is emphasized with the proposal to strengthen the navy.⁵¹¹



Graphic 34: Hayâl-i Cedid 30: 29 June 1910, 1.

511 Kâhya Kadın 1: 17 June 1910, 1

In another image of Hayal-i Cedid, Cretan rebels are gathered together, and their leader Yorgi states that it is no longer necessary to expect support from European states and that they must continue the struggle on their own. Yorgi's words "make or break" emphasize their determination, while his friends express that even if they cannot go by sea, they can advance by land; thus, the Ottoman press satirized the ineffectiveness of the Europeans in the Cretan rebellion and the difficult situation of the rebels.⁵¹²



Graphic 35: Hayâl-i Cedid 32: 6 July 1910, 4.

The image depicts an Ottoman soldier standing tall with an Ottoman flag in his hand, while the rebel Cretans retreat in a disorderly and scattered manner are depicted. The magazine "Hayal-i Cedid" states that this image very appropriately describes the current stage of the Cretan issue, and that the drawing clearly shows the situation without requiring explanation; thus, the Ottoman humor press emphasized the failure of the rebellions in Crete and the resistance of the Ottomans.⁵¹³

⁵¹² Hayâl-i Cedid 30: 29 June 1910, 1.

⁵¹³ Hayâl-i Cedid 32: 6 July 1910, 4.



اوزون صفالی اختيار ماكدونيا (استانقو) سيدر. اوتوردني قولونك اوزونده (وعداصلاحات) يازيليدر. شيشهك انجندكي الى زنجيرلي قزماكدونيالك
تقاليدز. شيشهك آغزي (ترقي) مانظاريله طبقاليدز. شيشهك آلتده الدهكي اوسزوي بوه آتق جاكلي روسيدر. اولك باستدهكي اوزون
بوي صاجلي جاكلي انگلوزدر. اوكدوغري اكر بلش دوران جاكلي آدم فرالسيز. اوسزوي اوموزنده طوتان جاكلي ايتالياندر. الدهلوقتي
اوراق اولان شيشيان آدم بلغادر. الده بولومقاص اولان آدده يونانساندر. بوليكه ماكدونيائي اصلاح ايتك اوعراشيوور و بون ملئر
المرندكي اوسزوي صفالي كسك مقاصله جاليشيورلر. يونانستان بلغارديوركه :
— سن بلغارلره چاراولدك بوسكا يتر. ماكدونيا بخدر. — آه اسكي حق نظارت، مداخله اوسزوي! سن كيتنه كريدن ترائش ايت.

Graphic 36: Kahya Kadın 8: 20 July 1910, 4.

In a cartoon by Kahya Kadın magazine, Macedonia and indirectly the issue of Crete are depicted through a metaphorical scene. The old man with a long beard represents the “Status Quo” in the region in question, and shows how the European states and Balkan nations act ineffectively and selfishly in Macedonia in line with their own interests, and only complicate the situation further under the name of reform. At the same time, it is satirized that none of the European states truly work for the freedom or well-being of the people of the region, and only think about their own interests.⁵¹⁴

514 Kahya Kadın 8: 20 July 1910, 4.



Graphic 37: Karagöz 213: 27 July 1910, 4

Another cartoon on the Cretan Question can be found in Karagöz magazine. Accordingly, in the first picture, Cretan is portrayed as a conflict between Palikarya and Karagöz, emphasizing the weakness of the Greeks' control over Cretan by comparing the rope pulled by the Greek side to being rotten. In the

second picture, when the Greek figure falls, a reaction is shown by saying “Gloat”. This is also a reference to the failure of the Greek side’s games on the island in the Cretan Question. The expression “Don’t reach out to everything you see” is an emphasis on the continuity of the conflicts between the Greeks and the Ottomans.⁵¹⁵



Graphic 38: Kalem 48: 12 August 1910, 5.

In another cartoon by Kalem magazine, a young Ottoman soldier is the focus, sitting in a café with a beautiful woman named “Kreta”. In the representation, the woman who symbolizes Crete is sitting with the Ottoman soldier, while the Greek is teasing him from the table next to her. With this expression, the possibility of the Cretan issue turning into a growing conflict is also reflected. The fact that Kreta smiles in response to the Greek is taken as a symbol of the relationship beyond disagreements, indicating that this conflict is in constant tension between the two sides, but also as a kind of show of interest. It shows how effective the Cretan issue is at the public level and in the relationships between individuals, and how such conflicts are connected at the national level. The cartoon humorously depicts the tension between the Ottomans and the

⁵¹⁵ Karagöz 213: 27 July 1910, 4.

