

**“KIZAN KAYMAKAM TAHSIN BEY”: AN ANALYSIS OF A
YOUNG TURK ADMINISTRATOR’S MEMOIR WITHIN THE
SCOPE OF BANDITRY AND OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATION IN
MACEDONIA (1897-1912)**

by
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ABSTRACT

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The Macedonian Question greatly impacted the last fifty years of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Macedonia, where the interests of the Great Powers and the Balkan states clashed, became a conflict zone that was terrorized by nationalist and separatist movements and waged a bloody fight for control since the last quarter of the 19th century. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire could not produce effective and permanent solutions, although it fought military and political struggles against the bandits in Macedonia. At a young age, first, being the district manager and then the district governor, aka Kızan District Governor Tahsin Bey, was one of the Ottoman bureaucrats who worked in risky areas during the most intense period of banditry activities. The memoir Tahsin Bey wrote years later is important in providing a better understanding of the different aspects of the banditry in Macedonia. This study examines the bandit activities in Macedonia, the lives of villagers and townspeople in the shadow of separatist-revolutionary committees, and the administration of the Ottoman Empire in the region through the memoir of a Young Turk, district governor. While examining the bandits and Ottoman rule in Macedonia through Tahsin Bey’s eyes, the elements that shaped Tahsin Bey and his narrative and the possible effects of these elements on Tahsin Bey’s Macedonia are discussed.

ÖZET

“KIZAN KAYMAKAM TAHSİN BEY”: MAKEDONYA’DA EŞKİYALIK VE
OSMANLI YÖNETİMİ ÇERÇEVESİNDE İTTİHATÇI BİR YÖNETİCİNİN
HATIRATININ İNCELEMESİ (1897-1912)

ZEYNEP ÖZTÜRK

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Makedonya Meselesi, eşkiyalık, çete, Tahsin Uzer, hatırat, Jön
Türk

Makedonya Meselesi, Osmanlı Devleti’nin son elli yılına büyük ölçüde etki etmiştir. Büyük devletlerin ve Balkan devletlerinin çıkarlarının kesiştiği Osmanlı Makedonyası, 19. yüzyılın son çeyreğinden itibaren milliyetçi ve ayrılıkçı hareketlerin terörize ettiği ve kontrolü için kanlı bir mücadele verdiği bir çatışma sahası haline gelmiştir. Osmanlı Devleti ise Makedonya’da çeteciliğe karşı hem askeri hem de siyasi mücadele verse de etkin ve kalıcı çözümler üretememiştir. Genç yaşta önce nahiye müdürü, sonra kaymakam olan namıdiğer Kızan Kaymakam Tahsin Bey, çete faaliyetlerinin en yoğun yaşandığı dönemde riskli bölgelerde görev yapmış olan Osmanlı bürokratlarından biridir. Tahsin Bey’in yıllar sonra yazdığı hatırat, hem birbirine hem de Osmanlı Devleti’ne karşı mücadele veren çetelerin ve Osmanlı Devleti’nin Makedonya’daki çetecilikle mücadelesinin farklı yönleriyle daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi bakımından önemli bir yere sahiptir. Bu çalışma, Makedonya’daki çete faaliyetleri ve ayrılıkçı-devrimci komitelerin gölgesinde köylü ve kasabalıların yaşamları ile Osmanlı Devleti’nin bölgedeki yönetimini bir Jön Türk olan genç kaymakamının hatıratı üzerinden incelemektedir. Tahsin Bey’in gözünden Makedonya’da çetecilik ve Osmanlı yönetimi incelenirken, Tahsin Bey’i ve anlatısını şekillendiren unsurlar ve bu unsurların Tahsin Bey’in Makedonyası üzerine muhtemel etkileri tartışılmaktadır.

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To my grandmother, Telli Hanım.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Once I saw my father in thoughts and asked what he was thinking about, he said: ‘I was born in Yugoslavia, raised my child in FYROM, spent my life in Macedonia, and now living in Northern Macedonia. I changed four countries without moving.’”

On a talk show, an actor born in Skopje, Ertan Saban, talked about another change in his country’s name.¹ When I² was in “Macedonia” the official name of the country written on the documents was FYROM, “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,” referring to “Vardar Macedonia”’s Yugoslavian past. In the summer of 2015, I was walking around the square where the giant statues of Alexander the Great, the greatest Macedonian ever born, on his majestic horse saluting his father Philip II, standing on the other side in front of the *Stara čaršija*. Animators dressed as Roman warriors, Yugoslavian soldiers, and Macedonian *komitadji* outfits with a more Slavic character were waiting for tourists to be photographed together. A deficiency in this painting, which presented a visual feast, was striking. No one represented the Ottoman period among these animators, reflecting different periods of Macedonian history. It seems that Roman domination was more embraced than Ottoman domination. It was the time that made me realize the identity and political legitimacy crisis that Macedonia is going through even today. The Macedonian Question was one of the major problems of the Ottoman Empire in its last fifty years. However, the precious lands of Macedonia, which could not be shared then, did not find peace after the Ottoman Empire vanished and continued to cause political disagreements among the peoples of the region. Therefore, the highly controversial Macedonian Question remains popular despite being a well-studied topic, attracting scholars from different disciplines by offering a rich

¹Sözcü Gazetesi, “Ertan Saban’dan Esprili Makendoya Anekdodu” April 29, 2019, <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/hayatim/magazin-haberleri/ertan-sabandan-esprili-makendoya-anekdodu>

²The author of this thesis.

field of research and resources.

The Macedonian Question is crucial not only for the societies living in the Balkans, but also for modern Turkey. According to Adanır, to understand the Macedonian Question is to understand the history of modern Turkey. Because, until the 1950s, the founding cadre and ruling elite of the Republic of Turkey consisted largely of Young Turks who had grown up with the Macedonian Question or those close to them.³

Hasan Tahsin Uzer is one of the important administrative and political figures who grew up in late Ottoman Macedonia and one of the ruling elites of Modern Turkey. Tahsin Uzer, as a historical figure who was raised in the Hamidian regime, served in many parts of the empire from Macedonia to Syria and witnessed the important events of the late Ottoman Empire, sets an important example for the point that Fikret Adanır draws attention.

In the context of the Macedonian Question, banditry in Rumelia, separatist movements, and Ottoman rule in the late 19th and the early 20th century in the Balkans; it is possible to see a number of academic works based on various primary sources such as official documents, newspapers, embassy, and intelligence reports, memoirs of individuals aiming to present different perspectives. However, Tahsin Bey's memoir is relatively less focused on this field. There is a master's thesis and a doctoral thesis, which are largely devoted to Tahsin Uzer's memory. The first of these is Ender Korkmaz's Master's Thesis, which deals with Tahsin Uzer's whole life and political activities. Since this thesis focuses on Tahsin Bey's entire life and political activities, it is written like a biography. All chapters deal with the life of Tahsin in chronological order. In this sense, there is not much distance between the work and the author. Apart from a few points, the sources used were also used to support what Tahsin told in his memoirs, and the critical and multidimensional approach remained in the background. The memoir is considered rather as the political life of Tahsin Bey than a collection of his intimate memories. Korkmaz made determinations about some of the factors that shaped Tahsin Bey's administrative life, such as Tahsin Bey's hatred of the Hamidian regime, these allegations could be dealt with in more detail. However, it is possible to see a more critical approach If we make a comparison

³Fikret Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu: Oluşumu ve 1908'e Kadar Gelişimi* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2001), 1.

with Mustafa Şahin. Mustafa Şahin's doctoral thesis focused on Tahsin Bey's administration and political identity. As a doctoral dissertation, the study is much more detailed, and the sources are more diverse. Since this study is primarily dedicated to Tahsin Bey's administrative and political career, the factors that may have influenced the Macedonian Question or Tahsin Bey's memoirs remain in the background. In the memoir, there are important determinations about some details, especially concerning his administrative life. It can be thought that the author, who also benefited from Tahsin Bey's family archive, was not distanced from the memoir.

Therefore, studying the memoir of Tahsin (Uzer) Bey within the framework of the Macedonian Question is believed to give a chance to focus on the rural areas of Ottoman Macedonia within the scope of the banditry and the Ottoman administration. Furthermore, the memoir is expected to enable us to better understand the banditry issue through the lens of a Young Turk administrator who served in small districts and townships.

Studying the Macedonian Question through a late 19th – early 20th-century memoir which is, in this case, Tahsin Bey's memoir, is crucial in two ways: Firstly, as it was mentioned above, Tahsin Bey was a Young Turk administrator who was appointed to his first duty at the age of 19. Tahsin Bey, who had served in small towns and townships of Macedonia at the very beginning of his career, had the opportunity to be in close contact with the region's people. He was also part of the Ottoman bureaucracy, albeit a young and early-career administrator. From this point of view, Tahsin Bey can be considered to be in a key position. He could look at both from the perspective of the state and the public and provide access to both sides. His account gives many details and embodiments from multiple small townships and districts of Macedonia where the separatist and nationalist guerilla fighters were the primary issue contributing the Macedonian Question, daily life of locals under these circumstances, their socio-economic and ethnic conditions, problems and conflicts. His ideological background of being a Young Turk and having an official duty gives him a critical outlook on the weaknesses and problems of the Ottoman administration in the fight against the banditry. The situation according to Tahsin Bey resulted with even more socio-political unrest and an unresolvable Macedonian question. In this sense, by looking at Tahsin Bey's account within the framework of banditry and the Ottoman administration in Macedonia provides a detailed and closer look at the rural life as well as both events he narrates. His critical inferences on the macro-level can give a different perspective of a Young Turk governor on the areas that are relatively less studied in this subject

and provide a more comprehensive study considering that there was a reciprocal influence between micro and macro narratives on the related topic.

Secondly, the memoir of Tahsin Bey, which Celalettin Uzer published as “History of Banditry and Ottoman Government in Macedonia,” seems to be relatively neglected. Certain works on this subject refer to this personal account though Tahsin Bey is a historical figure who is more likely to be studied with his later duties in Eastern Anatolia, Syria, and İzmir where he was in much higher positions. Apart from the above-mentioned master’s Thesis of Ender Korkmaz and Ph.D. doctoral dissertation by Mustafa Şahin on Tahsin Bey’s life, Master’s Thesis from Bilkent University by Anıl Kayalar gives a chapter to Tahsin Bey, but the thesis is primarily based on the Records of Rumelia Inspectorship as it can be inferred from the title which is: “Struggle Over Macedonia: Florina 1906, According to the Records of Rumeli Inspectorhsip.” Thus, there seems to be a gap and need for an extensive analysis that narrates what was written in the memoir and provides it in a broader framework of the Macedonian Question, banditry, and Ottoman administration, through Tahsin Bey’s perspective. The memoir was published with the title of “History of Banditry and Ottoman Administration in Macedonia” but an extensive analysis of his memoir at the center of the related framework is absent. One of the aims of this research is to fill this gap.

Before analyzing the memoir, this study will draw a broader framework of the Macedonia Question. The study will discuss the Macedonian Question in the second chapter. The chapter will briefly explain the emergence and development of the Macedonian Question and how the Macedonian Question was and is defined from different perspectives. The chapter will explain the revival of “Macedonia” and the milestones that significantly transformed the Macedonian problem into a serious international question. The study will focus on the discussions in the relevant field literature about the reasons for the development of the Macedonian Question.

The third chapter will focus on the systematization of terror and banditry in Macedonia in the late 19th – early 20th century. Since Tahsin Bey’s account primarily focuses on the Bulgaro-Macedonian committees, this chapter will also concentrate on them. In the last part of the chapter, the study will briefly explain the Ottoman administration and Muslim reactions. The fourth and final chapter will focus on Tahsin Uzer and his account.

In the fourth chapter, the Macedonian Question, banditry, and Ottoman administration will be analyzed from his perspective and the reflections of Tahsin Bey's narrative will be sought mostly in the Ottoman archival sources. The last chapter will attempt to draw a general persona of Tahsin Bey and compare some of its characteristics with similar examples. The chapter will try to determine the factors that might have influenced Tahsin Bey's narrative and perspective on the Macedonian "banditry". The memoir has a special place with its multifaceted features, which require a multi-perspective approach. The memoir of Tahsin Bey as a late 19th-century account has been written from a perspective of a typical intellectual of the Hamidian era, which bears a mission carried by the author is visible throughout the memoir. Not only the information, including a brief history of ancient Macedonia, that he constantly gives but also the way he tries to explain the reasons and results of the incidents, from his actions to the major problems on a macro level, could be considered as indications of efforts of justification of a Young Turk intellectual and politician. Therefore, in chapters 4 and 5 the factors that shaped Tahsin Uzer's personal and intellectual background will be discussed. Namely, his family, the city he was born and raised, the Hamidian education system and prominent schools such as *Mekteb-i Mülkiye*, CUP, Young Turk publications and mainstream thoughts that shaped Young Turks' intellectual life will be analyzed.

2. A GENERAL OUTLOOK ON THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

2.1 Introduction

Before analyzing “Tahsin Uzer’s Macedonia” and his experience with the banditry problem, a general framework of the “Macedonian Question” and its roots needs a brief explanation. The word Macedonia itself has significance. Thus, this study will briefly explain the use of Macedonia and its geographical boundaries. Later, the chapter will explain how the ancient name of “Macedonia” revives after centuries of Ottoman administration in the region. Drawing a concrete line between “pax-Ottomana” the relatively peaceful era when Balkans’ peoples lived side by side, and the exact time of emergence of the “Macedonian Question” is as challenging as drawing the exact boundaries of Macedonia or portioning its lands among the Balkan nations. Therefore, this chapter and the following one will discuss the milestones that led the way to the crisis. More in particular, concentrating on the post-1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War period, the study will emphasize the San Stefano and Berlin Treaties, as these moments took the Macedonian Question to an international level. Beside the milestones and their impacts, the chapter will discuss different views on the roots and the reasons for the emergence of the Macedonian question. To construct a general framework, this chapter will address the spread of nationalist ideas all around the Balkans, the disturbed balance of power in the region after San Stefano, the crushing interests of Great powers and Balkan states, socio-economic dynamics in the region and ethnoreligious conflicts inherited from Ottoman millet system.

Although the formation of the dynamics that make up the Macedonian Question was a long-term process, the July 1878 Berlin Treaty created a new status quo in the Balkans.⁴ While newly established Balkan states sought more territories

⁴Gül Tokay, *Makedonya Sorunu: Jön Türk İhtilalinin Kökenleri, 1903-1908* (İstanbul: AFA Yayınları,

in Macedonia, Bulgaria appeared as a deeply dissatisfied country that lost its ideal lands provided by the Treaty of San Stefano of March 3, 1878. In fact, Bulgaria considered entire Macedonia as the rightful country of the Bulgarians, a claim which upset and threatened other Balkan countries with connections in the region. Whereas this situation created a temporal balance favoring Ottoman rule in the region, it also increased the tension in decades. Fikret Adanır brings another dimension to the Question. Apart from tension within Balkan states and Bulgaria, the exploitation of Bulgarian villagers and bourgeoisie by Muslim notables is considered as one of the major internal reasons of the Bulgarian movement.⁵ On the other hand, Gül Tokay feels the need to note that even if Bulgarians' conditions were better under the Ottoman rule, there would still be a Bulgarian uprising in Macedonia as the problem already transformed itself into national sentiments against the Ottoman rule.

Bulgarians took action against the Ottoman central authority and the Greek Patriarchate, which reveals to us why in Turkish and Western historiography, the Macedonian Question is regarded as a "Bulgarian Question."⁶

2.2 Reintroducing the Concept of Macedonia

Geographically Macedonia is surrounded by; the north-western coasts of the Aegean Sea in the south, the middle Vardar river in the north, and the Mesta Karasu⁷ river in the east, stretching from Thessaly in the south up to the Shar mountains in the north.⁸ Tahsin Uzer describes the region in his memoir as a part of the Balkan peninsula located in the Struma, the Vardar, and Mesta river basins. The region is in the southwestern part of the Balkans. Macedonia included the entire Selanik *Vilâyeti* (province) and the parts of Manastır and Kosova vilayets, excluding Albanian lands and; after 1903, this region was given an "exceptional" administration under the so-called "Three Provinces General Inspectorate" (*Vilâyât-ı Selâse Umumî*

1996), 31.

⁵Tokay, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 33-35.

⁶Ibid, 35.

⁷The river is known as Nestos in Greek and Mesta in Bulgarian.

⁸Zafer Koylu, "Makedonya Sorunu (1878-1913)," PhD diss., (Anadolu University, 1997), 18.

