

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON SULTAN ABDÜLHAMİD II AND WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE

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ABSTRACT

As a four times Prime Minister William E. Gladstone was a cult figure in British political history so as Sultan Abdülhamid II who ruled the Ottoman Empire for 33 years. When Abdülhamid II came to the Ottoman throne on 7 September 1876, the uprisings in the Balkan provinces were at their peak. Gladstone had published his famous Turcophobic pamphlet entitled “Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East” only two days before. This was a turning point not only in British public opinion attitudes towards the Turkish government but also the intensity of the political antagonism between Gladstone and Sultan Abdülhamid II that affected their decision-making. Both politicians were in search of new policies in this politically charged atmosphere. For instance, Abdülhamid II’s strategy was Pan-Islamism in order to unite his Empire within a Muslim brotherhood while Gladstone asserted the essentiality of the Concert of European Christian Powers in Ottoman diplomacy since the Treaty of Berlin. Seen in this light, it would be essential for the scope of this research to draw parallels between the perceptions of two statesmen who basically determined the course of the Anglo-Ottoman relations. In addition to Hansard Parliamentary debates and British local newspapers, British foreign telegrams and correspondence will illuminate the aspects of this understanding.

Keywords: the Eastern Question, William E. Gladstone, Sultan Abdülhamid II, Victorian Britain

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Sultan II. Abdülhamid ve William E. Gladstone

Üzerine karşılaştırmalı bir analiz

ÖZ

İngiliz siyasi tarihinde dört dönem Başbakanlık yapmış William E. Gladstone kült bir figürken, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu 33 yıl yöneten Sultan II. Abdülhamid de bir o kadar önemli bir isimdir. 7 Eylül 1876'da II. Abdülhamid tahta çıktığında, Balkan uluslarının ayaklanmaları artmış, Gladstone "Bulgar Dehşeti ve Doğu Sorunu" isimli Turkofobik kitapçığını iki gün öncesinde yayınlamıştı. Bu gelişme ile yalnızca Türk hükûmetine yönelik İngiliz kamuoyunun tutumlarında değişiklik olmamış aynı zamanda II. Abdülhamid ve Gladstone arasındaki düşmanlık da karar alma süreçlerinde etkili olmuştur. Her iki devlet adamı da siyasi yüklü atmosferde yeni politikalar arayışına girmiştir. Örneğin, II. Abdülhamid'in stratejisi Müslüman kardeşliği çerçevesinde Panislamizm ile imparatorluğunu birleştirmek iken, Gladstone Berlin Antlaşması'ndan bu yana savunduğu Hristiyan güçlerin oluşturduğu Avrupa Uyumu siyasetini benimsemiştir. Buradan hareketle, bu araştırmanın amacı Osmanlı-İngiliz ilişkilerinin seyrinin belirlenmesinde etkili olan iki devlet adamının anlayışları arasında paralellikler kurmaktır. Hansard Parlamento tartışmaları ve İngiliz yerel gazetelerine ek olarak, İngiliz telgraf ve yazışmaları bu anlayışın nedenlerini ortaya koyacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Doğu Sorunu, William E. Gladstone, Sultan II. Abdülhamid, Kraliçe Viktorya Dönemi

Introduction

The fourth son of the merchant John Gladstone, William Ewart Gladstone was born on 29 December 1809 in Liverpool. The family's Scottish ancestry meant that William was brought up in the Evangelical tradition, and his strong Christian values remained a constant throughout his life. Following his resignation from the Liberal Party leadership in 1874, the development of public propaganda on the subject of the Eastern Question under his leadership was a milestone in the shift of traditional British diplomacy towards the Ottoman

Empire which had begun during the Bulgarian Agitation of 1876. Furthermore, it would be fair to say that Gladstone played a key role, arguably a disruptive role, in the political relationship between the Ottomans and Great Britain. Sultan Abdülhamid II as the thirty-fourth sultan of the Ottoman Empire was born on 21 September 1842 in Constantinople. Unlike many other Ottoman Sultans, Abdülhamid II interested in Western culture, particularly music, addicted to reading, was a distant traveller and frugal in personal finance, but also one of the sultans that implemented Tanzimat reforms. (Kocabas:15 , Engin, 201:17) However, he was criticized of his attitudes towards the Ottoman minorities particularly in British historical texts.²

Since the French occupation of Egypt 1798-1801, the foundation of Anglo-Ottoman relations can be defined as a co-operation between two empires as well as British protection in order to secure Ottoman territorial integrity against the Russian threat. On the other hand, the nineteenth century was a scene of the transition from ad hoc principles of diplomacy to the Anglo-Ottoman alliance. While the Crimean War can be considered as the peak-period of friendly relations, Palmerston's tradition was pursued by Whig and Tory policymakers with respect to the Ottoman Empire. Along with the confidence and trust that Ottoman sultans put in British ambassadors, British diplomacy was free from the dynamics of Victorian party politics. It is also fair to state that there was no keen division between the Liberals and the Conservatives with regards to the formation of British foreign politics towards the Ottoman Empire. Notwithstanding, Gladstone's involvement in the Eastern Crisis in 1876 eventually changed this situation. It is fair to state that his leadership and rhetorical framework during his opposition period was not only a response to