Greeks, while also emphasizing how important and symbolic Cretan is for both communities.⁵¹⁶



Graphic 39: Kalem 91: 1 September 1910, 1.

Another caricature from Kalem magazine criticizes the Ottomans' desperation against internal and external threats and their increasing loss of territory. The tragic consequences of the loss of both Macedonia and Crete are emphasized in the visual where a cat and a dog are made to talk. Here, a criticism is made that, despite the seriousness of the losses and external threats, this is more easily accepted by the public.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁶ Kalem 48: 12 August 1910, 5; Heinzelmann 2004, 134-135.

⁵¹⁷ Kalem 91: 1 September 1910, 1.



Graphic 40: Cadalog 16: 27 May 1911, 4.

In a cartoon in Cadalog magazine, the fear of the Greek population in Crete from the Ottoman power is satirized. The Ottoman sovereignty, represented by the turban, is shown as a threat to the Greeks; the expression “*Palikaryacıklar*” is seen to belittle the Greeks and emphasize the Ottoman’s strong position on Crete. The Greeks are afraid of the turban, which is an element that symbolizes the Ottoman sovereignty on Crete. While the cartoon humorously addresses the Ottoman claims on Crete and the fear the Greeks feel about this sovereignty, it also reveals the Ottoman power and the threat the Greeks feel towards this power. This fear of the Greeks symbolizes the Ottoman’s strong position on Crete and how they approach the threats they face.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁸ Cadalog 16: 27 May 1911, 4.



Graphic 41: Falaka 338: 5 October 1911, 1.

In a cartoon by Falaka magazine, the complex social, cultural and political situations that continue on the island are criticized. In this context, Crete is presented as a piece of land that symbolizes Ottoman sovereignty and is targeted by international powers. While the “beautiful smell” of Crete is a strong reference to the strategic importance of the island and its right to sovereignty, a chest where the most valuable items are placed draws attention to the fact that Crete is an indispensable element. Here, the message that the island belongs to the Ottomans should be preserved through external pressures and rebellions against Crete is intended to be conveyed. Using symbolic language, it is stated

that the Ottoman sovereignty over Crete is under threat and that a protective reflex should be developed against these threats.⁵¹⁹