Müfettişliği) by the Ottoman administration.⁹

Until the early 20th century, the region did not present homogeneity regarding ethnicity, geography, or climate. There were plains, mountains, and basins, not only dividing climates but also people. Even people sharing the same ethnicity and speaking the same language had quite different habits and cultures based on their geography in Macedonia. In each basin, a different group of Slavs lived; some of them were more homogeneous, while some of them were pretty mixed with Yoruks and Konyar Turks. Slavs were living together with “Ottomans,” as Adanır identifies in the north, while they were sharing their habitats with Greeks and Vlachs in the south. The ancient term “Macedonia” had not been used by not only the Ottomans but also the Bulgarian and Serbian kingdoms before the Ottoman rule.¹⁰ So it would not be surprising that the Ottomans did not use the consolidative term “Macedonia”, instead they divided their European territories, which they used to call “Rumelia,” into seven administrative units or vilayets in 1867, and these were; Tuna, Edirne, Selanik, Manastır, Yanya, İşkodra, and Kosova.¹¹

The ancient term called “Macedonia” was only revived as a geographical term in the 19th century by European geographers. However, one should be cautious that this revived term did not necessarily specify any well-defined geographical borders in Macedonia”.¹²

The term “Macedonia” acquired its political place as an international question at the Berlin Congress in 1878 when the concept became an issue of the Ottomans. However, the Sublime Porte did not use the term officially. The official term used for Macedonia was *Vilayet-i Selase*, covering three vilayets in Macedonia; Manastır, Selanik, and Kosova. Unsurprisingly, the Ottoman officials did not use a unifying term revived and defined by Europeans somewhat subjectively in the 19th century. Using the term officially would mean accepting how Europeans defined the geographical borders. Furthermore, using the term with separatist connotation and¹³ considering 3 vilayets as one unified region would lead to accepting the autonomy of Macedonia. It should be noted that one of the demands in the Balkans by different groups,

⁹Tahsin Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1979), 81.

¹⁰Koylu, “Makedonya Sorunu,” 18.

¹¹Adanır, Makedonya Sorunu, 3-4.

¹²Ibid, 4.

¹³Mehmet Hacısalihioğlu, *Jön Türkler ve Makedonya Sorunu (1890-1918)*, trans. İhsan Catay (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2008), 34-35.

whether the Macedonian Revolutionary movement, the Great Powers or Albanians, was the unification of a particular region that they were claiming. Unifying them under one administrative unit would easily open the path for autonomy and later independence from the empire.¹⁴

2.3 Roots of the Macedonian Question

Defining the “Macedonian Question” is a challenge that historians could not agree upon. How to define the Macedonian Question is directly related to the definer’s introductory perspective on what and who caused the turmoil in the region. As the introductory part of the chapter already mentioned, there is a tendency to describe the situation mainly as a “Bulgarian Question”. In another respect, some may relate it to a “Turkish question,” as stated by Macedonian historian Ivanka Vasilevska.¹⁵

On the one hand, it is not uncommon to consider the Macedonian question as a part of the “Eastern Question”. Kemal Beydilli¹⁶ describes the Eastern Question as to the “expulsion of Turks from Europe” As Beydilli indicates, the “Eastern Question” could be perceived as a fight for sharing the lands of Ottoman inheritance as a result of the weakening of the empire since the late 17th century. Ottoman Empire’s lands in Europe became “battlegrounds of European powers” to expand their territories and political and economic spheres of influence. Especially European lands of the Ottoman empire witnessed brutal struggles of different nationalist movements of Balkan nations as well as a power struggle of the Great powers with the visible decline of the empire by the 18th century.¹⁷ When the Ottomans were defeated by Russia in 1878 and forced to sign the Treaty of San Stefano, the emergence of the “Great Bulgaria” through the incorporation of Macedonia into the principality threatened European peace. This situation made the Macedonian crisis a part of the Eastern Question. The rapid collapse of the Empire required a re-arrangement

¹⁴It is seen that the expression Macedonia is frequently used in Ottoman archive documents, especially after 1878. Although the state does not officially adopt the expression Macedonia, this does not mean that the word Macedonia is not in use. So that, in a telegram sent to the Rumelia provinces, it is stated that place names should be given at the end of notifications and petitions and that the name Macedonia should not be used: “*Ma’ruzat ve tebligatın sonunda mahal ismi bildirilerek, "Makedonya" tabirinin kullanılmamasına dair irade olduğunun tebliği hususunda vilayetlere telgraf*” BOA, TFR.I..UM, 1-100.

¹⁵Ivanka Vasilevska “The Macedonian Question a Historical Overview.” Law Review , 2019. doi:10 Issue1

¹⁶Kemal Beydilli, “Şark Meselesi” TDV *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi.

¹⁷Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, “Makedonya” TDV *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2003.

of the borders and political relations in the Balkans.¹⁸

Mehmet Hacısalihoglu is also one of the historians describing the Macedonian Question as one of the most well-known problems of the Eastern Question and the Cretan issue.¹⁹ Ivanka Vasilevska also discusses the “Macedonian Question” within the “Eastern Question” framework. She quotes Ante Popovski; “In the second half of the XIX century on the Balkan political stage the Macedonian question was separated as a special phase from the great Eastern question.” Lack of serious support from Great powers and lack of a “Macedonian millet” which will be discussed under “ethnic-religious conflicts- part, Ivanka compares the situation that Macedonia ended up as “a real Gordian knot in which, until the present times, will entangle and leave their impact the irredentist aspirations for domination over Macedonia and its population by the Balkan countries – Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia.”²⁰

2.3.1 Russo-Ottoman War, Treaty of San Stefano and Berlin Congress

With the end of the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War and treaties signed in its wake, the Macedonian Question came to the fore as one of most important aspects of the broader Eastern Question. The war and its aftermath did not only change the future of the Balkans, but also affected the future of the Empire. After suffering a heavy defeat in the war, during which the Russian army had reached Ayastefanos (Yeşilköy) on the outskirts of Istanbul, the Ottomans were forced to sign to the Treaty of San Stefano on March 3, 1878. The Treaty of San Stefano included clauses that secured further Russian domination and expansion in the Mediterranean basin.²¹ The Treaty of San Stefano also established a Greater Bulgaria. This principality’s borders were vast, encompassing most of Macedonia. The principality was to be ruled by a Bulgarian prince chosen by the Bulgarians themselves; in the meantime, the Ottomans had to de-militarize the region while the Russians deployed troops until the Bulgarian army was established.

Further reforms were to be applied in those areas of the Balkans under Russian

¹⁸ Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*.

¹⁹ Hacısalihoglu, *Jön Türkler*, 422.

²⁰ Ivanka Vasilevska “The Macedonian Question a Historical Overview.” *Law Review* , 2019. doi:10 Issue 1.

²¹ Anıl Kayalar, “Struggle over Macedonia: Florina 1906, According to the Records of Rumeli Inspectorship,” Master’s Thesis, (Bilkent University, 2003), 13.

protection.²² The Treaty of San Stefano did not openly mention the name of “Macedonia,” since almost the entire region was given to Greater Bulgaria according to the sixth article of the treaty. Although it excluded Edirne and Thessaloniki, the Bulgarian Principality nevertheless included important cities like Skopje, Monastır, Ohrid, and Thessaly. With the new map, Ottomans did not only lose a significant amount of their European lands, including most of Macedonia, but they also lost a land connection to Thessaloniki, Janina, and rest of the Albania. Greater Bulgaria was thus extended to the Aegean coast while Serbia, Montenegro and Romania each received their independence.²³

The Treaty of San Stefano broke the fragile peace in Europe established by 1856 Treaty of Paris and the 1871 Treaty of Istanbul.²⁴ Consequently, the Treaty provoked the immediate reaction and intervention of the Great Powers, especially Austria-Hungary. The articles were a true victory of pan-Slavism, yet they threatened the interests of other states/powers. Britain, too, found its routes to her colonies endangered, while Austria’s influence over the Balkans was at stake. For Germany, the treaty meant that the road between the North Sea and the Mediterranean Sea was blocked. Other Balkan states were upset too, as Romania lost territory while Serbia gained very little, and Montenegro lost its opportunity to reach the Adriatic Sea. Indeed, it was not only the Bulgarians who desired Macedonia but also the Serbs and the Greeks, and they were waiting for their own opportunity to annex Macedonia. These conditions led to the emergence of a crisis that threatened European peace and made the Macedonian Question a central part of the Eastern Question. Since they thought the Ottoman Empire could no longer maintain its dominance in the region for a long time and would disintegrate, the re-arrangement of borders and political relations in the Balkans became an urgent issue for the Great Powers.²⁵ The Ottomans instead aimed to use the situation to their own advantage with the help of Austria, and as such German Chancellor Bismarck convened a congress in Berlin in 1878.²⁶

The Congress of Berlin was concluded and the Treaty of Berlin was signed on July

²² Halil İnalçık, *Devlet-i Aliyye: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar IV*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017), 285.

²³ Koylu, “Makedonya Sorunu.” 42-43.

²⁴ Ibid, 43.

²⁵ Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*. 272.

²⁶ Koylu, “Makedonya Sorunu,” 43. See also: Kayalar, “Struggle over Macedonia,” 13.

13, 1878. There were two main issues at the Berlin Congress: the Bulgarian Question and Ottoman foreign debt. The British delegate Salisbury most prominently brought up the Bulgarian issue by emphasizing that the territorial gains of Bulgaria, which took up most of Macedonia, posed a great threat to the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, many people from the Rum *millet* remained within these borders.²⁷ The establishment of a Greater Bulgaria would thus constitute a *casus belli* between Great Britain and Russia. As a solution, San Stefano's Bulgaria was divided into three regions: in the first region, a Bulgarian Principality was to be founded as a dependency of the Ottoman Empire. The second region, Eastern Rumelia, was to have a special status of an *eyalet* governed by a Christian governor for five years under Ottoman rule. The third region, "Macedonia," was to remain under Ottoman rule. However, the new agreement did not please any of the parties. After all, the Ottomans lost a significant amount of their territories. Serbia lost the chance of annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was given instead to Austria, and access to the Adriatic Sea. Romania lost Bessarabia, and Bulgaria lost its ideal borders as given by the Treaty of San Stefano. The Berlin Treaty upset Bulgaria the most, as its borders changed to a considerable extent.²⁸ San Stefano Bulgaria had created an ideal for Bulgarians to achieve, and Macedonia came to be seen as a natural part of the homeland. The loss of this "promised land of the Bulgarians" with the Treaty of Berlin laid the ground for a future conflict in Macedonia. Furthermore, with the Treaty of Berlin, not only Bulgaria but also Greece and Serbia became neighbors, and the Treaty increased the tensions between these countries; on a larger scale, it exacerbated the competition between Austria-Hungary and Russia over the Balkans.²⁹ Ultimately, the Treaty of Berlin only slightly improved the conditions of the San Stefano in favor of the Ottoman Empire, and it sowed the seeds for many issues, especially for the future of the Macedonian Question, with articles that did not satisfy anyone. Some of these problems would not find a solution until the First World War.

²⁷İnalcık, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, 289-290.

²⁸Koylu, "Makedonya Sorunu," 44-45.

²⁹Kayalar, "Struggle over Macedonia," 16.

2.4 Macedonia Question as an International Crisis: Influence of the Great Powers

“The Macedonian question was an absorbing and important diplomatic problem.”³⁰

Frances A. Radovich

From the second half of the 19th century, Macedonia virtually turned into a chessboard on which states with different interests played delicate balance games. In particular, the Berlin Congress convened in 1878 has an essential place in this respect. Berlin Congress was convened after the diplomatic defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the San Stefano Treaty signed as a result of the last Russo-Turkish War in 1877-78. In this congress “Macedonian Question” took its place in the literature, and Macedonia became the primary field of competition of interests and economic and political interference of the external powers.³¹ We see on one side neighboring Balkans states with irredentist policies on Macedonia, and on the other side, the Great Powers competing with each other for reaching oil resources, controlling the railroads extending towards rich soils and colonies, and reaching and dominating the Ottoman market. New actors such as Italy and German Empire began to compete with Britain and France for colonies and open markets, while historical rivals like Russia and Austria-Hungary displayed clashing interests on the status quo in the Balkans. All these factors made Macedonia one of the areas where conflicts of interest were most intense in the entire Eastern Question. Nevertheless, from the 1870s to the Balkan Wars, the relative balance of powers maintained the status quo preserved with some minor changes. Meanwhile, the European powers exploited the Balkan states they considered to be closer to themselves and allowed them to aggressively influenced the Macedonian Question.³²

Each Balkan State and Great Power had different policies toward Macedonia and varying relations with the Ottoman Empire based on changing balance of power and

³⁰Frances A. Radovich, “Britain’s Macedonian Reform Policy, 1903–1905,” *The Historian* 43, no. 4 (1981): 493.

³¹Mico Apostolov, “The Macedonian Question – Changes in Content over Time,” MPRA Paper 6568, University Library of Munich, Germany, 2006.

³²Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 274.

numerous variables. Some historians periodize the policies of external powers based on certain developments or events, such as the Berlin Treaty or the Russo-Japanese War.³³

The most significant trouble of the Ottoman Empire was Russia for the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries. Until the early 19th century, Russian Empire had shown a more or less determined attitude toward the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and followed an expansionist policy. Initially putting Greek merchants in the Black Sea under its protection, Russia later took advantage of the support of Britain and France for the Greek revolution. Interestingly As Vlasidis argues, Russia did not pay attention to Macedonia for a long term until the last quarter of the century. By the mid-19th century, Russia attempted to compromise with Britain. Because even after Russo-Turkish War, conditions for the dissolution of the empire had not been met yet. The plan of portioning the empire between Russia, Austria, Greece, and Britain included the Balkans and Constantinople. However, Russian policy on the Balkans changed by the end of the 1850s by getting Bulgarians onside and following a Pan-Slavist policy so that Russia could prevent a second Crimean War.

The defeat of Russia at the Crimean War, followed by the Treaty of Paris of 1856, forced the Russians to pursue their imperial aims indirectly by supporting the Bulgarians. Here there is a need to focus on Ignatiev, who served as the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, and foreign affairs minister Alexander Gorchakov³⁴ who implemented the Russian Pan Slavist policies in the Balkans and affected the Macedonian Question in particular.³⁵ Russia began to support Bulgarians on the Macedonian question by supporting the rights of the Exarchate and the unification of Macedonia with Bulgaria. Vlasidis argues that the Pan-Slavist Russian policies of this period cannot be explained only by Pan Slavist leaders. Instead, one should consider the post-Crimean War conjuncture in which conditions for the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire had not been met yet and would not be met unless European Powers withdrew their support in this aspect. Therefore creating

³³ According to Adanır, Russia started to follow a different foreign policy from 1905 after it was defeated by Japan in the Russo-Japanese war. According to the report of Ambassador Johann Pallavicini, after the Russo-Japanese War, the area of conflict of interests of the great states descended to the Balkans. See: Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 252-254.

³⁴ Rahman Ademi, "II. Abdülhamid'in Balkan Siyaseti," in *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Dönemi: Siyaset, İktisat, Dış Politika, Kültür, Eğitim*, 139–86. (İstanbul: İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim Üniversitesi, 2019), 145.

³⁵ Vlasidis Vlasidis, "Macedonia and the Great Powers," in *The History of Macedonia*, ed. Ioannis Koliopoulos, (Thessaloniki: Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, 2007), 329-330.

a powerful state in the Balkans, Black Sea, and Aegean per Russian interests was a better choice. Rahman Ademi remarks that Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gorchakov and Istanbul ambassador Ignatiev's Pan-Slavist policies had huge impacts during the Hamidian era. Especially Ignatiev used bureaucrats as spies to provoke Christians and support Bulgarians, disturbing not only the Sublime Porte but also local Balkan Muslims populations. In the long term, these provocative actions would result in consecutive murders of the Russian consul in Monastir and Mitroviche in 1903.³⁶

The Ottoman defeat at the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 and the Treaty of St.Stefano allowed Russia to design a Great Bulgarian Principality, which included Macedonia in its territories.³⁷ However, such a design created a crisis of balance of power since vast territories, including Aegean coastline, key locations reaching from Epirus to the Black Sea Coasts were incorporated into the new principality. Although Russo-Ottoman War proved the international isolation of the Ottoman Empire, The Great Powers immediately reacted against the San Stefano's outcomes which disturbed the balance of power and European Powers' interests in the Balkans, thus in the East. Instead of Greece, which would be a better ally or Ottoman Empire easier to control, SanStefano's Bulgaria in the region made things inextricable not only in Macedonia but in all the Balkans and became the turning point of many issues.