² Abdülhamid II was considered as the main person responsible for the Armenian question between 1894-1896 as a result of his Pan-Islamist policy. French author Count Vandal was the first to call Abdülhamid the "Red Sultan" in his speeches. *The Daily News* of 5 August 1897 published a report of the Chief Judge in France. According to the discussion minutes, "The Act of 1893 did not protect the acts of Foreign Governments, but you could not attack the Turkish government without attacking the Sultan. You could not denounce the Armenian massacres without calling the Sultan an assassin ... The massacres was prepared by the will of Sultan. Maitre Laborie quoted at length the French Yellow Book, M. Berard and the speeches of Count Vandal who was the first to call Abdülhamid II "the Red Sultan." "The Sultan and the Press", *the Daily News*, 5 August 1897. Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdülhamid II*, (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1917).

the shortcomings of his rival Benjamin Disraeli's pro-Turkish foreign politics but also the beginning of a change from traditional British diplomacy with respect to the Ottoman Empire. From this point of view, it will be argued that Gladstone's novel departure with his "Bulgarian Horrors" pamphlet gained massive support in public opinion. On the other hand, Abdülhamid II came to the Ottoman throne on 7 September 1876 in this political atmosphere. Although Abdülhamid II had to give priority to the new Ottoman Constitution proclaimed in December 1876, his response was a collection of photographs of wounded Muslim women and children at Adrianople asking A. Henry Layard to convey on 23 August 1877 as victims of Russian and Bulgarian atrocities.³ Layard wrote that the purpose of the collection was as follows: 'His Majesty wishes to afford proof of those atrocities to Europe, as he is inclined to think that they are not believed in, or, that having been committed by Christians upon Muslim, they are not considered worthy a compassion or notice.'⁴ Notwithstanding, Layard pointed out that those suspicious of the Sultan 'will be removed as far as England is concerned by the humane and benevolent interest for these poor creatures.'⁵ The expectations of the new Sultan were fairly high in terms of reformation of the country both from its subjects and the Great Powers. The consequences of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 and the Berlin Treaty had a major influence on the decisions of Abdülhamid II as well as on the future progress of Anglo-Ottoman relations. To an extent, it would be fair to state that Abdülhamid II began to concentrate power in his own hands which would eventually lead him to become an "absolute authority". To Gladstone, however, it is difficult not to see the peculiar importance that he gave to the implementation of the Berlin Treaty in his second Premiership.

It is, therefore, necessary to consider these politicians' perspectives on life and politics. The aim of this study is to show the historical background and to what extent Abdülhamid II and W. E. Gladstone have a special place in the area of decision-makings resulting from their desire to change mutual

³ TNA FO 78/2583 A. H. Layard to The Earl of Derby, photographs include 30 photographs depicting: sepia-coloured portrait photographs of wounded Muslim women and children at Adrianople victims of 'Russian and Bulgarian atrocities'. Enclosure in Mr Layard's report No 987, 23 August 1877.

⁴ TNA FO 78/2583 A. H. Layard to The Earl of Derby, 23 August 1877.

⁵ Ibid.

perspectives. This paper argues that despite their differences in cultural and religious senses, the vision two statesmen emerged distinctively from different reasons and functioned in different ways. It is important to rectify the balance of the aspects as well as an explicit analysis of the relationship between Gladstone and the Sultan Abdülhamid II for this study. Moreover, it can also be argued that studies on the Eastern Question and diplomacy generally fail to mention manners of the politicians involved on the course of events. At this point, we should search the answers to the question what separated the era of two statesmen from the earlier periods in terms of their legacies to the Anglo-Ottoman relations. By showing the consistent elements in Gladstone's and Abdülhamid II's thinking, this study suggests a new perspective on their long-engagement. Analysing public and parliamentary speeches as well as foreign telegrams as primary evidence will demonstrate how they employed these concerns during their administrations. Furthermore, comparative thoughts and perspectives is a main focus in order to fit the main argument into the wider historiography.

Analyses through their legacies on the Anglo-Ottoman relations

Gladstone's long political career was a platform to show his mottoes on Christianity, love of freedom, liberalism and humanitarianism. As a result, Matthew had already suggested Gladstone was assigned to Prime Ministership as "liberal" and argued that this can be considered as a reflection of his altering from being a Liberal Conservative during his political career in spite of "careful distancing from the party hierarchy." (Matthew, 1997:101) On the other hand, it can be argued that the experience Abdülhamid II had during the Eastern Crisis influenced his perceptions. Georgeon argues that Abdülhamid II had viewed the label of the "the Sick Man of Europe" as an insult to his Empire since his childhood and this enabled him to be strong-minded against the Great Powers during the uprisings in the Balkan provinces in 1875 (Georgeon, 2005:32, 35). From that point of view, Yasamee identifies four major elements in the Sultan's political outlook; "autocracy, conservatism, reformism and Islam, as a result of the events between 1875 and 1878." (Yasamee, 1996: 20). This said, it becomes clear that there were similarities between the two statesmen, namely, the power of self-management on politics and conservative religious boundaries within the diplomacy. By the same token, it would also be fair to state that both statesmen