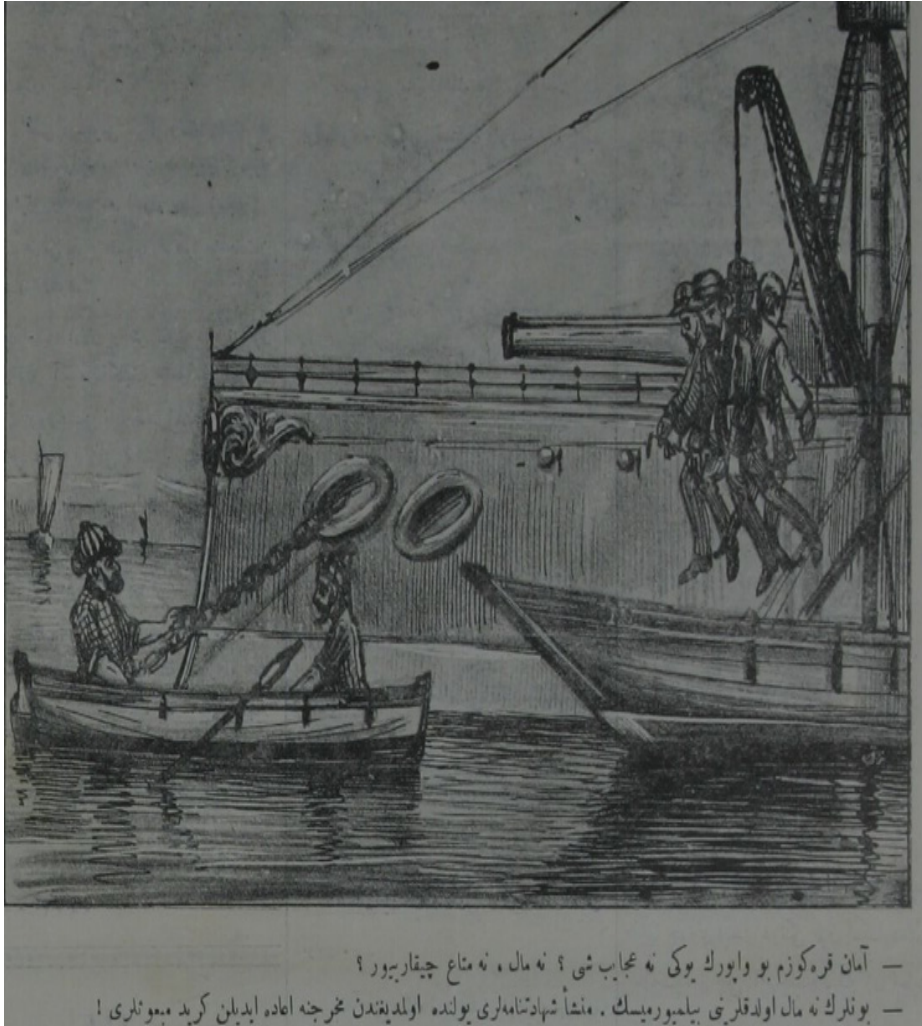


Graphic 42: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 18 October 1911, 10.

Another cartoon in Punch magazine satirizes the desperate diplomatic situation of the Ottoman Empire during the 1911 Tripoli War; a traditionally dressed Ottoman soldier (Turkish) tries to get into the vehicle and says "I am the man fighting Italy, take me to the front", Britannia replies "I'm sorry sir, it's not possible", whereupon the Turkish soldier expresses his helplessness by saying "Oh no! Then I'll have to write another diplomatic note", as in the

⁵¹⁹ Falaka 338: 5 October 1911, 1.

final stages of the Cretan Issue; this scene sarcastically reveals the Ottomans' inability to use military force against Italy and be effective on the battlefield, and their attempt to resolve the issue only with diplomatic protests.⁵²⁰



Graphic 43: Karagöz 373: 10 January 1912, 4.

In another important cartoon by Karagöz during the annexation of Crete to Greece, the loyalty and legitimacy of Cretan deputies serving in the Ottoman Meclis-i Mebusan became a subject of debate; these individuals were depicted as a burden “returned to their homeland” on the grounds that their “certificates of origin were not appropriate”. This message conveyed through Karagöz and Hacıvat’s speech symbolizes that Cretan deputies had become unwanted and excluded figures within the Ottoman political order. The commercial

520 Punch, Or The London Charivari, 18 October 1911, 10.

terminology used here strengthens the criticism of the instrumentalization of politics and the devaluation of individuals in the eyes of the state, while at the same time emphasizing that the Cretan issue led not only to the loss of territory for the Ottomans, but also to a crisis of political identity and legitimacy.⁵²¹



Graphic 44: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 27 August 1913, 14.

In another cartoon in Punch magazine, Wilson warns Mexico. It is satirized that some states, despite their threatening appearances, are ineffective in international politics. According to the criticism, during the Ottoman Empire's rebellion and annexation process in Crete, the attitudes of European states towards the Ottomans remained similarly superficial, diplomatic notes and verbal warnings were given, but actual intervention was avoided; thus, although

521 Karagöz 373: 10 January 1912, 4.

a strong promise of support was given against the Ottomans, no concrete steps were actually taken, just like Wilson's finger wagging, Europe was content with only token reactions against the Ottomans.⁵²²



Graphic 45: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 17 September 1913, 22.

According to another cartoon in Punch magazine, while the Greek King attributed the responsibility for the victory in Crete to the German Emperor, the Emperor ironically said that the Ottoman Empire was seemingly kept on its feet

⁵²² Punch, Or The London Charivari, 27 August 1913, 14.

by the political organization and reform suggestions of Europe, but in practice it was left alone; in the face of the de facto annexation of Crete to Greece, Germany and the other great powers, just like in the cartoon, interpreted the failure within the framework of their own strategic interests and instead of giving real support to the Ottoman Empire, they met the situation with sarcastic silence.⁵²³



Graphic 46: Punch, Or The London Charivari, 8 October 1913, 23.

⁵²³ Punch, Or The London Charivari, 17 September 1913, 22.

In a recent cartoon in *Punch* magazine, the Ottoman, as a cunning figure, approaches the young Greek soldier in a friendly manner and proposes a new peace treaty in a “quiet corner”; this symbolizes the Ottomans’ search for a diplomatic solution to the Cretan issue, avoiding direct conflict with Greece: in fact, however, these “peace” offers by the Ottomans were mostly an attempt to buy time and preserve their weakening sovereignty, since the *de facto* fall of Crete to Greek control had already become inevitable, and the Ottoman diplomatic initiatives only served to slow down the process.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ *Punch*, Or The London Charivari, 8 October 1913, 23.