A congress was summoned immediately in Berlin to renegotiate the status in the Balkans. The great success of Pan-Slavism in the Balkans conflicted with other powers' interests. For instance, Austro-Hungary, which aimed to reach Adriatic and the Aegean Sea, preferred Serbian expansion on Macedonia so that it could annex Bosnia and Herzegovina without difficulty. Moreover, Austria allied with Serbia a few years later to support Serbian claims on Macedonia in 1881. For other Great Powers, Macedonia became one of the regions that were too significant to just leave to Bulgaria. In this sense, the Berlin Congress shaped Macedonia's destiny and the Macedonian Question. After the Berlin Treaty Great Bulgaria became/remained a "Great Idea". According to new terms Bulgarian Principality was established in the north, and Macedonia was returned to the Ottomans with the conditions of reforms.³⁸

³⁶Ademi, "II. Abdülhamid'in Balkan Siyaseti," 140.

³⁷Vlasidis, "Macedonia and the Great Powers", 330.

³⁸Ibid, 331.

Competition in Macedonia increasingly continued among the Great Powers. After the Berlin Congress in 1878, Austria-Hungary shaped regional policies based on the plan of annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this direction, Austrians did not oppose the unification of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia. Yet it was not the case for Macedonia. Especially Thessaloniki and surrounding provinces that could enable Austria-Hungary to reach the Aegean coasts were essential. Unlike Britain, Austria-Hungary did not have oversea-colonies so the need for Aegean commerce grew even more critical. Therefore, Austria-Hungary's policies on Macedonia were shaped accordingly, which could not tolerate a powerful Slavic state like Bulgaria. Austria collaborated with Russia during this period to prevent territorial changes in Ottoman Macedonia.³⁹

Meanwhile, Germany showed up by the late-19th century as a new powerful actor. As a new powerful actor, Germany was considered one of the primary concerns of Britain, which could change the balance in Europe and pose a danger to the British colonies⁴⁰ Germany followed a more pro-Ottoman policy in this period compared to its rivals France and Great Britain. The need for industrial raw materials for developing German factories, a beneficial economic zone, and a strategic railroad reaching Baghdad made the Ottomans an attractive ally. However, this alliance and cooperation with Austria-Hungary to link the railroads alarmed Great Britain and Russia, which found the solution to the Eastern Question by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Although Germany did not follow a particular policy regarding Macedonia and the Macedonian Question, Germans adhered to the balance of power policy in the Balkans against Russia's intervention in the regions with Orthodox populations and Austria-Hungary's attempt to reach the western Balkans and Thessaloniki.⁴¹ Thus, the Germans wanted the status-quo in the Balkans to continue. Germany formed a quite good relationship with the Hamidian regime and Sublime Porte.⁴² However, a small note should be made here; In Berlin, in 1878, the German Chancellor Bismarck stopped further Russian expansion, though he remained unconcerned with the disintegration of the Ottoman lands. He tolerated Britain taking Egypt and Cyprus.⁴³

³⁹Ibid, 335.

⁴⁰İnalcık, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, 293.

⁴¹Ademi, "II. Abdülhamid'in Balkan Siyaseti," 145.

⁴²Vlasidis, "Macedonia and the Great Powers," 336-337.

⁴³İnalcık, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, 294.

Just like Germany, France did not follow a certain policy in Macedonia either. France also needed a stable environment for a growing economy in the region as France was dominating important sectors such as banking and transportation. Yet, it would be wrong to assume that France was as supportive as Germany towards the Hamidian regime. France frequently went along with Great Britain regarding implementing extensive regional reforms.⁴⁴

As for Russia, a significant actor that played an active role in the Macedonian Question, one could see Russia's foreign policy on Macedonia based on a delicate balance. It is not unknown that Russians find the existence of the Bulgarian State in the region suitable for their interests. Thus, some may take Russian support for Bulgarians for granted. Yet, the delicate balance between the Balkan States and Great Powers made it necessary for Russia to pursue more careful and sometimes transformative policies. For instance, after the Berlin Congress until 1885, Russia attempted to enhance its relations with Bulgarians and Greeks regarding the Macedonian Question but remained inconclusive. In 1885 when the Bulgarian movement gained momentum, Russia did not support Bulgaria's annexation of Eastern Rumelia because of the fear of Austria, Serbia, and Greeks.

On the other hand, Russia supported Bulgaria during the war with Serbia from 1885-1886. In the later period, it is possible to observe that Russia followed a moderate policy in the Balkans. In 1902 Russian and Austrian foreign affairs ministers Lambsdorff and Golychevski found the solution to the Macedonian Question in the autonomy of Macedonia by a Christian governor.⁴⁵ Rahman Ademi also discusses how Pan-Slavism received a blow by new terms of the Berlin Treaty led Russia to oppose San-Stefano Bulgaria's unification. The alliance between Russia and Austria to maintain the status quo in the Balkans in 1897 proves this idea.⁴⁶

Although Vlasidis is right to periodize the Great Powers' policies on Macedonia and Ottoman territorial integrity in the Balkans based on before and after the Berlin Congress, it is noteworthy that the radical change in the British policy on

⁴⁴Vlasidis, "Macedonia and the Great Powers," 336.

⁴⁵Ibid, 336.

⁴⁶Ademi, "II. Abdülhamid'in Balkan Siyaseti," 144-145.

Ottoman integrity was/ is observed with Gladstone government. In 1868, under the government of Gladstone, Liberals came to power for the first time, ending the period of British protectionist policy toward the Ottomans.⁴⁷ So Britain was less interested in the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and was shaping her policies with this expectation while keeping the delicate balance in the region to protect her interests. Also, Great Britain was the empire the Hamidian regime hesitated most.⁴⁸ During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Britain made occasional changes in Balkan policy under different variables. For example, in Berlin Congress, British delegate Salisbury who was well known for his Turkish opposition, took an efficient step to alter the terms of San Stefano regarding Great Bulgaria. He claimed that terms on Bulgarian borders reaching out to the Ohrid lake and the Aegean Sea were the most significant issue of the congress. Also, the new borders presented a significant threat to Ottoman sovereignty. Thus, Ottoman Empire could not be forced to accept these serious conditions.⁴⁹ After the Berlin Congress, Britain continued to favor the maintenance of the status quo against the Russian expansion, yet in this period collapse of the empire was expected sooner or later. Especially with Austria, Great Britain was one of the most influential actors in changing the conditions of San Stefano in the Berlin Congress to prevent Russian expansion through the straights and the Mediterranean Sea. Great Britain's policy towards Ottoman rule in Balkans was mainly affected by two significant factors; Britain's internal politics and changing balance in the "East". That's why one could see Great Britain openly supported Bulgarian rule in the region, which they considered to be much more suitable for the British interests, and created an ex parte public opinion in favor of Bulgarians in 1876, while a couple of years later interfered and changed the terms of San Stefano to the detriment of "Great Bulgaria".⁵⁰ British public opinion and government, especially liberals, favored Bulgarians and their actions in a romantic way as they did during the Greek revolution. Gül Tokay quotes Marchall saying that the Macedonian Question was not a result of the poor administration of Turks but a result of enmity between Serbs and Bulgars though the British Liberal government was in denial of this fact to maintain the support of non-conformist votes.⁵¹ Nevertheless, this support for the Bulgarians of Britain was cautious. British support for Bulgaria was more likely to be shown. If Bulgaria

⁴⁷İnalcık, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, 292.

⁴⁸Hakan Tan, "*Makedonya'da Bulgar Komite Faaliyetleri ve Boris Sarafof*," Master's Thesis, (Sakarya University, 2013), 18.

⁴⁹İnalcık, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, 288.

⁵⁰Mithat Aydın, "İstanbul Konferansı (1876)'na Giden Yolda İngiltere'nin 'Doğu' Politikası," *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 17 (2005): 3.

⁵¹Tokay, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 163.

was strong enough to be free from Russian influence as strong Russian domination in Balkans and Straits would not be suitable for British interests in the East. British governments at the end of the 19th century were no longer supporters of Ottoman integrity though different governments proposed varying solutions in the region. For example, during Ilinden Uprising, Britain supported Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), favored Bulgarians, and condemned the way the Ottomans suppressed the uprising in 1903. On the other hand in 1897 the Gladstone government followed a different policy on Macedonia because of the reconciliation of the Russo-Bulgarian relationship at the time. Britain's solution was the self-rule of the people of Macedonia under the protection of the Great Powers instead of unification with Bulgaria. Neither Austria-Hungary nor Russia accepted this proposal. Thus Britain continued with the plans of reforms in Macedonia.⁵² Although 1878 was a turning point in European diplomacy and its policies in the Balkans, a particular focus should be placed on the early 20th century. Changing policies of Austria-Hungary and Russia on the Balkans, in the first place, some significant development that took place in the world had essential effects on the Macedonian Question.

In the early 20th century, Russia could not take an active stance in the Balkans for a while due to the Russo-Japanese war that broke out in the east in 1904. Although Russia continued to pursue a much more aggressive policy for the dissolution of the Ottoman lands in the Balkans, Russian defeat against Japan in 1904-1905 proved its weakness which continued with 1905 revolution and 1907 Coup. These developments required a new foreign policy. The most suitable field for the new foreign policy to gain legitimacy was the Balkans because of its historical context.⁵³

By 1905, the new context of Russia required British support, and the German threat to British domains made this alliance possible. According to the report of the Austrian ambassador Pallavicini, in the post- Russo-Japanese war period, the Balkans became the center of the Great Powers' conflict zone.⁵⁴ Russian defeat in East Asia disturbed the relative balance of power with Austria in the Balkans existing since 1897. Austria wanted to make changes in the reforms in favor of herself as soon as the Russo-Japanese war broke out, which Russia had no chance to accept and resulting in excluding Kosovo and some provinces of Monastir from the reforms.

⁵²Vlasidis, "Macedonia and the Great Powers," 333-334.

⁵³Adamir, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 252.

⁵⁴Ibid, 254.

A Russian civil advisor who worked in Macedonia summarizes that the Macedonian Question and the Russian-Austrian influence in the region have a more layered context beyond the interests of peoples in Macedonia or historical ties: “The Macedonian Question is first a European Question, and finally a Bulgarian Question. The final outcome of this question depends on the interests of Europe, particularly the interests of Russia-Austria-Hungary.” This quote explains why Russians pursued a more realistic policy and did not want a strong Bulgaria in the region in this period. On the other hand, Austrians provoked Albanians as a counterbalance to Serbs in the region. Although they formed good temporal relations with the Bulgarian government, Austria formed its policies to maintain the ethnic conflicts and turmoil in the region

2.5 Socio-Economic Problems

The problems behind the Macedonian Question and banditry issue are far more complicated than merely the spread of post-French revolution ideas around the Balkans. As the chapter explained before, one of the most significant factors making the situation unsolvable was the clashing interests of Balkan nations and the Great Powers. On the other hand, one should consider internal dynamics triggering what happens in Macedonia. It would be oversimplifying to reduce the situation to a mere battle of ideologies. The internal conditions, especially socio-economic conditions in Macedonia played a great role. Since the emergence of national movements and internationally recognized Macedonian crisis, the general western outlook as well as the main propaganda of the other Balkan states, claimed the reality of Macedonia consisted of “oppressed Christian peasant and oppressing Muslim lords”.

The hypothesis developed by Fikret Adamır by comparing the Balkan historiography is invaluable in terms of refuting the dominant thesis used in the study of the Macedonian question. According to this hypothesis, one can talk about a Macedonian problem in the 19th-20th century Balkans and European politics rather than a Macedonian national movement. Accordingly, the Macedonian question did not emerge due to ethnic-national causes. The main reasons should be sought in the socio-economic factors of Ottoman administration in the Balkans and to a great extent in the European powers’ interests. This hypothesis suggests that factors like the transformation in the urban-agricultural structure, the persistence

of the “millet system,” and the intrusion of European powers’ interests played significant roles. Among these factors, socioeconomic changes led the path to social unrest and finally gained functionality in national conflicts. These socio-economic layers were never parallel with ethnic groups, and the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the conditions of landed property was never on an ethnic basis. However, the fundamental contradiction was between production and the market system, which were unsuitable for the current economic conditions. As the socio-economic layers in the society are far more complex, an oversimplified formula of the clash between Slav peasantry versus Muslim exploiter does not explain the Macedonian question even though this could be attractive to the national historiography. On the other hand, Fikret Adanır does not deny that Slavic intelligentsia emerging due to urban developments could not find a suitable place for themselves in the existing social structure. So in this sense, one can speak of a role of a socio-national conflict as this intelligentsia had vital interests in ending Ottoman domination.⁵⁵

Macedonian historian Ivanka Vasilevska points out that the vast majority of the population in Macedonia during the 19th and early 20th centuries was rural. Around 80 percent of the population was engaged in agriculture and their main concern was to survive.⁵⁶ It is essential to look at the taxation system as to which taxes were applied and how much was collected are some of the questions that Fikret Adanır dwells upon. Aşar tax for instance is the heaviest tax burden for a 20th-century countryman. The tax itself and the way these taxes were collected was also a huge problem. Turkish tax farmers took Macedonian aşar of one year and they in return, were assigning their collection to sub-tax farmer contractors. In 1903 the bulk tax farming system was abolished and in 1906 an alternative collective tax farming system of farmers- peasants with collective responsibility was introduced. What is most problematic about the debate on the Ottoman land system in the Balkans is the exaggeration of çiftliks’ role. One of the primary reasons for that is the traveler accounts of Europeans who mostly focused on çiftliks and created an image as if the land system was entirely based on çiftliks. In the travelers’ accounts, the transformation of share farmers to serfs, symbiotic relations, usury, and working for debt were highly emphasized. Yet Adanır states that they had different legal terms than European feudal lords, which enabled farmers to be independent from landowners. Moreover in the post-Crimean War period number of çiftliks showed a decline. In this transitional process, great *çiftlik* owners’ conditions got worse,

⁵⁵Ibid, 272.

⁵⁶Vasilevska “*The Macedonian Question*” 1-2.

followed by handing over of çiftliks to merchants, moneylenders, and share farmers, which peaked in the 1890s. Research on Macedonia clearly shows the çiftliks that are exaggerated by European scholars in Macedonia no longer play a significant role in the last quarter of the 19th century.⁵⁷

Yet another factor that emerged concerning the economic changes in Macedonia was the issue of migration. Labor migration emerged due to abandoning çiftliks and traditional agriculture and the rise of industrial plantations. Especially tobacco farming and opium cultivation became two of the primary sources of income after 1835 as they were convenient for intense farming in small areas. Thus, it is no surprise that tobacco, which is 13 times more valuable than wheat, became the main export item in the late 19th century in Macedonia. It is no coincidence that American and European companies competed in the early 20th century over Macedonian tobacco.

Domestic labor migration was not the only reason of social mobility. Macedonia had its share of mass emigration trend to America in the early 20th century. Curiously enough, Adanır finds the consequences of this mass labor emigrations results even more critical than the migration of Slavic-Macedonian intellectuals of Bulgaria. This stroke a major blow on agricultural production, especially around 1905-1906 when the labor emigration peaked. The main predicament for Ottoman agriculture was while lands were inadequate in mountainous areas, çiftliks were abandoned to become pasturage. Over and above this war development, extraordinary taxes, road constructions and partly feeding the Muslim refugees exiled from the lands occupied by Russia imposed too much burden on the farmers and peasants, which caused unrest and uprisings among Christian peasants.⁵⁸ The social impacts of this dilemma were well exploited by Macedonian revolutionary organizations at the beginning of the 20th century.

2.6 Identity Crisis - Ethno-religious Conflicts

The identity crisis is one of the most contradictory aspects of the Macedonian Question. Even “whether a Macedonian ethnicity exists at all?” is a debated

⁵⁷Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 40-41.