were interested in woodwork, keen on reading literature, history as a part of intellectualism and building their own libraries. Moreover, Gladstone's special relationship with Russian Olga Novikov was similar to Abdülhamid II's courtesy to Lady Layard. During the Bulgarian Agitation Novikov was considered as Gladstone's Russian follower whilst Haslip describes Lady Layard "as one of the few who persisted in maintaining that by nature Abdülhamid II was of a kind and gentle disposition and that his character was only warped by the circumstances and tragedies of the beginning of his reign."(Haslip, 1958: 155)

Conversely, an important distinction between the two politicians was their perceptions of each other's nation which also had a huge impact upon the course of Anglo-Ottoman relations. The majority of the scholarship seems convinced that Abdülhamid II's meeting with the British ambassador, Sir Stratford Canning, was substantially important for the formation of his emotions and perceptions of British people. By referring to this encounter, Haslip refers to Abdülhamid II's seeking for "friends abroad" analogous with his own profit; therefore, "Abdülhamid II had made the first overtures to England, the only power who did not appear to covet any part of his dominions." (Haslip, 1958: 89) In similar vein, Georgeon and Salt stated that Abdülmecid relieved his son by defining Canning as the representative of the most fellow nation, England and should not afraid from them (Georgeon, 2005: 30; Salt, 1993: 147). On the other hand, it would be fair to argue that Gladstone's perceptions of the Turks were formed during the Crimean War while he was working on the war budget as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Palmerston's ministry. Although Gladstone did not hold hostile attitudes to Turks, he still had complaints with regards to the ineffectiveness of the Ottoman reforms. On this basis, he developed his arguments from the Islamic authority on the Ottoman Christian minorities in his Bulgarian pamphlet which arguably showed that his views on the Turks were now changed.

In that respect, Yasamee stresses that "the Eastern Crisis of 1875-78 had utterly destroyed the Tanzimat vision of a revived and reformed Ottoman Empire whose existence would be guaranteed by the goodwill and support of the European Powers."(Yasamee, 1996:18) Therefore, he justifies Sultan Abdülhamid II endeavour to revive his empire and to "determine what future, if

any, his weakened and reduced Empire might be able to carve out for itself.” (Yasamee, 1996:18) Moreover, he argued that Abdülhamid II preferred independence rather than British or Russian alliance in the 1880s which will be one of the main distinctions between Gladstone’s Foreign Office with regards to the fate of Anglo-Ottoman relations. Furthermore, Haslip assesses the alteration of alliance and refers to the words of Henry Layard as the British ambassador at the Porte which “Abdülhamid II listened without any show of anger or of irritation” expressing to the Sultan that “England, owing to the bad effect of the Bulgarian atrocities, was pledged to neutrality.”(Haslip, 1958: 123) Accordingly, Georgeon’s recent research on Abdülhamid II has pointed out the “a deep-seated antipathy” which appeared between the Ottoman Sultan and the Liberal Prime Minister. (Georgeon, 2005: 129) Seen in this light, the studies on the British occupation of Egypt were prominent in order to reveal British imperial approaches and its influence on diplomatic relations. From this perspective, Galbraith and Sayyid-Marsot described Gladstone’s first reactions to the emergence of an Egyptian national movement as “vaguely liberal,”(Galbraith and Sayyid-Marsot, 1978: 478) and the scholarship seems mainly convinced that Gladstone was a reluctant Prime Minister in his imperialistic approaches. Hanioglu’s assessment on the occupation became prominent with regards to its repercussions on diplomacy. He defined the foreign policy of Gladstone’s ministry as a “liberal assault” which “coincided unhappily for the Ottomans, with a reassessment of British defence policy which diminished the importance of Ottoman territorial integrity for the defence of the British Empire.” (Hanioglu, 2006: 131) Therefore, Hanioglu’s argument clarified the main aspect of the alteration in Anglo-Ottoman relations during Gladstone’s second Premiership.

The legacy of the Bulgarian uprising of 1876 left a heavy impression on both leaders and directed them to alter their positive thoughts. Haslip argues that Abdülhamid II referred to the Bulgarian Agitation as, “the most unfortunate event which could have occurred both to him and his country” and who, many years later, came to the throne genuinely believing in England’s friendship, offering to be guided by the advice of her government, and he found the government helpless in the hands of that strange phenomenon “public opinion.” (Haslip, 1958: 90) In a similar vein, Gladstone was the first who defined his