⁵⁸Ibid, 41-42,89.

question. Here both in the 19th and early 20th centuries and the contemporary studies defining ethnic identities are as difficult as untangling the Gordian knot, a term the Macedonian historian Ivanka Vasilevska uses to compare with the Macedonian Question.⁵⁹ There are two crucial problems in Macedonia's social structure; the region is ethnically diverse and has ethnic and linguistic fluidity and ambiguity between groups. Yet another issue is how the Ottoman empire regulated the interaction between these people. Ottoman "millet" system was primarily based on confessions rather than the ethnic "nations" in the modern sense. Majority of the Slavic-speaking Orthodox people and Orthodox Albanians were part of *Rum millet* which was one of the factors that stoked up the conflicts among different groups in Macedonia and also why especially Slavic speaking groups fought against the Greek Patriarchate even more than they fought against the Sublime Porte itself.⁶⁰ After the conquest of the Byzantine Empire, Mehmet II's appointment of the Ecumenical Patriarch defined the relations with non-Muslim confessional communities. However, the millet system was a more complex "web of context-dependent arrangements" than a centrally supervised system. Therefore İpek Yosmaoğlu says; "Unquestioningly accepting millet paradigm as an explanatory model for social and political organization in Ottoman Empire undermines historical complexity of the experience of different communities before their transformation into nations and implicitly credits "national awakening narratives manufactured retrospectively to bolster the legitimacy of the nation-state."⁶¹

One could look at the background of ethnoreligious conflicts to elaborate on the development of new millets. The Ecumenic Patriarchate was in charge of all Orthodox elements in the empire. Hellenic characteristics of the church created more tension during the period of nationalist movements. Ecumenical characteristics, power, influence, and unity of the Patriarchate were damaged in the 19th century, first by Serbs, then the foundation of a national Greek patriarchate after the Greek revolt based in Athens, followed by Romanians, and finally Bulgarians. Especially the emergence of national states in the Balkans and Tanzimat reforms contributed to secularization and reduced the influence and unity of the Patriarchate not only in Macedonia but all around the empire. The superiority of the Fener Rum Patriarchate as a result of privilege given by the empire was objected to by

⁵⁹Vasilevska "The *Macedonian Question*",1.

⁶⁰İlber Ortaylı, "Millet" *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2020.

⁶¹İpek Yosmaoğlu, "From Exorcism to Historicism: The Legacy of Empire and the Pains of Nation-Making in the Balkans," in *Beyond Mosque, Church, and State: Alternative Narratives of the Nation in the Balkans*, ed. Theodora Dragostinova and Yana Hashamova. (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2016), 59.

Slavic-speaking clergy. Egalitarianist policies implied by the new regulations during the Tanzimat period officialized the abolishment of the privilege of the Patriarchate, which İlber Ortaylı describes as a downturn period of the Fener Rum Patriarchate.⁶²

Although one of the main goals of Tanzimat reforms was to centralize the authority and unite people under Ottoman citizenship, which is a revisioned millet system in the conditions of 19th century Macedonia,⁶³ these measures were not enough to solve ethnic problems. Even the Albanians who were the best example to integrate into the Ottoman nation became another problem in the 19th century.⁶⁴ In the 19th century, while Muslims were traditionally considered “Turkish” or ummah both by the Porte and Europe, Orthodox people were bound to Patriarchate, and Catholics were under the protection of Austria-Hungry. The language of education was also shaped based on religious affiliation; Muslims were educated in Ottoman educational system using Arabic script, Orthodox people using Greek, and Catholics Latin.⁶⁵

“If Fener Rum Patriarchate was entitled to control over the entire eastern Christianity, what developments caused this series of sectarian conflicts among Christians?” is a question to be answered. The emergence of the Bulgarian Exarchy in 1870, when a millet based on ethnicity emerged in the Empire for the first time, the religious division turned into a conflict. Consequently, this conflict turned into a struggle between Serbians, Bulgarians, and the Rum Patriarchate. While Serbian and Bulgarian Christianity was laying on a national basis, they engaged in a power struggle against the ancient privileges of the Patriarchate that had been controlling all Ottoman Christians. The main objective of the nationalist movements was to justify the movement by defending all Balkan Christians against Muslim Empire. As there could be no monolith Macedonian millet, with external influence based on neighboring Balkan states and Great Powers’ interests, the main characteristics of these movements became a constant struggle and conflict to transform each other’s identity.⁶⁶

⁶²İlber Ortaylı, “Millet” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2020.

⁶³Borche Nikolov, “Mro (Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) – A New Perspective on the “Millets” in Ottoman Macedonia,” in *Osmanlı İdaresinde Balkanlar II*, ed. Alaattin Aköz et al. (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi ve Medeniyeti Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Yayınları), 72.

⁶⁴Tokay, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 39.

⁶⁵Ibid, 33.

⁶⁶Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 273.

Regarding the emergence and empowerment of bourgeoisie in the Balkans, especially Bulgarian bourgeoisie who had a significant role in the Macedo-Bulgarian organizations and national movements in Macedonia; Bulgarians' conditions become more of an issue. As Bulgaria was in a position of a hinterland or supplier to the big cities in the region, there was a minimal opportunity for free trade. However, wars did not have only adverse effects on Balkan socio-economic life. For example, Russo-Ottoman Wars in the mid- 18th century and treaties signed with European powers revived Bulgarian commerce. Increasing cultural and commercial relations with Russia and Central Europe created a Bulgarian bourgeoisie. Thanks to these relations, Bulgarian bourgeoisie's children who got a chance of education in Europe started to take place in Slavic countries' state offices rather than in Ottoman bureaucracy. In the new social structure rising Bulgarian bourgeoisie emerged as a revival against Ottoman feudal institutions and privileged Feneriots. The development of the Bulgarian national movement was not only related to the socio-economic developments in Bulgaria and Macedonia but also to the Ottoman external developments and the internal religious and political dynamics. Bulgarians fought to change the balance of power in favor of themselves against the Greek Orthodox church supremacy. One of the first demands was education and prayer in vernacular language. The first step to accomplish this was the foundation of schools separate from the Patriarchate, the first Bulgarian school was founded in 1835. These Bulgarian schools with secularized characteristics raised the Bulgarian bourgeoisie against the schools of the Patriarchate with Hellenic ideas. Raising urban intellectuals was not enough. So in the same period, a similar momentum of the activities among rural bourgeoisie could be observed. For the rural Bulgarian bourgeoisie, the only way to engage in political activities was the local communities to take care of school and church affairs. In time, church communities, just like schools, started to grow away from the influence of the Patriarchate.

The petite-bourgeoisie who triggered these developments also gained political superiority. By the Tanzimat Period, a period of the collapse of the Patriarchate's power as described previously, the rising power of this petite bourgeoisie was officialized and they started to participate in local administrations. As discussed in previous parts, the conflict between these groups was not free from international politics and the different interests of the Great Powers. Bulgarians took advantage of French support against Russia and started to convert to Catholicism which gave its results immediately. Especially Bulgarians who were in search of strong protection started to gravitate towards Catholicism. In this way, they could get support from France.

As mentioned before, Catholics became the major threat against the Patriarchate as missionary activities spread around the empire and shook the Patriarchate's power of influence. Considering that Catholicism was officially recognized in 1830 and an Armenian Catholic Church was already established, some Bulgarians were encouraged to convert as there was a powerful and officially recognized church that could provide protection and create an alternative against the Patriarchate. With the support of Catholic Europeans, they could resist the assimilation of the Patriarchate and establish their church hierarchy within the Catholic Church as they grew in number.⁶⁷

Russia, which did not want to lose its influence over Bulgarians, pressured the Patriarchate into reconciliation with Bulgarians and made compromises to keep them under their and Patriarchate's domain.⁶⁸ Tanzimat Reforms and modernization process afterward in this example proved something truly significant; renouncement of ancien regime's institutions for the sake of reforms and modernization. Greek Orthodox Church's damaged supremacy was one of the best examples of this situation.⁶⁹

Particular attention should be paid to the Imperial Reform Edict of 1856 as it is a turning point for the Bulgarian Church, including articles to change the structure of the previous millet system. The Bulgarian bourgeoisie welcomed these changes in the millet system while the Patriarchate disapproved. Such that, increasingly radical demands of the Bulgarians in terms of military service, school, language, administration, and church confronted Patriarchate, and conflict between the two groups intensified after 1860.⁷⁰

According to Adanır, what mattered in the Greek-Bulgarian conflict was not establishing an independent Bulgarian Church, but its domains. What the geographical boundaries and religious, political authority, and limits of both churches would be, is the vital question. Before going into details of the nationalist organizations that emerged within the context of the Macedonian Question that will be discussed in the next chapter, one of the causes and means of this brutal conflict between

⁶⁷Ramazan Eren Güllü, "The Foundation of Bulgarian Exarchy and it's Status," *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 17, no. 1 (2018): 351.

⁶⁸1861 synod and decisions taken aftermath should be considered in this regard.

⁶⁹Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 46.

⁷⁰Ibid, 55-75.

Bulgarians and the Patriarchate should briefly be introduced. While Patriarchate was ready to recognize the existence of a new religious group and their churches in the highlands, it was not enough for Bulgarians. They demanded establishing churches and gaining status in a wider area of Bulgaria and Macedonia. There was a new millet emerging now, and its representative was the church; the places Bulgarians had church would be designating the places to free from the Empire. The main purpose was to prepare for as much territory as possible for the Bulgarian state to be founded in the future. Thus, instead of being dispersed around uncertain boundaries, getting stuck within a minimal mountainous area would not be convenient for Bulgarians. In this situation, what is called the “Bulgarian church” or churches demanded by Bulgarians, according to the radicals, were considered a de-facto Bulgarian National church since 1860. In the following period, especially in 1868, the Sublime Porte’s mediocre relations with Greece and policy to block Russian interference through the Patriarchate which had just begun to reconcile with moderate Bulgarians, changed the course in favor of Bulgarians. After a peak of Bulgarian unrest in 1868, an imperial edict was declared about the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870. İpek Yosmaoğlu in her article which focuses on the “dynamics of the conflict between Greek Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate,” discusses that “the religious independence and national emancipation are closely intertwined and began in the 1830s but had long-term consequences.”⁷¹

Ramazan Erhan Güllü goes back to 1845 when Bulgarians were giving petitions to the Sublime Porte to prevent the Patriarchate’s unpleasant policies and demands such as having official representatives that provided direct connections to the center of the empire, the establishment of a Bulgarian Church in Istanbul, and school. As they could not succeed, in 1849 they sent a committee to Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşit Paşa to make an official application. Although they were not allowed to establish a church, they were permitted to build a clergy house in the Fener district in Istanbul. Güllü discusses that the foundations of the Exarchate had been laid with this clergy house in Fener, as for the first time the Empire recognized the existence of Bulgarians who were subordinate to the Greek Patriarchate.⁷² İpek Yosmaoğlu argues that the Macedonia struggle emerged due to the post-Berlin Congress’s ambiguous and insecure atmosphere, though it was a struggle between Bulgarians and Greeks and partly Vlachs and Serbs to gain control over the territories in the region. She says: “One might argue that the origins of the struggle went back to the creation of an autocephalous Bulgarian Exarchate in

⁷¹Yosmaoglu, “From Exorcism to Historicism,”70.

⁷²Güllü, “The Foundation of Bulgarian Exarchy,” 352.

Constantinople in 1870.”⁷³

The Edict declaring the establishment of a separate Bulgarian Church or Exarchate consists of eleven articles. To summarize the articles, a separate metropolitan, episcopate, and spiritual organization with control over some districts will be founded under the name of Bulgarian Exarchate. The highest rank of metropolitans in this institution, “exarch,” will be the leader who will be chosen following Orthodox doctrine and approved by the Sublime Porte. Before electing the Exarch, Sultan will be informed and his approval will be taken. They can directly consult with the Sublime Porte and will be separate from the Patriarchate in their internal affairs.⁷⁴ Among the eleven articles, the 10th article is quite essential it regulates the areas under the control of the Bulgarian Exarchate. The places named in the article draw the boundaries of future Danube Bulgaria but territories in Macedonia, which was a part of San Stefano Bulgaria, remain unclear.⁷⁵

After the declaration of the imperial edict, the first Exarch was appointed in 1872. In Macedonia(Ohrid and Skopje in particular), most of the population chose to pass to the Bulgarian Church. Although the edict discourages any activity from creating divisiveness in the society, the 10th article about having the majority (2/3 of the population) have control over a region caused Bulgarian to work for it in Macedonia, against which Greeks and Serbs did not remain silent. The article became one of the significant problems for the Macedonian Question post-1870 and the early 20th century. Yosmaoğlu also points out that fifteen dioceses were all in the “Danubian Bulgaria” but they could attain more by fulfilling the 2/3 majority requirement This was a serious threat for the Greek Patriarchate as Bulgarian bourgeoisie claims against Greek domination started to acquire a reputation among Bulgarian speaking people and more people passed to the Exarchate. On the other hand, there were a considerable amount of territories in which the Slav population was divided. Many of these regions in which some Slavs did not want to separate from their traditional church were in Macedonia.⁷⁶

İpek Yosmaoğlu who focuses on the complex dynamics of the society in making

⁷³Yosmaoğlu, “From Exorcism to Historicism,” 70.

⁷⁴Güllü, “The Foundation of Bulgarian Exarchy,” 354.

⁷⁵Adamir, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 60-79.

⁷⁶Yosmaoğlu, “From Exorcism to Historicism,” 70.

nations in the Balkans gives wide coverage to religion as a tool for awakening the national consciousness. She argues that increasing tension between the Greek Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate was proof that sectarian tension was more than a mere “doctrinal” difference and took an important place in the transition of Balkan Christians into nations in Macedonia. She even claims that this issue was even more important than other elements on the path of creating the nation such as standardized education or industrialization.⁷⁷

⁷⁷Ibid, 71.

3. SYSTEMATIZATION OF TERROR: BANDITRY IN MACEDONIA

3.1 Introduction

Since the 1990's scholars have discussed why conflicts and tensions escalated in the region must be much more complex than the differences between people who have to live together. İpek Yosmaoğlu focusing on the period between 1878-1908 emphasizes the influence of the Great Powers on people living in strategic regions such as Macedonia and how their ethnic-religious and linguistic differences were “constructed” in this period and violence was systematized after 1878.⁷⁸ The Macedonian Question, recognized as an international problem at the Berlin Congress, was not resolved and became more intractable over the decades. Revolts that had arisen for various reasons turned into organized terror and banditry together with the secret societies founded to control Macedonia. Thus, terror and banditry became integral to life in late 19th and early 20th century Macedonia. This chapter will examine these secret societies, which various groups founded with different motivations. The most important of these movements is the Bulgarian movement, divided into sub-groups within itself. Since there was no separate ethnic Macedonian identity and the development of Macedonian revolutionary societies within the Bulgarian movement, this section will deal with different sub-groups under a single heading. Macedonian bands called “chetas or *komitadjis*” interact with the Bulgarian movement the most, and the identity debate is based on the Macedonian-Bulgarian identity, they will be discussed under the Bulgaro-Macedonian movement.

The Greek movement, the most important rival of the Bulgarian movement, and the activities of the Greek bands, which took up arms against the Bulgarian bands,

⁷⁸İsa Blumi, “Review of İpek Yosmaoğlu’s Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (2015), 200-201.

constituted the second most important group that spread terror in the region. The Greek bands and Bulgaro- Macedonian bands had the most brutal conflicts with each other and both movements carried out propaganda activities against each other in various fields.

Although they were not as effective as the Bulgaro- Macedonian and Greek movements, the Serbs and Vlachs did not stay idle either. The study will briefly give their banditry activities and motivations in Macedonia. The Albanians, which differ from other groups in many aspects, and their reaction in the region since the Berlin Congress will be examined in the context of Macedonia under the title of the Albanian movement. The last two parts of the chapter will discuss the increasing reform pressures in correlation with the increasing terrorist and banditry activities in the region, and Ottoman administration's struggle with the reform pressures and these organizations both politically and militarily and the Ottomans' reaction.

3.2 The Bulgaro-Macedonian Movement and Banditry

The previous chapter explained how significant the San Stefano and Berlin Treaties played in developing the Macedonian Question as an international crisis. Especially Berlin Treaty became a milestone for Macedonia's nationalist movements and uprisings. As the previous chapter discussed, Ottoman Empire had to sign the Treaty of San Stefano after the defeat by the Russians in 1878. Especially the foundation of the Bulgarian Principality by the San Stefano Treaty made the first peak for the Bulgarian movement. According to this treaty, Bulgaria had a vast territory, including most of Macedonia. It was the point that inspired the Bulgarian movement to liberate Macedonia from Ottoman rule and re-gain the historical lands of the Medieval Bulgarian Empire. With this motivation, secret revolutionary societies were established to provoke the Slavic population against Ottoman rule.⁷⁹

Although in Berlin Congress, the previous borders were divided into three regions and only one of the regions was given to the Bulgarian principality, San Stefano's Bulgaria set an ideal for the Bulgarian nationalists to achieve.

This section will explain how The Bulgaro-Macedonian movement that gained

⁷⁹ Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 4-5.

momentum after the Berlin Treaty evolved throughout the decades, the foundation of the secret societies, their motivations, purposes, methods, and factionalism within the movement. The 23rd article of the Berlin Treaty led to the emergence of secret societies and increasing terror and banditry in Macedonia.

After the Berlin Agreement in 1878, Bulgarians revolted in Kresna & Razlog (Razlık) to protest the return to Ottoman rule with the encouragement of Russian officers. The Ottoman government suppressed this rebellion by sending an army to the region.⁸⁰ The Kresna-Razlog uprising in north-eastern Macedonia was triggered by the loss of the territories granted with the San Stefano treaty and is considered the continuation of the Bulgarian independence movement. Though it was more like a failed attempt of an armed struggle than a large-scale rebellion, it was enough to remind us that a Macedonian problem was waiting to be solved.