anger by describing the Turks as “the one great anti-human specimen of humanity” in his famous pamphlet. (Gladstone, 1876: 13) Ironically, and perhaps, unfortunately this can be counted as the beginning of a confrontation between Islam and Christianity once again in the nineteenth century. In other words, Gladstone’s strong defence of the rights of Eastern Christians in the Ottoman Empire was arguably perceived as the liberation of Christianity. On this basis, Karaca describes Gladstone as a crusader and also claimed that he individually determined the circumstances of future Anglo-Ottoman relations. (Karaca, 2011: 18) By the same token, it would also fair to state that Abdülhamid II’s perceptions had changed since the Russo-Turkish War due to abandonment from expected British Abdülhamid II considered Britain as the main threat to the Ottoman Empire due to its policy during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. (Engin, 2011:25) One of the solutions as to his diplomacy was the influence of Islam whilst searching for new remedies for his policies and empire. It becomes clear that this tendency showed the prominence of religion in the minds of the two statesmen while pointing out the great contradiction between the Islamic centric point of view and extreme Christianity. It can also be argued that this strong influence on historians and researchers still remains whose studies mainly focus on Gladstone’s evangelism⁶ (Karaca, 2011: 18) and Abdülhamid II’s authority of the Caliphate.⁷ From a different angle, Deringil argues that the extent of Abdülhamid II’s own involvement with Pan-Islamism arguably is in line with his opinions together with those that allege that he was of “no major importance to Pan-Islamism” to, at the other extreme, “those who see it as the mainspring of his foreign policy.” (Deringil, 1991: 350)

Up to this point, it might seem logical to argue that both politicians were in search of new policies in this politically charged atmosphere. Admittedly, the lessons of Eastern Crisis thought used to be adapted to the

⁶ Speculations and debates on Gladstone’s declaration on the Quran as an “accursed book” and “We cannot rule over the Muslim as long as this Quran remains in their hands; we must do everything possible to remove the Quran away from Muslims, or alienate them against the Quran” and eventually became an enemy of Islam despite any evidence. Conversely, a recent and unique study on Gladstone which argued that Gladstone’s plan to destroy the Ottoman Empire who published in 2011.

⁷ For further information, see Azmi Ozcan, *Pan-Islamism Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*, (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 1997)

agenda of the governments. In this vein, Abdülhamid II's first strategy was Pan-Islamism which can be defined as a call to unite his Empire within a Muslim brotherhood. Özcan argues that Islam was emphasised as "the main pillar of the state" as opposed to Ottomanism and Abdülhamid II himself held the view that his Empire was based on Islam.⁸ (Özcan, 1997: 47) In supporting this view, Deringil assesses the importance of the status of the Caliphate in the reign of Abdülhamid II particularly after the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War although these were losses of Ottoman territories, particularly of her non-Muslim population in the Balkans, which encouraged "the Sultan to urge the Islamic religion as a new bid for unity against what he saw as an increasingly hostile Christian world." (Deringil, 1991: 346; Duguid, 1973: 139-155) Nonetheless, Yasamee claims, on the lack of independent evidence, that Abdülhamid II considered "revolutionary Pan-Islamism as pragmatic politics" and "assertions that Yıldız served as the headquarters of an Islamic International must be dismissed as a speculative fantasy." (Yasamee, 1996: 29) Instead, he describes Abdülhamid II's decision to re-emphasise Islam "as an aspect of his general conservatism" particularly, in order to "stabilise the state by governing in accordance with the nature and characteristics of his subjects." (Yasamee, 1996: 24-5) On the contrary, Gladstone asserted the essentiality of the Concert of European Christian Powers in Ottoman diplomacy since the *Treaty of Berlin* in order to compel the Ottoman Empire to reform on the issue of Christian subjects' rights. *The Spectator*, when supporting Gladstone's arguments argued that, "It (the Liberal Government) will carry out the spirit of the *Treaty of Berlin*, assign territory to Montenegro, sufficient to enable the mountaineers to live without brigandage; restore to Greece two of her three provinces on the mainland; establish enduring order in Macedonia; and save the Armenians at all events from open outrage; and it will do these things, if it be only possible, through the European Concert." (*The Spectator*, 11 September 1880) Medlicott points out the existence of a dilemma, arguably a balance, in the aims of Gladstone's agenda in which he sought "both the tranquilization of Europe and the coercion of the Turks, and the powers of preferred peace." (Medlicott, 1956:

⁸ Abdülhamid II declared that "It was Islam that kept the different groups of the Empire like the members of one family. Therefore the stress should not be on Ottomanism but on Islam... because the social structure and the politics of our Empire is based upon religion." Abdülhamid II, *Siyasi Hatiratım* "Political memoirs", S. Can (trns.), (Istanbul, 1984), p. 178 and p. 180.

305) Therefore, it is fair to state that Gladstone's concert policy represented a change in the nature of Anglo-Ottoman relations since the Crimean War.

The second renewal in diplomacy was an Ottoman rapport with Germany which would last until World War I. Following the lack of confidence in his former ally, Britain, Abdülhamid II had approached Germany. Abdülhamid II's choice of Germany amongst the Great Powers seems judicious; in comparison with Britain and Russia Germany had no particular interest to expand upon with respect to Ottoman territories. In this vein, Yasamee argues that Bismarck's objective was "to keep Abdülhamid II available as a kind of insurance policy", with his expectation that never Abdülhamid II complained upon, "and for which he would pay the premium possible." (Yasamee, 1996: 75) On the other hand, Gladstone had already taken up a position on Russia during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. It became clear from his speeches during the opposition period that Gladstone was disposed to clear the Russophobia inside the British public opinion as well as the diplomacy. Therefore, these new alliances were also factors for this estrangement between the Ottoman and British Empires.

A new era for Victorian Britain on Ottoman policies?

Up to this point, it becomes clear that the estimation as to new Ottoman diplomacy of Gladstone's ministry was adverse. Prior to the elections of 1880, the Constantinople correspondent of *The Times* reported that "the news that the Conservatives were likely to be defeated at the elections produced here, a profound sensation. The various sections of the Christian native population received the intelligence with delight and began at once to speculate on the advantages which they would derive from the expected support of a Liberal Cabinet. The Turkish official world, on the contrary, was most disagreeably surprised by the prospects of the Liberals coming to power, and the Sultan trembled at the idea of "bag and baggage" policy being adopted by the British government." (*The Times*, 14 April 1880) By supporting this consideration *the Bristol Mercury* speculated that "Lord Beaconsfield was regarded by them (the Ottoman governors) as a tower of strength, whereas Mr. Gladstone is suspected to have certain Russophile tendencies, which might ultimately lead to an *entente* in the Eastern Question. Therein lays, in the opinion of Turkish statesman, the

only real danger for Turkey” (*The Bristol Mercury*, 14 April 1880). It should also be noted that, a major amount of British newspapers were in favour of this idea (*The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire* on 17 July 1880) Most important of all, Abdülhamid II had already changed his mind about the British administration and had started to consolidate his new policies. Furthermore, Georgeon emphasised “a deep-seated antipathy” appeared between the Ottoman Sultan and the Liberal Prime Minister. (Georgeon, 2005: 129) Abdülhamid II assessed Gladstone as “old and garrulous” whilst Gladstone defined “Abdülhamid II’s mind as a bottomless well within a combination of craftiness and shiftiness” (Anderson, 1968: 224; Georgeon, 2005: 129). From a different angle, Salt also asserts that the Ottomans considered Gladstone as “a fanatic whose antipathy to the Sultan, Islam and the Turks - whom he had described in 1876 as an “anti-human specimen of humanity” seemed to know no bounds.” (Salt, 1990: 310)

Under these circumstances, the key question was to what extent did the actions and motivations of the Liberal cabinet under the leadership of Gladstone determine the course of Anglo-Ottoman relations? Most importantly, how influential was Gladstone as Prime Minister when it came to the decision-mechanism regarding the consolidation of the new Ottoman diplomacy? It can be argued that Gladstone’s main attack was on the Turkish governors and the rulers of the empire rather than general hostility towards the entire Turkish nation or Muslims. Therefore, his main objective might be an imposition of Ottoman reforms and acting together within the European Concert. Nonetheless, this meant an estrangement between two empires. Following Goschen’s arrival to Constantinople, replacing, Layard in April 1880 and the rejuvenation of the Anglo-Turkish Convention with regards to Cyprus, it should be noted that Gladstone occasionally lost his confidence in the likelihood of the Turkish reforms being realised and was in search of new policies. On 6 May 1880, Layard was asked to inform the Porte that George Goschen would be the special ambassador and enquired about whether he could gain the Sultan’s consent on this decision.⁹ As Gladstone and Lord Granville conceived of it, Goschen’s

⁹ ‘Inform the Porte that the Queen has appointed the right honourable G. Goschen to be the special ambassador from relieving you the duties of ‘Qualifying’ ‘Provoking’) on leave of closure.’ ‘I am afraid we have needed to ask whether Mr. Goschen could be agreeable to the

particular mission began with giving effect to the Treaty of Berlin which included the naval demonstration at Smyrna in the first place. In comparison with Layard, Kemal H. Karpat describes Goschen as 'a rather abrupt person due to his usage of the British navy to force the sultan to cede Montenegro to Dulcigno.'(Karpat, 2002: 502) Indeed, his political movements under the directive of following "strong instructions from London" and to impose as promptly, besides highlighting the speciality of article 61 of the Berlin Treaty "which charged the Ottoman government with carrying out reforms in East Anatolia under British supervision."(Karpat, 2002: 502) This argument, nonetheless, emphasizes the basic contradiction between Ottoman-centric and British-centric historiography. It was not Goschen's individual determination of policy but responsibility for the Liberal government's expression of the British attitude in the East. It is clear that it was Disraeli's ministry that had refused to make certain moves in foreign policy and Layard was the last representative of old Ottoman tradition of policies. Layard's sudden departure was, therefore, not welcomed by the Ottoman side, particularly by Sultan Abdülhamid II. On the day that he left the office, Layard pointed out the Sultan's "regret at his departure" by stating that "His Majesty's principally owes to me that he was now on the throne. If it had not been for me, his fleet would have been given up to Russia and Büyükdere would have been occupied by Russian troops."¹⁰ Goschen, on the other hand, thought that Sultan Abdülhamid II was afraid of him and wrote to Lord Granville that, "as you told the Queen I never fail to be perfectly courteous ... My manner leaves the impression on him that I thoroughly mean business, and that is what he doesn't like."¹¹ (Spinner, 1973: 71) Particularly, it became clear from the correspondence with Lord Granville and speeches in the Houses of Parliament during September and October 1880, the Prime Minister thought that, "I am afraid that we are in danger of new mockeries worse than before-with this for the ultimate plea of the Turk that he has done his best, and cannot execute." (Ramm, 1952: 171) Furthermore, in a letter to Lord Granville on 13 September 1880, Gladstone asked him to criticise himself as to his thoughts on Abdülhamid II,