The Bulgarian revolutionary movement did not have a single organization or leader. There was even disagreement between the committees on important issues, such as gaining the support of the great power and cooperating with other Balkan revolutionary organizations.⁸¹ To summarize the Bulgarian movement in the following period, there were two main streams in the 1880s Bulgarian movement: Revolutionists and evolutionists. Until the second phase of the movement in the 1890s, the Bulgarian movement followed a more evolutionist line and focused on propaganda through the church and schools.⁸² This line was represented by the Bulgarian church, supported and financed by the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. Upper clergy, church and school administrators and teachers actively participated. The main motivation of this movement centered in churches and schools were to re-gain villages and towns lost to the Fener Patriarchate and prevent the spread of Hellenistic ideas propagated by the Patriarchate and Greece. These efforts resulted in the 80's and Bulgarian schools regained popularity and power. The role of the complex relations of the Ottoman government with other Balkan states and the Patriarchate should not be underestimated either. Disagreement between the Sublime Porte and the Patriarchate caused a better treatment of the Porte toward the Bulgarian Exarchate as a counterbalance. The second line of the Bulgarian movement was the revolutionist one. Revolutionists believed the solution was an

⁸⁰ Mehmet Hacısalıhoğlu, "Balkanlarda Muhafız Hareketleri ve Sultan II. Abdülhamid," in *Sultan II. Abdülhamid ve Dönemi* (İstanbul: İZÜ Yayınları, 2019), 176.

⁸¹ Barbara Jelavich, *Balkan Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2013,) 375.

⁸² Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 89-96.

armed uprising and unification of the Eastern Rumelia in short term and to give a sense of Bulgarian nationality to every Slav in Macedonia. They started their activities with charity organizations for Macedonians in Bulgaria, though, in fact, they were working to support the committees and banditry in Macedonia, attract foreign intervention, and put the 23rd article of the Berlin Treaty into practice. In 1885, the annex of the Eastern Rumelia by Bulgaria strengthened revolutionists.

By the 1890s, the fear of the Ottoman empire collapsing sooner than expected and the danger of losing Macedonia to other Balkan states required the Bulgarian movement to take a new turn. Dame Gruev with his compatriots Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, Petr Pop Arsov, Ivan Hadzinikolov, Dr. Anton Dmitrov and Hristo Bostanciev, founded The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO; Bulgarian: Вътрешна Македонска Революционна Организация (ВМРО) in 1893, Thessaloniki. According to Tatarchev's memoir, their purpose was to realize an autonomous Macedonia in which the Bulgarian element was dominant. Otherwise, the attempt of unification would be prevented by other Balkan states and Turkish rule.⁸³ The Internal Macedonian and Edirne Revolutionary Committee were jointly established by the Macedonian origin youth and Bulgarian nationalists, who were influenced by socialist movements, and set the goal of ensuring the autonomy of Macedonia. Then, with the direct initiative of Bulgaria, another secret organization called the Supreme Macedonian Committee was established in 1895. Macedonian immigrant associations in Bulgaria also constantly protested for the Ottoman government to carry out the reforms promised in the Berlin Treaty. The Supreme Committee started an uprising in Melnik in 1895. The main purpose of the uprising was to announce to the world public that the region was Bulgarian territory and that the Bulgarians were unhappy under Ottoman rule, ensuring the intervention of the great powers. The uprising could not get the support of the people and fail but it succeeded to attract Europeans and Russia's attention. Thanks to this rebellion, Ferdinand, the Bulgarian Prince solved the recognition problem with both Russia and the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁴ However many Macedonians realized that the Bulgarian government had used them for pragmatic purposes in Bulgarian foreign politics they left the Supreme Committee and returned to Macedonia. From this point, socialist ideas gained momentum and opponents took steps to establish a real revolutionary organization that had a broad sphere of influence

⁸³Ibid, 113, 118-119.

⁸⁴Hacısalihoglu, "Balkanlarda Muhelif Hareketler," 177.

and activity.⁸⁵ The rise of socialism in the Balkans gradually strengthened the belief that the Macedonian movement should start in Macedonia and be carried out by the Macedonian peoples. A socialist Bulgarian leader Dimitar Blagoev advocates that the liberation of Macedonia cannot succeed with Europeans' or Russians' intervention, it could only happen if Macedonians trusted no one but themselves. The Internal Organization was organized in provinces in great secrecy, keeping them as an underground society until 1897. During a house search of the villagers, a lot of ammunition was seized, giving away the Internal Organization. This situation disproves the idea of the Macedonian Question because of the Bulgarian intervention, but people supported them too.⁸⁶ The organization and arsenals were discovered, and many members got arrested, though, by 1897, the Bulgaro-Macedonian movement and banditry entered a new phase.

One incident in the Balkans had a significant influence on the Bulgaro-Macedonian movement and other claimants on Macedonia. Cretan Question and 1897 Thessaly War between the Ottoman Empire and Greece. The uprising and aftermaths in Crete became an example not only for Bulgarian nationalists but also other Balkan nations that had desires on Macedonian territory. Although the unification of Crete did not finalize until the Balkan Wars, the uprisings in Crete and Great Powers' support that gradually increased in favor of Cretan Christians and Greece set an example for other movements, especially for Macedo-Bulgarian. From Greek Revolution in 1821 to 1913 several uprisings brought the Cretan Question one step further.⁸⁷ After the Ottoman-Greek War of 1897, the Ottomans' diplomatic defeat even though they won the war, was a crucial turning point for both separatist organizations carrying out terrorist activities and other Balkan states. The loss of Crete was a severe example for organizations that acted with the motivation to join Bulgaria, in terms of the idea of connecting Macedonia to Bulgaria by bringing it into a *fait accompli*. In addition, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Thessaly was one of the strongest proves of the Ottomans' complete diplomatic isolation. As a precedent of whether an armed struggle of Christians would succeed or not in the 19th century, the War of Thessaly and Cretan issue proved to other groups that even an attempt to revolt against Ottoman rule could be enough for European intervention and safe to attack without taking risk.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 126.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 127-128, 130.

⁸⁷ Cemal Tukin, "Girit" *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1996.

⁸⁸ Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 132-133.

So even if an armed movement or rebellion was suppressed by the intervention of the Ottoman army, it was possible to gain autonomy when the Great Powers stepped in.⁸⁹ By 1897, banditry entered a new and critical phase which was also the time that Tahsin Bey started his career and faced with banditry issue. In this period more intense armed struggles took place in Macedonia. The Internal Organization adopted new rules focusing on protecting the villagers against other bands, making propaganda, especially on the state corruption and insecurity which will be discussed in the following chapter through Tahsin Bey's experience. In the earlier period most of the income came from the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. However, after the disagreement between the Bulgarian government, the peasantry became the main source of finance instead of hostile bourgeoisie who supported the Exarchate. During this period split between Exarchists who were following a more conservative and nationalist line and the Internal organization also known as "centralists" who were in more socialist revolutionary line. Especially revolutionary intellectuals and conservative clergy competed to be the absolute authority in the Macedonian Question. For Exarchists, revolution meant destruction. The best way to solve it was to keep the Macedonian question as a Bulgarian problem.

On the other hand, centralists welcomed all unpleasant elements, including other Slavs. They did not need to be a member of the Bulgarian Exarchate, on the contrary, otherwise would be better. Even so, the split between the two groups should not be misinterpreted. Fikret Adanır suggests that it is quite misleading to infer that a Macedonian national identity emerged from the conflict between these two groups as contemporary Macedonian historians suggest. Adanır considers this situation as an opposition of socialist groups against the Exarchate and the bourgeoisie. Moreover, after a severe response by the Ottoman government against the Internal organization, they became dismissible without the support and struggle of Exarchists. One could even suggest that the conflict between these two groups intensified in the 1890s turned into a large scale of cooperation.⁹⁰

3.2.1 Cuma-i Bala Uprising

In the early 20th century, relations between different fractions of the Bulgaro-Macedonian movement and foreign politics of Bulgaria led a significant uprising in Cuma-i Bala province. The split between two groups and the increasing isolation

⁸⁹Hacısalıhoğlu, "Balkanlarda Muhelif Hareketler," 177.

⁹⁰Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 147-149.

of Bulgari in the international arena led Prince Ferdinand to attempt to take control of the movement and prevent the legitimacy of the Bulgarian cause from getting harmed by the terror actions of the Internal and Supreme Committee. So, Ferdinand wanted to take control through Konchev and Bulgarian military officers believed to be the only solution. In the Macedonian Congress in 1901, Konchev gained a victory and control whom the Serez group opposed under the leadership of famous insurgent Sandanski.⁹¹ In 1902, the Supreme Committee chose Cuma-i Bala region Zelesnica village. Yet they could get little support from the villagers as the Internal Committee was already against this uprising. This failed attempt by 300-400 terrorists was suppressed peacefully by the Ottomans though many village searches put revolutionists into risk afterward. Yet, Konchev and the Supremists did not consider it as a failure but a victory as, once again Macedonian Question was recognized as a Bulgarian problem by the public opinion which clearly shows the different approaches of the two groups. During this period, the relationship between Russia and the Sublime Porte got better, affecting the banditry in Macedonia. It is not a coincidence that Russians discouraged Serbs and Bulgarians from the idea of a general Christian governor of the entire *Vilayet-i Selase* within the reforms. Moreover, the Bulgarian government in this period arrested and dissolved the Macedonian Committees in Bulgaria and set a cordon on the Ottoman border to prevent bands attack.⁹² Surprisingly, Tahsin Bey notes that banditry and *komitadji* attacks decreased in the more or less same period thanks to his efforts and fights against the banditry in the towns he was working in.

The uprising that broke out in Cuma-i Bala was not the last incident. An insurgency on a larger scale broke out in 1903 called Ilinden, referring to the day of Ilias. The transitionary period between two major uprisings and internal conflicts should be understood to see in what circumstances the uprising took place. In 1902-1903 post-Cuma-i Bala uprising required restoring the Internal Organization's authority, which would mean another revolt. On the other hand, villagers were not sharing their interests and laying down their arms to the Ottoman government. There were hot debates between different factions in the organization. The Supreme Committee and the Bulgarian government did not want the Macedonians to act independently. In the Internal Organization, Sandanski and his supporters thought it would be the most suitable time for a large-scale insurgency, while Delchev and Petrov believed a total rebellion should be considered the last card and should not

⁹¹Sandanski who got his name from "zindan" as he was a prison officer previously had a special place in the Macedonian banditry history: Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 118.

⁹²Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 167-171.

be wasted before the time. They also warned others that villagers' escape to the mountains in arms did not necessarily mean they were preparing for a revolution, but it could mean the opposite. The peasants who handed their arms in also proved that the people needed time and preparation. A revolt that could only take place in Monastir would destroy the image of the Internal Organization. What Delchev and Petrov suggested was to establish terror cells inspired by Armenian terrorist committees, in this way they could organize chetas in the towns and cities while they were constantly terrorizing the villages and the city centers. In this phase, until the Ilinden uprising, the Bulgaro - Macedonian movement chose terror as a way of struggle. Besides the fact that they needed time for a total revolt, terror would require constant military power, damage the Ottoman economy and attract European intervention. However, the Supreme Committee decided for a total revolt, the preparation for an uprising was discovered both by the Great Powers and the Ottoman administration. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian government was playing a double game.

When an uprising was about to break out, A secret Macedonian Revolutionary Committee in Thessaloniki, following an anarchist line, organized anarchist actions and assassinations in march of 1903. Bulgaro-Macedonian anarchist students named Gerchikov, Mancukov and Bojkov were publishing a revolutionary terrorist journal. They considered any chauvinism, including the Bulgarian, should be fought against. No one can be superior to another in Macedonia. Peaceful Turks should be welcomed to the struggle for liberation against the Sultan. The group active in Thessaloniki named "Gemicii" organized terror attacks on several places like the French ferry, German school or Ottoman Bank that terrified and turned the European public opinion against themselves. This affected the situation of the Internal Organization, many got arrested, tension increased among Muslims, some important names like Goce Delcev were killed and the final preparation for the uprising got wasted.

Meanwhile, a new government in Bulgaria tried to restore its reputation and relations with the Sultan. However, Greece which had been in a bad situation financially and militarily was extra careful and collaborationist toward the Ottoman administration. When a Balkan government was in a disadvantaged situation, they were restoring relations with the Ottoman empire fearing other Balkan states to take the control over Macedonia before they recovered.

The temporary alliance between Greece and the Sublime Porte enabled the Ottoman administration to fight against the Bulgarian bands effectively. Greek officers and Patriarchate was most kind and helpful to the Ottoman authorities, they were reporting Excarhists to get arrested. Especially a Greek priest Karavangelis, founded his own paramilitary forces and fought against the Internal Committee. Ottoman armed forces were helpful and tolerated the Greek bands in return, Greek intelligence was giving away many members of the Internal Committee.

3.2.2 Ilinden Uprising in 1903

Gruev was elected the leader and a traditional guerilla fight was chosen. The uprising was postponed several times as they struggled against Karavangelis' forces and Ottomans. Because of this collaboration, many members, including the famous Chakalarov got killed. Even the villagers were not giving enough support, Ottoman military forces could use more power but European pressure for reforms and intervention prevented it. Under these circumstances, Saint Ilias Day, the 20th of July, was decided for the uprising but it started two weeks earlier than the actual plan. The Ilinden uprising did not mean to destroy Ottoman rule but to show how Christian elements reacted against Muslims to the European public opinion. The Internal Organization shifted from Delchev's revolutionary line to an unplanned and random attitude. While many Muslim Albanian-Turk were killed, Greek and Serb chetas did not remain silent. Greeks were either neutral or If they were strong enough, fought against the Bulgarian revolts. As this uprising was presented as a Bulgarian national cause, Serbian bands also started an armed struggle in Skopje.

3.3 Ottoman Administration and Muslim Response

“Macedonia is the Second Jerusalem!” ⁹³

The attitude of Bulgaro-Macedonian revolts toward the Muslims contradicted each other. Though they decided to wage this war against the Sultan not the Muslim people in Smilevo Congress, it is contradicting that the uprising started with the attacks on Turk and Albanian majority villages. Especially Turkish villages in

⁹³Ademi, “II. Abdülhamid'in Balkan Siyaseti,” 140.

Florina and Kastoria were targeted and the Bulgarian bandits killed many civilians.

The lack of plan and structure in the uprising led to attacks and the loss of Muslims, which unified Muslims from different groups against the Bulgarians and created a civil war. Ilinden uprising peaked the religious identity and tension among Muslims. The Sultan's lack of brutal response to the revolts led Muslims to organize and engage in armed struggles. Although there was a huge lack of order and plan, Adanır notes that the leaders of the Ilinden Uprising expected and planned the Muslim reactions and missiles against the Slavs. Also, Bulgarian peasants' setting their Muslim neighbors' houses fire and escaping to the mountains prove that missiles were expected. What is also expected was the European intervention as it was impossible to feed all those people in the mountains for a long time. If the leaders could control the plain and be ready for a long-term uprising, they would not let thousands of civilians who were blocking the logistics escape to the mountains, proving that the Uprising was for propaganda rather than military success. However, they could not get what they expected. Russian minister of foreign affairs Lamsdorf suggested Ottoman ambassador to take strict cautions, end the bloody actions of Bulgarian bandits and punish them severely. When troops in Kosovo returned to Monastir, especially defense positions in Krushevo were shelled and in the 24th of August, the Ilinden uprising was successfully suppressed. The aftermath had destructive impacts on the Bulgarians in the short and long term. Their plans to damage Turkish harvests reversed; people had no winter stock in the mountains, the Exarchate was in difficulty. Muslims and the Patriarchate were fierce.

After the Ilinden Uprising, the Internal Organization got weaker; people turned against them, even gave them away. Serres wing under Sandanski changed their policies and adopted more social democrat principles. Though the uprising was a disaster, it led European powers to focus more on the reforms. In Mürtzteg, new decisions were made on the reforms to be applied. After Mürtzteg, commissions were founded based on nationalities instead of religious identity which was a precedent for the history of Ottoman reforms.⁹⁴ The objective was to balance Bulgarian elements in Macedonia with other groups but it did not please Greeks after all that they did for the Turkish government, as this situation harmed the strength of the Patriarchate. The Mürtzteg reforms, on the other hand, could not establish peace and order, on the contrary articles like the 3rd article increased the tension in the region. The article enables border changes in vilayets based on

⁹⁴ Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, 201-218.

the population and opened the path for ethnic cleansing and propaganda between different groups.

Constant pressures for the reforms and foreign intervention were least welcomed by the Muslims. Albanians were upset about the general governor which endangered the Albanian lands and their national identity. Meanwhile, Abdülhamid II utilized the sensitivity of upset Muslims within the Pan-Islamist sentiment and attracted European public opinion. After the reform program was proposed in 1903 Abdülhamid II made the famous French journal *Le Figaro* publish an article with the name of Mısırlı Kâmil Bey in the 12nd of September 1903. To summarize this article draws attention to European invention to split Muslims and Non-Muslims who had been living together until now. The reform program imposed by Europe was a start of the dissolution of the Empire, proving the Sultan's words about Europe launching crusades. The role of the sultan is emphasized; against these crusaders, entire Islamic world should band together under the spiritual leadership of the Ottoman sultanate. The European hypocrisy on the Bulgarian terror is criticized, anarchists' terror attacks in Thessaloniki are referred and accepting the terror of Bulgars and blaming the Ottoman administration for restoring the peace is considered unacceptable. The article emphasizes that the Macedonia Question is not an ethnic, religious or sectarian issue. Conflicts between Bulgarians and non-Bulgarian Christians such as Vlachs and Greeks are reminded and the author warns If these people are left alone (without the Empire) they would immediately kill each other. It is observed that The Cretan Question and annexation of the Eastern Rumelia remain as traumas. The article's author is well aware of these traumas and how they set examples for the Bulgarians regarding the Macedonian issue. Bulgarian atrocities, European hypocrisy and interference are the reasons for the turmoil, and the caliphate is pointed to be the real solution mechanism.⁹⁵ The article proves that the Cretan issue and annex of the Eastern Rumelia did not influence only Balkan separatist movement but also the perspective and the political discourse of Abdülhamid II. While it is an interesting way to emphasize the significance of Macedonia for the Empire by attributing sanctity, discourse seems to change from Ottomanism to Pan-Islamism.

⁹⁵BOA.Y.PRK.TKM., 47-18 19.06.1321/11.09.1903. The document was accessed through the work of Ademi. See: Ademi, "II. Abdülhamid'in Balkan Siyaseti," 140-141.

4. TAHSİN UZER’S MACEDONIA: MACEDONIAN BANDITRY ISSUE AND OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATION THROUGH THE EYES OF TAHSİN BEY

4.1 Hasan Tahsin Uzer and his life

Tahsin Uzer, due to his remarkable personality and the important government positions he held, was an active and influential administrative and political figure during the last period of the Ottoman Empire and the early years of the Turkish Republic. From a very early age he served as a central figure in various state issues. He became an important figure among the founding cadres of the Republic after taking an active role in governing some of the most critical regions of the Empire, from the Balkans to Syria. With a career spanning from the reign of Abdülhamid through the Republic’s first years, Tahsin Bey received recognition from the regimes he worked for. Having served as governor of Van, Erzurum and Syria during the Ottoman empire and taking a central role in the early republican period, he is still recognized as one of the most famous governors in the history of modern Turkey, with a short biography of his published among the “50 Famous Governors” series from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, he is less well known for his work in Rumelia, especially when the Macedonian Question was at its peak in the early stages of his career. Therefore, the study of Tahsin Uzer’s life and influence should center more on the political, administrative, ideological and social history of the Balkans during the late Ottoman period.

Hasan Tahsin Bey, later known as Tahsin Uzer, was born on August 29, 1877, in Thessaloniki, recorded in *Sicill-i ahvâl* as *hijiri* 1294 According to the Register of Persons, he was born on July 1, 1878.⁹⁶ Tahsin Uzer traces his paternal lineage to

⁹⁶Mustafa Şahin, “Hasan Tahsin Uzer’in Mülki İdareciliği ve Siyasetçiliği,” PhD diss., (Atatürk University, 2010), 12.

the famous Albanian leader Skanderbeg.⁹⁷ His Father, whom Tahsin Bey refers as a descendant of Skanderbeg, is Hacı İbrahim Ağa , his grandfather was İskenderoğlu Yahya Kethüda and his great grandfather was İbrahim Kethüda. İbrahim Kethüda was from Serin village of Radomir, located in Prizren, Kosovo. He acquired extensive *çiftliks* and lived quite a religious and benevolent life. Tahsin Bey's father's name was given after his great grandfather whom Tahsin Bey describes as being a 1.90 m tall, blonde, fair-skinned, light blue-eyed, clean and well-dressed and pious person. His father died in 1883 due to contracting pneumonia when Tahsin Bey was only six years old.⁹⁸

His mother was referred to as “*İstanbullu Hacer Hanım*” in *Meşhur Valiler* (Famous Governors);⁹⁹ however, Tahsin Bey gives his mother's name as “Hatice Hanım” saying that she was born in Thessaloniki and died in 1912 in Istanbul. His mother was the daughter of Mahmut Bey, the commander of the fortress of Thessaloniki. His mother's family was quite well-known in Thessaloniki. Since Hatice Hanım was orphaned at a young age, she grew up in her older brother, Abdullah Bey's family house.¹⁰⁰

Tahsin Bey came from a relatively wealthy family. His father, who was in an excellent financial situation, was engaged in trade. Later, he went to Balıkesir for commercial purposes, and by buying goods from Mihaliç, Bandırma and Kirmasti (present-day Mustafakemalpaşa) regions and sending them to Thessaloniki, he established extensive commercial relations, staying in these regions for five years. In the meantime, he was also assigned to ensure the transfer of land and sea troops to the Crimean front. When the war was over, contracting also came to an end, and his father adopted the city of Thessaloniki as his new business location and settled there. Later, he married Hatice Hanım.

Hacı İbrahim Ağa built a house in Thessaloniki in 1860. In the *haremlık* there were 12 rooms, one kitchen, one *hammam* (Turkish bath) and two large gardens. The *selamlık* had seven rooms, one kitchen, one *hammam* and a garden with a barn and cistern. He also bought Gorgob Çiftliği from İstanbullu Salih Bey for 9000 gold

⁹⁷Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 1.

⁹⁸Şahin. “Tahsin Uzer'in Mülki İdareciliği.” 11.

⁹⁹H.Orhun, C.,Kasaroğlu,M.Belek, K. Atakul K. *Meşhur Valiler*, İçişleri Bakanlığı Merkez Valileri Bürosu Yayınları, 1969, 513.

¹⁰⁰Korkmaz. “Tahsin Uzer'in Yaşamı.” 7.

liras and started farming and sheep husbandry. Tahsin Bey spent his childhood in this house.

Tahsin Bey lost his father when he was only six years old. After his father died in 1883, his family rented out the *selamlık* of their house as a school where Tahsin Bey received his primary education. After the death of his uncle, who was also the school's director, Tahsin continued his primary education at the *Hamidiye İptidaisi* (Hamidiye Primary School) and graduated in 1888. Although he initially joined the military school, he left after some time and continued at the *Mülkiye Rüştiyesi* (Civil Secondary School). He attended boarding high school in Thessaloniki for two years.

Later, Tahsin and his mother moved to Istanbul, where he enrolled at *Soğukçeşme Askeri Rüştiyesi* (Military Secondary School) for a while before being accepted to *Kuleli İdadisi* (Kuleli High School).¹⁰¹ Ender Korkmaz says that though the *Sicill-i ahvâl* records do not mention his education at *Soğukçeşme Askeri Rüştiyesi*, he might have graduated from there.¹⁰² Although Tahsin Bey was admitted to the *Kuleli Askeri İdadisi* (Military High School), following the advice of his uncle Cemal Bey, Tahsin Bey chose to attend the *Mülkiye İdadisi* (preparatory school of the School of Civil Administration). After high school, Tahsin Bey continued at the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* (School of Civil Administration) where he first encountered the then-secret and illegal Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). When he was in his third year, supposedly around 1893-1894, Tahsin Bey joined the CUP with the invitation of senior military medical school (*Askerî Mekteb-i Tıbbiye*) student Selanikli Uzun Emin Bey.¹⁰³

Tahsin Bey's years as a student at the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* coincided with the period when the students of the *Tıbbiye* and *Mülkiye* organized as the revolutionary center of CUP. Tahsin Bey took an oath, joined this society and worked to get the students around him to join. He quickly became a trusted member of the community and was assigned to distribute pamphlets. One day he was arrested when he went to receive the organization's papers in a German pub. Tahsin Bey was found not guilty, as there was no proof against him and other innocent bystanders had been

¹⁰¹Şahin. "Tahsin Uzer'in Mülki İdareciliği." 16-17.

¹⁰²Korkmaz. "Tahsin Uzer'in Yaşamı." 10.

¹⁰³Ibid, 13.

arrested that day. Tahsin Bey's health worsened during the long interrogation, so he was released, although he was sent out of Istanbul by order of Yıldız palace.

In 1897, Tahsin Bey was appointed as the *nahiye müdürü* (township director) of the Pürsican *nahiyesi* (township) of Thessaloniki in present-day Prosotsani, northern Greece. This appointment was seen as an exile by both Tahsin Bey and his family. Mustafa Şahin notes that exile largely was carried out in the form of appointment to a civil service post outside of the city, since for *Mülkiye*, *Tıbbiye* and *Harbiye* graduates, staying in Istanbul was essential to career advancement. A lucky few had the connections to secure appointments in the city, while others who were appointed to distant provinces saw their posts as *de facto* exile.¹⁰⁴ One of the documents sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Governor of Thessaloniki regarding Tahsin Bey's appointment indicates that he was appointed to the Pürsican township of Drama on an incidental basis after being taken into custody by order of the palace and being forcibly exiled from Istanbul.¹⁰⁵ Tahsin Bey relates that every day "thousands of innocent and aggrieved youngsters" were arrested and tortured. Many *Tıbbiyeli* students were arrested. Tahsin Bey's superiors, Emin and Tahsin Bey, and their wives were exiled to Fizan along with 400 others.¹⁰⁶ Ender Korkmaz also remarks that, considering that many opposition figures were exiled to Tripoli in the same year, his appointment to his hometown of Thessaloniki with the title of township director could be considered a removal rather than an exile and a lighter punishment than what others received.¹⁰⁷

Tahsin Bey served in different sub-districts and towns in Rumelia. His lifelong career as a civil servant started with his duty in Pürsican while he was only 19 years old. After his term of office in Pürsican Tahsin Bey was appointed to Çiç township in Drama.¹⁰⁸ After a short time he returned to Pürsican. Once he reached the age of military service, he served in Thessaloniki. Afterwards, Tahsin Bey was appointed to Ağustos *nahiyesi* of Thessaloniki. After his term in Ağustos, Tahsin Bey worked as *qaymaqam* (district governor) in Razlık, Gevgili, Florina, Kesendire and Thessaloniki. After his duty in Ağustos Tahsin Bey worked as district governor (*qaymaqam*) in Razlık, Gevgili, Florina, Kesendire and Thessaloniki. After a

¹⁰⁴Şahin. "Tahsin Uzer'in Mülki İdareciliği." 22.

¹⁰⁵Orhun, *Meşhur Valiler*, 514.

¹⁰⁶Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 16.

¹⁰⁷Ibid, 16.

¹⁰⁸(present-day Pangaio)

short time, he returned to Pürsican. Once he reached the age of military service, he served in Thessaloniki. Afterwards, Tahsin Bey was appointed to Ağustos *nahiyesi* of Thessaloniki. After his term in Ağustos, Tahsin Bey worked as *qaymaqam* (district governor) in Razlık, Gevgili, Florina, Kesendire and Thessaloniki. After his duty in Ağustos Tahsin Bey worked as district governor (*qaymaqam*) in Razlık, Gevgili, Florina, Kesendire and Thessaloniki.¹⁰⁹ Tahsin Bey, who later worked in the governorships of Drama and Beyoğlu, was promoted to the governorship after a while. Tahsin Bey then served in the eastern provinces during the critical years of the First World War, first as the governor of Van and then to the governor of Erzurum. During the First World War, he attracted the attention of the state, especially in terms of providing logistical support to the army. On July 20, 1916, he received the order to move to Damascus. Tahsin Bey mostly served on inspections and front-line tours during this period, eventually Tahsin Bey resigned from this duty which lasted for two years. While Tahsin Bey was on his way back, he learned that he was appointed as the Governor of Syria again and went to Aleppo to return to Damascus. However, the British forces captured the city before Tahsin Bey returned to Damascus.¹¹⁰ Tahsin Bey, appointed as the Governor of Izmir on November 9, 1918, could only stay in this post for 20 days, but he accomplished many important works in Izmir within these 20 days. He was appointed as the Governor of Izmir on November 9, 1918, and even though he could only stay in this post for 20 days, he accomplished much in Izmir within these 20 days.¹¹¹ Tahsin Bey, who became a deputy of Chamber after his dismissal from governorship, served as the İzmir Deputy from January 12, 1920, until the parliament was closed. After the parliament was closed, he was arrested along with many others and exiled to Malta. Returning from Malta in 1921, he went to Anatolia and served as a deputy in the Grand National Assembly. After serving as a member of parliament for five terms, he was appointed as the Third General Inspector by Atatürk and died in 1939 due to cancer while he was working as an inspector. He became a Deputy of Chamber after his dismissal from governorship, serving as the İzmir Deputy from January 12, 1920, until the parliament was closed. After the parliament was closed, he was arrested along with many others and exiled to Malta. Returning from Malta in 1921, he went to Anatolia and served as a deputy in the Grand National Assembly. After serving as a member of parliament for five terms, he was appointed as the Third General Inspector by Atatürk and died in 1939 due to cancer while working as an

¹⁰⁹See “Macedonian Question and Banditry Through The Eyes Of Tahsin Uzer” for more details.

¹¹⁰Korkmaz. “Tahsin Uzer’in Yaşamı,” 102.

¹¹¹Mustafa Şahin and Cemile Şahin, “Osmanlı’nın Son Döneminde Partizanlık ve İç Çekişmeler Nedeniyle Azledilen Tahsin Bey’in 20 Günlük İzmir Valiliği.” ÇTTAD X, no.22, (Spring, 2011.): 33.

inspector.¹¹²

4.2 Macedonian Question and “Banditry” through the Eyes of Tahsin Uzer

Before describing the Macedonian Question, Tahsin Uzer gives a brief history of Macedonia and its administrative, ethnographic and geographical boundaries. He provides a historical framework going back to the rule of famous Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great and continues with the Ottoman conquest of Macedonia. While doing so, he mentions some of the integration policies the early Ottomans used in order to gain the locals’ loyalty, as he considered them successful. It is remarkable that Tahsin Bey explains the significance of the Macedonian Question in world history, as it is seen as one of the main reasons for the outbreak of the First World War. He calls the region a “Macedonian Salad” (ironically, a century later, *shopska salata* is served as “Macedonian Salad” in the restaurants of Skopje).¹¹³ In the following section, a brief history of the Russian-Ottoman relationship over the previous few centuries is given, as well as an explanation of the ideals of Great Russia and noteworthy wars and uprisings.

According to Tahsin Bey, the Ottoman Empire’s major troubles were as follows: Macedonia, Yemen, Albania, Kuwait, Armenians, Druze, Hejaz, Jerusalem, Zionism, Kurdish-Hamidiye Regiments, Nestorians, the Bulgarian Exarchate, the Fener Rum Patriarchate and some other tribes.¹¹⁴ Among these, the Macedonian Question and the history of Macedonia had a special place for Tahsin Bey. As he tells his son in his memoir, Thessaloniki, the city where he and his son was born, belonged to Macedonia and learning the history of their homeland was an ancestral obligation.¹¹⁵

In Tahsin Uzer’s view, the first signs of separatist movements and “banditry” started to emerge during the reign of Mahmud II and Abdülmecid. One of the turning points of the Macedonian Question occurred during the Tanzimat period. He firmly

¹¹²Şahin. “Tahsin Uzer’in Mülki İdareciliği,” 247, 290.

¹¹³“*shopska salata* : a salad combining sliced cucumbers, onions, and tomatoes with soft white cheese”. See : Britannica, “North Macedonia, Cultural Life,” Sep. 1, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/North-Macedonia/Cultural-life>.

¹¹⁴Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 122.