Sultan. The mission is quite unintentional.' TNA: Earl Granville to Layard, 6 May 1880, Foreign Telegrams.

¹⁰ TNA FO 78 3108 Henry Layard to Earl Granville, Foreign Telegrams, 12 May 1880.

¹¹ Goschen to Granville, 2 July 1880.

“You are a far better judge than I am of the exact position at the moment in an affair like that of the Montenegrin frontier, and as a rule I should feel some misgiving in a case when you had diverted from your own judgement to give effect to a suggestion of mine. On this occasion, however I do not anticipate any mischief from the strengthening of the Telegram, so profoundly impressed am I with the Protean shiftings and shufflings of the Sultan, his bottomless fraud, and his immeasurable lying. It is also I think in apparent accord with Goschen’s mind as conveyed through his query.” (Ramm, 1952: 172)

In this vein, he believed that the Sultan eventually strengthened his authority and began to transform Ottoman diplomacy. (Eraslan, 1992: 316) While he stated the change of Ottoman ministry as evidence, he also argued that “it was only one in the long series of blinds and frauds used with indigenous variation of form by the Sultan to evade the fulfilment of his engagements.”¹² (Ramm, 1952: 173) More to the point, Gladstone suggested that “a naval demonstration will do not harm makes me more hopeful of its doing good. I confess however it will not surprise me if we find that in order to succeed it is necessary to employ the ship force on shore.” (Ramm, 1952: 173) Medlicott describes this draft as “a curious commentary” on these proceedings and that in September Gladstone was appealed to in order to “coerce the Sultan by requiring all British subjects to quit the employment, military and naval of Turkey.” (Medlicott, 1956: 112) Conversely, Yasamee assesses “the assurance of German meditation” manifested as “well-founded” and points out “Austria-Hungary’s fearing that would provoke disturbances which might precipitate the Ottoman Empire’s collapse” by Gladstone’s talk of a possibility of the occupation of Smyrna. (Yasamee, 1996: 77) With regards to a Naval Demonstration at Constantinople, the *Northern Echo* reported that, “the Political Correspondence announces that the Ambassadors at Constantinople, at the very commencement of diplomatic action and as a condition *sine qua non* of the joint Naval Expedition, signed a protocol; which had been drawn up and agreed upon in common, that the Powers mutually pledge themselves to abstain

¹² With regards to this change, Goschen wrote that “reporting on Said’s succession to Kadri as prime minister simplifying diplomacy, since Said as a creature of the Sultan would not be overruled by the Court.”

under any of the eventualities likely to arise out of the Eastern Question, in its various branches, from pursuing their own separate and individual interests.” (*Northern Echo*, 17 September 1880) Conversely, the *Essex Standard* commented that if the Sultan was displeased with the political circumstances, he would use his spiritual power to gather the masses. (*the Essex Standard, West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties” Advertiser*, 25 September 1880) Following the failure of the policy for “a naval demonstration” and speculations as to a possible war with the Ottoman Empire, Gladstone wrote to Lord Granville that “I really had told him when you came in that i. Smyrna was sufficient for success ii. that there were ulterior measures between it and war, such as stopping Turkish ships from acting against Greece; but you quote him correctly. On the other hand I do not think he said the comedy would be an insult to Europe. But when I said it did not deny it & when I asked whether it would be borne he said if it were this would certainly not be for love of the Turk.” (Ramm, 1952: 200)

To this degree, then, it would be fair to state that the implementation of the reforms was now a primary condition of the maintenance of friendly Anglo-Ottoman alliance. While this was a high expectation on the change of British ministry from Turkish front¹³ (Layard Papers, 23 April 1880), Gladstone pointed out its vital importance by defining it as a change that,

“the Ottoman Government begins to understand that although we are bona fide desirous to avoid the difficulties and complications that might arise upon the breaking up of the Turkish Empire, yet the tolerable discharge of the duties of government towards the subjects of Turkey is no longer a secondary, but a primary object; and that unless Turkey is prepared to discharge them in that tolerable manner of which, I am sorry to say, we have not yet sufficient evidence, the integrity and