¹¹⁵*Ibid*, 82.

believed that the Macedonian Question became a “gangrene” because governments could not implement the necessary measures before it was too late. Moreover, they let European states intervene in the domestic politics of the empire. Tahsin Bey sought to uncover the roots of this issue in a much earlier era. According to him, if the elements that formed the basis of the Macedonian Question had been minimized, events such as the Peloponnese uprising would not have occurred. He suggests that if the Ottoman Empire had continued Sultan Murad and Mehmed II’s policy of converting the locals and settling Anatolian Turkmen in the region, Tuna vilayet would not have become Bulgaria and Macedonia would not have become a thorn in the side of the empire for a century.¹¹⁶ His ideas on this subject are best explained in the pages where he describes his time serving as the governor of Kesendire District. The fact that there were almost no Turks or Turkish speakers in Kesendire, with Greek flags and the king’s pictures hanging everywhere, made the town more like a part of Greece than the Ottoman Empire. Tahsin Bey’s chagrin with his ancestors is evident in the following passage:

“Why did you go to distant lands (Morocco, Tunisia, Malta, Persian Gulf) and leave behind an unsettled state? So why did you come back? Oh, Great Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha, instead of sacrificing hundreds of thousands of Turkish sons in the land of Nemse by besieging Vienna, wouldn’t it be better if you had completely Turkified Halkidiki and Macedonia and put them under our administration with solid ties?... Oh, rusty-headed Şeyhülislam Halet Efendi, why did you neglect Mora and the Greek uprisings and deal with Tepedelenli Ali Pasha instead? Why did you send such a unique commander and vizier like Hurşit Paşa against the Tepedelenli and make the sons of the country hurt each other?¹¹⁷ Why didn’t you beat the Greeks of Kesendire instead of shedding such brotherly blood? [...] If you had, today the Mora revolution would not have happened, and the armies of King Constantine would not have been able to cause thousands of troubles by stepping on our beautiful Izmir. Halet Efendi! Get up from the grave and see!”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶Ibid, 83.

¹¹⁷It was inevitable that Mahmud II’s policy of eliminating local powers to establish central authority would eventually put an end to the power of Ali Paşa, who acted semi-independently and gradually expanded his sphere of influence, Ali Pasha’s rule came to an end when he clashed with Nişancı Hâlet Efendi, who was in an important position and had changed the balance of power through his scheming. Halet Efendi played an important role in discrediting Tepedelenli. Tepedelenli Ali Pasha took advantage of the turmoil in foreign politics, acting as an independent ruler and making agreements with other countries. He reached the peak of his power in 1811 and helped inspire the idea of an independent Greek state, which led to the Peloponnese Revolt. He prepared a revolt in Morea, held a meeting with the Greeks and provided weapons and money to the Greeks in 1820 (see : Kemal Beydilli, “Tepedelenli Ali Paşa”, TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, Aug.28,2022, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tepedelenli-ali-pasa>.) Tahsin Bey likely knew about this historical narrative, given the information he provided. Nevertheless, Tahsin Bey’s point of view on these events is quite remarkable despite Tepedelenli’s collaboration with the Greeks of Morea that Tahsin Bey nursed a grudge against.

¹¹⁸Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 219-220.

Tahsin Bey's retrospective musings show that his perspective differed from the official historical narrative of the Ottoman Empire at some points. Moreover, it is possible to say that his views on the Kesendire Rums and the Peloponnese uprising are related to traumatic events in his life that will be explained in the next chapter. Likewise, these are the words of an exiled Ottoman deputy who had witnessed the occupation of İzmir.

Tahsin Bey continues his historical background of the Macedonian Question with the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War. He also lists the reasons that brought the empire to war, specifically Russia's policies and the establishment of the Istanbul Rum Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate. Tahsin Bey notes that the granting of the Greek Patriarchate with special privileges long before the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, constituted the biggest mistake made by the Ottoman State after the collapse of Byzantium and the conquest of Istanbul. Taking it further, he argued that Mehmet the Conqueror and his viziers committed an "unforgivable political murder" in this matter. He also criticized those who underestimate what a "temple" left for "Eastern Christians" could have done to a majestic and magnificent state. "Like a boil in the heart of the country," he emphasized what a terrible and harmful entity this church later became. New troubles were added when the Bulgarian church was permitted to be established during the reign of Abdulaziz. Tahsin Bey noted the "terrible role" played by this Bulgarian exarchate in the history of the Balkans and Macedonia. As for how these two churches helped cause the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78, the issue goes back to Peter I.¹¹⁹ The Russians, previously subordinate to the Istanbul Greek Patriarchate, declared themselves the spiritual leaders of Orthodoxy during the reign of Peter I. This development enabled Orthodox Christians in the Balkans to seek the protection of Russia and to attempt rebellion.

Furthermore, thanks to Russia's Tsar, many young Bulgarian students were sent to be educated in Russia through the Bulgarian Exarchate, helping to establish a Slavic-Eastern Orthodox national identity. Tahsin Bey blames grand vizier Âli Paşa for this development, as he let the Bulgarian Exarchate pass unchallenged.¹²⁰ Hasip Saygılı agrees that the Fener Rum Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate caused huge trouble by financing, training and protecting bandits. He reiterated that, in literature, Bulgarian bands engaged in armed conflict were called Exarchists, and

¹¹⁹Known as "Deli Petro" in Turkish.

¹²⁰Ibid, 115-116.

their Greek counterparts were called Patriarchists. According to him, this shows that the separation of the churches was the main reason for ethnic clashes in the region.¹²¹ Kemal Beydilli also suggests that the Macedonian Question emerged due to the Bulgarian Exarchate's establishment, Pan-Slavic ideals and the outcome of the Russo-Ottoman War. The autonomous Bulgarian Church's attempts to spread its domains at the Patriarchate's expense increased competition and tension in the region.¹²² One of the most disastrous events that accelerated *komiteci* activities was the Law of Churches, which was approved by Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa and resulted from the 77-78 Russo-Turkish War and the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. At this point, Tahsin Bey agrees with Abdülhamid II that the law was a grave mistake because it united Bulgarian and Rum guerillas who were previously fighting against each other.¹²³ The old policy of supporting groups of bandits fighting one another could not work anymore. Multiple documents indicate that the empire tolerated or even partly supported some of the Greek bandits against the more threatening Bulgarian *chetas* in the region; however, there was tremendous pressure from the Great Powers on the Ottoman Empire to take action against the Greeks. In the same way, until 1906, Greek bandits did not consider the Ottoman administration and Turks the main threat; they even supported their authority in some areas.¹²⁴

On the issue of the Law of Churches, many historians hold similar views with Tahsin Uzer and Abdülhamid II. İsmet Görgülü summarizes the impact of the 1910 Law of Churches as follows:

“While dealing with the turmoil, the Ottoman administration made a historical mistake that played into the hands of the Balkan states - according to our current assessments. The empire enacted the Law of Churches on July 3, 1910. With this, the Ottoman Empire accepted the principle that whichever group made up the majority when it came to disputed churches, schools and holy places would be in charge of those sites. However, after Mehmed II conquered Istanbul, he appointed the Greek patriarch in Istanbul as both the spiritual and material head of all the people in European Turkey. The Greek Church used this advantage gained over other churches to spread its own culture, to oppress and torment those who did not belong to it. With the resulting friction, the churches, and therefore the

¹²¹Hasip Saygılı, “Rumeli Müfettişliği Döneminde (1902-1908) Makedonya’da Yunan Komitecileri ve Osmanlı Devleti,” *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi* 11 (2015): 147-185,153.

¹²²Kemal Beydilli, “II. Abdülhamid Devrinde Makedonya Mes’eleşi’ne Dair,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 9, (1989), 78.

¹²³Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 116-117.

¹²⁴Saygılı, “Rumeli Müfettişliği,” 147-185, 161-167.

groups affiliated with them, fought each other for years and saw each other as constant enemies. The Law of Churches ended this enmity, and it caused those who had fought each other until then to unite and fight against the Ottoman Empire.”¹²⁵

Although it is undisputed that the Law of Churches brought various troubles to the state, an argument like the one above risk being an oversimplification. As discussed in the second chapter, before the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, the Slavic Orthodox people had already revolted against the oppression and abuse of the Greek Orthodox church, preparing the ground for future conflict. However, the principle that the party that constitutes a quorum has the right to establish their own church and school is not enough to suggest that the Law of Churches brought an end to the Greek-Bulgarian conflict. As mentioned in the second chapter, Article 10 of the imperial edict, which approved the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate despite strong opposition from the Greek Patriarchate, also allows the party that constitutes a two-thirds majority of the population in a region to have control of that region. This article caused the Bulgarians and Greeks to fight to gain a majority in various regions, elevating the Macedonian Question to a different level.¹²⁶ Moreover, similar to the imperial edict ordering the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, strong objections came from the Greeks before and after this law was enacted. In a telegram dated July 4, 1910, there is a joint complaint about the Law of Churches presented by the Greek Patriarchate and Metropolitan bishops.¹²⁷ In a report dated July 13, 1910, it is stated that the Ministry of Internal Affairs allowed the Greeks to hold a meeting opposing the Law of Churches in Ioannina within the limits of the law.¹²⁸ In the July 4, 1910 issue of the Tanin newspaper, which was first published after the Constitutional Revolution and served as the media organ of the CUP, Babanzade İsmail Hakkı extensively covered the objections of the Greeks in the patriarchate and parliament and their threats of resignation, explaining the peace that the law would bring.¹²⁹ The same

¹²⁵İsmet Görgülü, “Balkan Harbi,” *Türk Tarih Kurumu*, Aug. 26, 2022, <https://www.ttk.gov.tr/belgelerle-tarih/balkan-harbi/>

¹²⁶See 2.4.3. Identity crisis- Ethno-religious conflicts

¹²⁷BOA, İ.MBH, 2-88.

¹²⁸BOA, DH.MUI, 113-1.

¹²⁹“*Meclis-i mebusan ve muahharen meclis-i ayan kiliseler kanununu kabul etdikleri zaman hareket-i vakaların mahiyetini ve iktisab edeceği netayıcı tamamen takdir etmemişler ve işin her cihetini cihetini ariz ü ‘amîk teemmül ve mülâhaza eyledikten sonra ellerini kalblerine koyarak ve vicdanen mutmain ve müsterih olarak kararlarını vermişlerdi. Rum Patrikhanesinin bu neticeden men-nun olmayacağını, şikayet edeceğini, kanunu icra etdiremek için hatıra gelen ve gelmeyen kâffe-i ve-saite müraca’at eyleyeceğini kanunun vaza’ları daha evvel zaten keşf ü tahmin etmiş oldukları için birkaç günden beri duran iden güftegûlar, istifa tehditleri, zât-ı hazret-i mülûkâneye mürâca’at-ı key-fiyeti kendilerini hayrete dūcâr etmez. Kanunu kabul edenler şimdiye kadar vuku bulan ve bundan sonra vukua geleceği daire-i ihtimalde bulunan hadisat ve vekayiiin programını adeta ezberden*

piece of legislation, however, can have different effects at different points in time. By considering the internal and external policies of the Balkan states, discussing why the situation in the Balkans paved the way for an alliance that could not be established before 1910 can give a clearer idea about how effective the Law of Churches was in the formation of this alliance.

The tumultuous history of Rumelia and the Macedonian Question was seen first-hand by Tahsin Bey and is related in his account of the era. According to Tahsin Bey, the annexation of Eastern Rumelia by Bulgaria occurred in 1899, after which the Bulgarian Committee of Macedonia focused its activities on assembling a country-wide congress and cooperating with the British government. In his account, Tahsin Uzer describes the internal conflicts within the Committee. The movement was divided into two: *Komitadji* Sandanski.¹³⁰ led the first party of “Santralists”, while Mihalovski led the party of “Virhoists”.¹³¹ Their principal difference lay in the question of whether Macedonia belonged to Macedonians or Bulgarians.¹³² Tahsin Bey gave the names of a few prominent *komitadjis* commenting that Sandanski and Apostol¹³³ were of great importance in the history of Macedonian banditry.¹³⁴ Engaging in the struggle against the *komitadjis* himself as an administrator in the field allowed Tahsin Bey to have extensive knowledge of these individuals and their activities. Yet the year he gives as the date of annexation of Eastern Rumelia by Bulgaria seems to be a mistake. As will be discussed in the third chapter, Eastern Rumelia was annexed by Bulgaria in 1885, not in 1899. It is difficult to say if Tahsin Bey was wrong or if the mistake was made when his writings were published, as the fate of the original handwritten manuscript is unknown.

Hasan Tahsin Uzer made an effort to appear objective when giving information about the region, explaining whenever necessary the cruelty of Bulgarian bands and the persecution locals faced at the hands of the police and gendarmerie. He

bildikleri için şimdi bu muayyen programın muhtelif füsûlünün sırasıyla sahne-i vukuatda zuhuriyesine hiç bir taacüb, hiçbir asabiyet, hiçbir hiddet izhar etmeksizin muntazır-ı temaşa bulunuyor...” See: Babanzade İsmail Hakkı, “Kiliseler Kanunu ve Patrikhane Mehâfili,” Tanin, July 4, 1910, <https://dSPACE.ankara.edu.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12575/4285/4%20Temmuz%201910.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

¹³⁰Yane Ivanov Sandanski (1872-1915)

¹³¹Stoyan Nikolov Mihaylovski (1856-1927).

¹³²Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 117.

¹³³Apostol Petkov Terziev (1869-1911).

¹³⁴Ibid, 118.

saw poor Ottoman administration as the root cause of Bulgarian nationalism in Macedonia.¹³⁵ Furthermore, poor administration did not only cause banditry in Macedonia but also in other regions. In the case of Macedonia, the extensive borders of Rumelia created constant disagreements with the governments of other Balkan states. Many of these disagreements resulted in military measures. The necessity of resorting to military means in internal affairs meant that many civil duties were assigned to military commanders. Abdülhamid II had to temporarily compensate for the shortcomings of his administration through military means to suppress problems such as rebellion and revolutionary movements; however, these were temporary solutions. For example, the governors of Edirne, Kosovo, Shkoder, Janina and Monastir were all either generals or marshalls. The 4th Army Marshal Zeki Paşa,¹³⁶ who Tahsin Bey saw as one of the champions of Sultan Abdülhamid's administration, displayed unconditional loyalty to the regime and was unaware of the financial difficulties of the state treasury. Tahsin Bey compares the empire to a "centuries-old plane tree with a woodworm inside" because of the internal and external issues and the mistakes made during the reign of Abdülhamid II.¹³⁷ Poor governance and corruption created problems for local administrators in towns and villages. Tahsin Bey faced numerous cases of corruption, poor administration and economic mismanagement during his first assignment as a civil servant in Pürsican. The fact that Tahsin Bey, as an exile, was appointed to Pürsican when he was only 19 points to the system's problems. He was underage, had not fulfilled his military service and was still under the guardianship of his parents when he was made governor.¹³⁸

Tahsin Bey considered his first post a practical school that taught him the work involved in administration. In his memoir, Tahsin Bey states that he learned the principles of administration in Pürsican, the principles of maintaining order in Çiç, and the importance of struggle and patience in Razlık.¹³⁹ Pürsican has a special place among all the districts and cities he served in, as he states several times in his memoir. Tahsin Bey began his first post on October 17, 1897, in Pürsican.¹⁴⁰ His

¹³⁵ Özge Kobak, review of *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi*, by Tahsin Üzer, 2017. <https://www.academia.edu/33389384>

¹³⁶ Zeki Kolaç (1862-1943).

¹³⁷ Üzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 124.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 24.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 80. Razlık is present day Razlog in southwestern Bulgaria.

¹⁴⁰ BOA, DH.SAİD.d, nr. 81-242. I accessed the information in this document through Korkmaz's work. See: Korkmaz, "Tahsin Uzer'in Yaşamı," 22.

first impression of township and government office was quite disappointing. The government building was a dilapidated, filthy, crumbling structure where Bulgarian women dried cotton. The previous director had planted tobacco in its garden. Moreover, his predecessor, Cemal Efendi, was an alcoholic. His clerk was at least as old as Cemal Efendi and his clothes were worn. Tahsin Bey's office was no better. It was like a cell with two chests glued to it, two or three chairs, and no curtains.¹⁴¹ This first scene he encountered in his administration greatly impacted Tahsin Bey, prompting him to ponder about the deplorable condition of the state. The neglected condition of official offices not only gave him an impression of the state's weakness, but also proved to the local people that the state was not strong enough. Tahsin Bey was quite aware of the symbolic meaning of these buildings. Following this dramatic experience, one of the first things he undertook wherever he went was the repair and construction of neglected government offices, military buildings and schools. However, the condition of the buildings was not the only problem he faced in Pürsican.