¹³ In a telegram to Foreign Office, Layard reported that, “Sultan has held several Committees with the Prime Minister and Mahmoud Nedim, Safeivet and Hanedian Pashas to discuss the measures to be taken in consequence of the change of the government in England. I am informed that they have drawn up a report or about to do so to the affect that in order to save the Empire certain fundamental reforms must be immediately put into execution. These reforms are I have reasons to believe those which I have constantly urging upon the Sultan and his Ministers including the immediate assembly of the chambers provided Midhat’s constitution or of some such representative body”, TNA, Layard Papers, 23 April 1880.

independence of the Turkish Empire must learn to shift for themselves." (Hansard Parliamentary Debates, "Treaty of Berlin-Eastern Affairs-The Principle Of "Nationalises", 20 September 1880)

Undoubtedly, it would also be fair to criticise the perceptions and thoughts of Queen Victoria on the determination of Ottoman diplomacy. It becomes clear that she was strongly determined to pursue the tradition of alliance with the Ottoman Empire and occasionally intervened in the discussions in order to assure its progress. By the same token, Haslip emphasises that Sultan Abdülhamid II always held Queen Victoria in esteem by defining this as "an admiration tangled with envy of a woman who shared his Empire over the Moslem world despite his secret bitterness at England's policy." (Haslip, 1958: 124) Therefore, it can be argued that Gladstone's Liberal ministry had to convince the Queen of the integrity of the Ottoman policies¹⁴ (Ramm, 1952: 188) whilst occasionally asking her to write to the Sultan to reassure him.¹⁵ (Guedalla, 1933: 107) Particularly, when Gladstone planned to coerce the Porte with a naval demonstration, she clearly stated her anxiety and hesitations as to the Liberal ministry's policies. She wrote on 18 September 1880 in a letter to the Prime Minister, "The Queen fears British ambassador at Constantinople is pushing to hostilities. She will not consent to war with our old ally Turkey, whom the country always supported. She has repeatedly stated to Lord Granville that she will not sanction a reversal of the policy of the last few years, to which she had willingly given her consent as she believed it to be for the true interests of this Empire; we are now playing into the hands of Russia. The Queen feels particularly aggrieved as Lord Granville assured Prince Leopold on coming into Office that the Queen need be under no apprehension

¹⁴ In a letter to Granville on 28 September 1880, Gladstone wrote that "... It was great concern that I heard of even your slight indisposition: the moment of the Turkish contumacy is most unfortunate. But, I take the case to be one of the very highest order. Unless effective and prompt support is given to Montenegro within the limits of Treaty there is an end to all beneficial action of Europe and the Eastern Question will be left to pass into chaos and unlimited bloodshed...I do not know whether you will leave today or tomorrow. Before you go, I dare say you will have considered whether to advise the Queen once more to address the Sultan in terms of warning."

¹⁵ In a letter to Gladstone, "The Queen, as Lord Granville will no doubt inform him, will send a telegram to the Sultan. This is in accordance with the precedent of 1878-when the Sultan appealed to her-& she telegraphed in consequence to the Emperor of Russia & received a very insolent answer." "Queen Victoria to Mr. Gladstone on 13 July 1880".

as to foreign affairs, and asked her to tell Mr. Gladstone that she expected there would be no reversal of (policy) instead of which we have gone nearer and nearer to war with Turkey. The Queen will never consent.” (Guedalla, 1933: 113) Gladstone wrote that he received “a cyphered pro Turkish message” from the Queen by Granville on “the Queen’s anxiety lest the naval demonstration should lead to war with Turkey and her demonstration that, if other powers then withdrew, Britain should not be left alone with Russia” (Ramm, 1952: 174). Gladstone aimed to assure the Queen¹⁶ (Guedalla, 1933: 114) and informed Granville to “again the confidence of the Sultan” on the condition of a special request coming from her. (Ramm, 1952: 202)

Gladstone, on the other hand, was disappointed with the failure of reforms and Sultan Abdülhamid II’s administration and thoughts. With regards to traditional friendship, he again made it conditional upon the reforms and amendment of the rights of Ottoman Christian subjects. He stated that, “If the measures which we recommend to the House, or if the measures which we ourselves adopt, are bad, it is no sufficient apology to offer to Parliament, or the people of England, that we adopted them in concert with others; and, therefore, I am most glad we should be taken to task if, at any time, we are heard urging the doctrine of the Concert of Europe, and the expediency of maintaining it as a means of escaping from, or reducing in any respect, our own responsibility.” (Özcan, 1997: 44-5) Furthermore, he suggested that Lord Granville “point out at Constantinople this state of things and urge that it, and all that may follow it, are principally due to the delays and evasions of Turkey in the non-execution of the Treaty of Berlin as a proof of Sultan’s request for a proof of friendship.” (Ramm, 1952: 177) By emphasising the importance of the Concert of Europe, Gladstone rejected Elliot’s arguments on the comparison between Austrian and British policies concerning the Ottoman Empire which defined “a profound difference” after Gladstone’s speech on 4 September in the Commons. (Ramm, 1952: 175) According to Elliott, “Gladstone’s object was administrative reform, whereas Austria-Hungary’s was European peace; she agreed that Turkey must

¹⁶ “.. Mr. Gladstone deeply regrets that the circumstances of the Empire should at various points be such as to cause Your Majesty special anxiety; an anxiety which cannot for the moment be diminished by the Sultan’s having now, apparently, thrown off the mask in the Dulcigno negotiation (as to the frontiers of Montenegro), and having said to the United Powers of Europe what, if at all, should have been said some months ago.”

shift for herself, if this meant that no foreign aid was to be given either to the sultan or to his subjects.” (Ramm, 1952: 175) Nonetheless, Gladstone strongly rejected Elliot’s claim in three points.¹⁷ (Ramm, 1952: 176) Most important of all, Gladstone stated when addressing Elliot that, “If I say to a man “shift for yourself” it is not an interpretation of that phrase, but a sheer caricature of it, to say that it signifies I mean to assault him. And it reminds me, I am sorry to say, how on a former occasion, when I contended that the official & governing Turk should go out of Bulgaria, I was construed by Sir H. Elliot as saying that the Ottoman Power, indeed I believe that all Turks, should be turned out of Europe.” (Ramm, 1952: 176) This said, he also argued that “It is provoking to find how the proofs accumulate that fear will make the Turks assent-& at the same time the powers are afraid of exciting that fear. We had better conceal from friends and foes what we should have done, if the Turks had not yielded and it is easier, as we did not come to any decision.” (Ramm, 1952: 199) Admittedly, it is obvious that Gladstone eventually defined that “the present condition of the Turkish Empire and its present dangers are the proof of the fruits of another policy” from which Anglo-Ottoman relations had developed (HC “Treaty of Berlin-Eastern Affairs-The Principle of “Nationalises”, 20 September 1880)

Conclusion

Drawing what logic that can be inferred from retrospective analyses, it is not difficult to see Sultan Abdülhamid II’s concerns about Gladstone’s Premiership and British policy towards the Porte. It is equally clear that “a change of tone” was adopted and Britain moved away from its traditional protective policy towards the Porte while ceasing to recommend humanitarian reforms to the Turkish Government. Indeed, the Abdülhamid II factor was an important component in Gladstone’s thinking and was discussed in reference to his previous thoughts as to Turkish government. Since Gladstone had made clear his general distrust of Abdülhamid II policy measures, his belief in the imperative notion of a European conscience increased incrementally with the

¹⁷ “1. Arguing that the announcement of “a profound difference” from Elliot as Austria acting in concert with Britain in concert. 2. Claiming on Elliot’s misunderstandings on his speeches 3. The introduction of reforms in Turkey ought to be British primary object in Turkey.”

concerted action at Smyrna. Along with Gladstone's intense interest in the case, the concerted naval demonstration in Smyrna with respect to the territorial question of Thessaly marked an important stage for showing "the necessity of coercive pressure upon Turkey, [which was] the only kind of pressure available in certain cases."¹⁸

Gladstone's strong defence of the rights of Eastern Christians in the Ottoman Empire was arguably perceived as a provocation for the freedom of Christians against Muslim oppression and a component of his plan to ruin the Ottoman Empire. By the same token, Abdülhamid II's perceptions had changed since the Russo-Turkish War due to the withdrawal of British support which he had previously expected. Beyond any doubt, by emphasizing the importance of self-determination and freedom of religion, Gladstone's great support towards the Ottoman Christian subjects affected not only British foreign strategy in the Porte, but also shook the Ottomans' confidence in the British alliance. It was Gladstone's strong rhetoric and indication during the Near Eastern Crisis that led to Sultan Abdülhamid II receiving such sentiments with a deep-seated antipathy which, in turn, eventually suspended the Anglo-Ottoman alliance. Following the lack of confidence in his former ally, Britain, Abdülhamid II had approached Germany. Consequently, it has been emphasized that Gladstone's role in Armenian affairs was not simply a reflection of public or parliamentary reaction but one that had a significant place within broader humanitarian debates which prevailed since the Treaty of Berlin.

Despite the assertions to the contrary, it is also clear that Gladstone clung to his belief in the maintenance of the territorial integrity policy but abandoned the promotion of Turkish reforms under British control. In contradistinction to the Crimean alliance, Gladstone already stated firmly that British friendship to the Sultan was conditional upon the relief of his subjects from misgovernment. Seen in this light, Gladstone's second ministry gave rise to Sultan Abdülhamid II's suspicions against the Liberal government and Gladstone as the Prime Minister. To underline the impact of Gladstone's image

¹⁸ British Library (BL) Gladstone Papers (GP) Add MS 44776 fols. 145-53, fols. 152-3, 8 April 1895, "Memorandum of proceedings in 1880 with relation to the unfulfilled covenants of the Treaty of Berlin."

in these affairs, it must be emphasized that the mutual antagonism between the Sultan and Gladstone also represented the attitudes to foreign policy of their respective countries.

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