Although the most significant problem was Abdülhamid II's "tyranny" and the inefficiency of the central government, Tahsin Bey noted other factors, such as corrupt officers that worsened the conditions for villagers in the region. From the beginning, he encountered the arrogance of the Bulgarian and Greek notables of the township when they visited Tahsin and presented him with gifts. This event angered Tahsin Bey, prompting him to shout at all of them and chase them off.¹⁴²

Another such group were corrupt imams who maintained power by using their so-called networks to regulate and decide on who would go to the army and who would be exempted in return for gifts and bribes from the already poor villagers, many of whom gave up what little wealth they had to ensure the exemption of their children or husbands.¹⁴³

Additionally, cavalry gendarmes exploited the people of Pürsican, eating and drinking from their stores and stealing their animals; in Christian villages, they went even further, harassing wives of poor villagers. The peasants could do nothing to resist. Since they could not harvest on time, they were forced to take loans to

¹⁴¹Uzer, Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi, 29.

¹⁴²Ibid, 29.

¹⁴³Ibid, 40.

pay taxes and ended up stuck between brokers and officers. The official regulations related to tax collection were neglected in rural areas, and officers behaved in an arbitrary manner.¹⁴⁴ One incident of an officer dealing with a group of Yoruks who could not pay their taxes made Tahsin Bey very angry. An officer named Sergeant Kara Osman had the nomads climb trees and forced them to stay there until they paid their taxes. When Tahsin Bey witnessed this, he said he would pay the tax himself, let the nomads down from the trees and beat the officer. However, when he reported the incident to the *Mutasarrıf* (governor) of Drama, he found himself in conflict with the governorship. He was sent to the Çiç sub-district for about five months.¹⁴⁵ This reassignment shows the level of corruption and weakness of the Ottoman state on its periphery, in Macedonia.

Tahsin Uzer did not only fight for Muslims. He related an unpleasant instance of a Bulgarian boy captured for ransom and how he made a serious effort to save the child. Governor Tahsin Bey summarizes the situation: “If justice were applied in Macedonia in this way, national sentiments would not awake among Bulgarians, there would be no Balkan issue. While working in Pürsican, I raised the youth against Abdülhamid and his rule.”¹⁴⁶

After his appointment to Çiç township in 1898, he worked there for around 4 months and 19 days.¹⁴⁷ Since the post represented a new place of exile for him, he was reluctant to start his duty. The condition of the government office here was not better than in Pürsican. Tahsin Bey faced many problems in Çiç, especially regarding public order and corruption, and he struggled against these issues during his few months there.¹⁴⁸ Corrupt imams were using the guise of sharia to marry young local girls for a short time, divorce them and re-marry them to other young men. One of these imams also abused and tortured villagers to take a portion of the harvest. Tahsin Bey earned the epithet “Kızan Müdür”¹⁴⁹ after beating one of these imams to death, becoming, in his own words, the number one enemy of the

¹⁴⁴Ibid, 33-34.

¹⁴⁵Ibid, 35.

¹⁴⁶Ibid, 56.

¹⁴⁷Ibid, 35.

¹⁴⁸Ibid, 40.

¹⁴⁹Due to his young age when he served in Çiç township, Tahsin Bey was given the title “Kızan”, which was used to refer to young boys in that region. However, this title soon gained the double meaning of “angry” due to his cruel and violent attitude towards those he thought were persecuting the public.

imams.¹⁵⁰ Tahsin Bey waged a war against corrupt officers, oppressive imams and aghas, cruel thieves and rapists. He repaired crumbling mosques and rescued them from corrupt imams. He wanted to improve local education, although he realized that local authorities were not always as keen as he was to do so.¹⁵¹ After almost five months, he returned to Pürsican, probably due to the change of governor in Drama and his mother's efforts.¹⁵² During his second governorship in Pürsican, Tahsin Bey dedicated himself to public works and improving educational standards.

After gaining experience in the districts like Pürsican, Çiç and Ağustos, Tahsin Bey was appointed to Razlık district as governor. Hasan Tahsin Bey's appointment to the Razlık district governorship was ordered on March 19, 1902. He took office on April 11, 1902 and served in Razlık until December 28, 1904. Tahsin Bey's memoirs state that he served as the governor of Razlık district for about three years, from 1317 (1901) to Kanunuevvel (December) 16, 1320 (1904).¹⁵³

In the second part of the book, Tahsin Uzer wrote about his experiences in Razlık. He was appointed there at such a critical time because the district was in a key strategic position, both politically and geographically. He had gained a reputation as a just and effective administrator throughout Macedonia, which is why he served one- or two-year terms in each district.

Razlık is the area where the Pirin and Rilla mountains in Bulgaria converge, surrounded by pine forests and rivers. Due to its location on the Bulgarian border, it was quite a dangerous place with the road between Cuma-i Bala and Razlık the site of many incidents. Tahsin Bey states that one of these incidents played a major role in his appointment as district governor to Razlık. According to Tahsin Bey's memoir, Ms. Stone, a "well-known American writer", was kidnapped by the Baniçe *cheta* on this road, causing the Ottoman Empire considerable trouble. An encrypted military correspondence signed by Serasker Rıza Pasha, dated September

¹⁵⁰Ibid, 41.

¹⁵¹Ibid, 43.

¹⁵²Ibid, 35. Ibid, 41.

¹⁵³Although there is an understandable gap between the dates of order and the dates he took the office, difference between the dates written in the memoir and the documents are still confusing. Mustafa Şahin also remarks these gaps between the dates provided in the memoir and the official documents, interpreting as a miscalculation when publishers translated the dates into Gregorian calendar. As Mustafa Şahin also remarks, it is highly possible that the publisher of the memoir simply added 584 years to the years given by Tahsin Bey according to Rumi calendar without taking month and day into consideration. See: Şahin. "Tahsin Uzer'in Mülki İdareciliği," 48.

10, 1901, states that an American nun and her companion were taken to the mountain by thirty bandits on their way from Razlık to Cuma-i Bala. Another document dated September 12, 1901, reported to the vilayet of Thessaloniki that an American missionary mistakenly identified as “Madmazel Elinstone” and a Bulgarian female schoolteacher were kidnapped.

More detailed information about Ms. Stone’s abduction can be found in *Confessions Of A Macedonian Bandit*, published in 1908, in which a so-called American journalist named Albert Sonnichsen shares his experiences living among the Macedonian-Bulgarian chetas. Although we do not know much about the author and his credibility, his detailed narration and language are quite remarkable. The book details disputes within the Macedonian-Bulgarian revolutionary organizations after the fall of Sarafov, under the leadership of Prince Ferdinand and General Tsoncheff. Hristo Tchernopeef, the *komitadji* the American journalist spoke to, was one of those responsible for Mss. Stone’s kidnapping, along with Sandanski and 18 other “husky lads”. Tchernopeef related that, because of the poor decisions made in Sofia and a betrayal in Thessaloniki, many *cheta* leaders were arrested and exiled to Anatolia, leaving only Yane Sandanski and Tchernopeef active in North Macedonia.

“Sandanski and I were together. We were now so poorly equipped that we didn’t even dare to meet Tsoncheff’s bands; we had to run from them, as if they were asker. We needed money. So we determined to capture some wealthy Turk and get a few thousand liras ransom. Once we tried and failed. At that time there came to us a chetnik who had been a student in the American school in Samakov. ‘Capture one of the missionaries he suggested, and the Turkish government will pay the ransom immediately to avoid complications. The idea took us with fever heat. You understand, it wasn’t pleasant to contemplate—we had never even captured Turks for ransom. But Tsoncheff’s bands were pouring in on us. When we heard that Dr. House was coming across the country, we decided to take him. Dr. House has always been a friend of the peasants; when we heard that he had decided not to come our way, I, for one, only half regretted it. A few days later we heard that Miss Stone was in Bansko, and would be traveling south in a few days. Down we rushed to Bansko. I didn’t mind Miss Stone so much. She often preached against us, telling the poor peasants that God would right their troubles, and not the “brigands.” All harmless stuff nobody took it seriously, but it made the business less difficult for us to gulp down. There was a garrison in Bansko, and the villagers couldn’t even get food out to us. But for two days Sandanski and I were in the village, dressed as peasants, watching Miss Stone and arranging plans. It was the villagers who persuaded us not to do it in Bansko; they feared reprisals. The courier who afterwards was guide to the party was our man; he took them to

us. You will remember how we dropped down on them as they passed, all of us disguised as bashi bazouks, but so famished that we hadn't the presence of mind to refrain from pork when we tore open the lunch hampers. Sandanski and I had decided to take a Bulgar woman with us as Miss Stone's companion. We really wanted to be as decent to her as was possible. But the elderly woman we had chosen was taken so ill she couldn't be moved. "Were the two women frightened?" I asked (the author, Sonnichsen). "Naturally. That first night's march took the breath out of them. But afterwards well, we were inexperienced. We gave them a month, believing we should have the money from Constantinople in a week. Of course, we wanted them to take it seriously. Those missionaries are different from us, but we know that some of them are in earnest. We had one fear she might decide to martyr herself. Fortunately, she didn't. "So, we arranged dramatic scenes. I was best at them that's why I am the Bad Man. But Yani Sandanski has the instincts of a French dancing master. I've seen the perspiration stand out on his bald head, with winter frost about us. I've seen him go off by himself among the trees and clench those big hands of his and grind his teeth. Well, he got his reward. He was handed down to history as the Good Man..."

Figure 4.1 Miss Stone's Captors



Miss Stone's Captors

To the left, Hristo Tchernopeet (The bad man); Middle, Yani Sandanski (The good man); Right, Krusty Bulgarias, a chetnik at the time, later a sub-chief

Source: Albert Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit, A Californian in the Balkan Wars* (The Narrative Press, 2004), 254, 261.

To improve the security of the area, with the help of the local population

Tahsin Bey started the construction of a barracks in the town of Preder, located on the road. However, the issues of the region were not limited to the safety of this road.

Since Tahsin Bey was the district governor of Razlık during the 1903 Bulgarian uprising, he was involved in the events that took place during the uprising as well.¹⁵⁴ His intellectual background, knowledge of history and politics, and experiences in the field allowed him to write a detailed narrative of the uprising and Bulgarian committee activities. He took extraordinary measures in Razlık, confiscating weapons from Bulgarians in the region, which helped decrease banditry activity in the district. Even though Istanbul acknowledged his exemplary service, appointing him to critical districts ultimately did not solve the complicated Macedonian Question.¹⁵⁵

Tahsin Bey briefly describes the general situation of Razlık in his memoir. Some 18 villages were inhabited by Bulgarians, two villages by Muslims, and the rest by a mix of Muslims and Bulgarians. He describes the people of the Razlık district as hardworking but entirely *komitadji*. This region always had a revolutionary air, he notes, meaning that “banditry”, politics and administration in this district were extremely important.¹⁵⁶ He comments that Razlık was a whirlpool of banditry and malice – as soon as he arrived in town, he received the news that two gendarmes had been killed.¹⁵⁷

Although he was only 23 years old when he was appointed to Razlık, Tahsin Bey emphasizes that he actively fought against the bandits. He describes how exciting yet frustrating it was to be a young and inexperienced governor caught in the horrible events unfolding in Macedonia. It was his first confrontation with bandits.¹⁵⁸ frustrating it was to be a young and inexperienced governor caught in the horrible events unfolding in Macedonia. It was his first confrontation with bandits.¹⁵⁹ Tahsin Bey complains a lot about the inadequacy of the state, not only in terms of the image it projected but also in terms of the measures taken in

¹⁵⁴Kobak, “Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi,” 2.

¹⁵⁵Ibid, 6.

¹⁵⁶Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 79.

¹⁵⁷Ibid, 119. “Whirlpool of banditry and malice /şekavet ve fesat girdabı, şekavet merkezi”

¹⁵⁸Ibid, 124.

¹⁵⁹Ibid, 124.

the fight against “banditry”. Tahsin Uzer’s experiences in Macedonia during the uprising reveal how the inefficiency and corruption of the Ottoman administration fuelled the spread of the uprising.¹⁶⁰ As discussed in the third chapter, there were temporary improvements in the struggle against banditry during Tahsin Uzer’s governorship. However, Tahsin Bey does not describe the large-scale developments and changes in the balance of power between Balkan nations and the Great Powers during this period. He highlights his personal achievements in the fight against banditry. Mentions of notable figures like Sandanski give the audience the sense that Tahsin Bey played a significant role in the Ottoman fight against banditry. One of the first events that Tahsin Bey witnessed in Razlık revealed the scale of banditry and ineffective administration. Following the murder of the gendarmes, a Bulgarian child informed them that a Bulgarian band of at least 200 guerillas had passed by the same field as Tahsin Bey and his officers only 5 minutes before; by chance, they had missed an encounter that would have cost them their lives. While the incident shook Tahsin Bey, the commander seemed not to care or take caution. The young governor was aware that the combination of careless officers and armed Bulgarians was a dangerous one.

On the other hand, he knew how difficult and provocative it would be to confiscate weapons by force. However, after multiple incidents of Muslims being murdered around the district, he took action. Various correspondences show that Tahsin Bey started to collect weapons in Razlık. One correspondence between the District Governor of Razlık and Ferik İbrahim Paşa reported the weapons collected from the people in Erşenice,¹⁶¹ while a correspondence sent to the Serez Governorate from Razlık a month later stated that the people in Razlık surrendered their weapons voluntarily without any difficulty. According to a copy of the correspondence, two Martini-Henry rifles and 1,160 cartridges were collected peacefully from Erşenice village and sent to Dobronište.¹⁶² Another report dated December 15, 1902, stated that the district governor of Razlık had collected 130 rifles and 1280 cartridges without coercion.¹⁶³

In addition to these figures and reports, Tahsin Bey also relates how he collected

¹⁶⁰Ibid,152.

¹⁶¹“ *Razlık’a bağlı Eşnice köyü halkının ellerinde mevcut olan silah ve fişekleri teslim ettikleri.*” BOA, Y.PRK.ASK.,187-40.

¹⁶²BOA, Y.PRK.UM., 61- 22.

¹⁶³“Razlık kaymakamının ifâ ettiği rızaya ve nasihat-ı hikemâne-yi îşârı olarak ahâli-i [?] cem’[?] Yüz otuz tüfenk ile iki bin dört yüz seksen fişenk fi 4 Mart senesi 318 tarihli...” BOA, Y.PRK.UM., . 61-22.

guns from villages. Hasan Tahsin Bey recruited a Bulgarian *komitadji* named Georgi as an informant through Süleyman Ağa from Barçova village. The informant helped him record how many and which type of weapons the villagers possessed. After he employed force on some of the village's Bulgarian notables and discovered an armory in the church, the rest of the villagers started to turn in their weapons voluntarily.

Table 4.1 Approximate numbers of guns per village.

Village Name	No. of Rifles
Dobronište	150
Erşenice	250
Central district	280
Bakorit	350
Nedobriska	400
İki Kotorlar	400 ¹⁶⁴

The documents regarding the number of weapons collected in Razlık prove that Tahsin Bey did not exaggerate when describing the revolutionary atmosphere in Razlık. The method Tahsin Bey used to collect weapons without using force involved making a deal with the notables of the village, making use of informants or through persuasion. The task of collecting weapons was not always easy, however, and the situation sometimes got out of hand. Banditry was already a significant problem in the region, especially in districts like Razlık. Tahsin Bey faced multiple assassination attempts, not only from Bulgarian bandits but also jealous commanders and displeased officers. One day, after Major Remzi Bey tried to confiscate weapons from Banko by force, Lieutenant Colonel Hacı Nazmi Bey threatened to attack which provoked the villagers.¹⁶⁵ When Tahsin Bey returned to the district, he persuaded the villagers to turn in 300 rifles, but he was accused of protecting Bulgarians. A drunk lieutenant tried to kill him but was stopped by gendarmes, an incident that nearly caused an internal conflict among the soldiers. This anecdote is striking for Tahsin Bey as well because it also reflects the general

¹⁶⁴Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 127.

¹⁶⁵Major "Remzi from Samsun", mentioned in this incident, tried to collect weapons in the village of Banko and to suppress the village by surrounding it with a battalion of soldiers. Upon the Bulgarians' resistance, the major intensified the pressure and threatened the village with two mountain cannons. The memoir does not give the date of this event. In the Ottoman archives, in a correspondence dated October 3, 1903, Razlık district governor Tahsin Bey states that Redif Major Hüseyin Bey reached Razlık from Menlik with 250 people and two mountain cannons in the last of the telegrams. The previous telegrams give information about the collection of weapons from the Christians. Although the date, region and some of the details such as collecting weapons and bringing two mountain cannons coinciding with each other, It is unclear whether these two events are the same event. BOA, TFR.I.SL,21-2011.

malaise of the era.¹⁶⁶

Arzu Taşcan asserts that the cooperation between the Exarchate and the Bulgarian Principality played a significant role in the 1903 uprising. Priests and teachers in the service of committees also turned schools and churches into armories.¹⁶⁷ A telegram sent by Rükneddin Bey, the Governor of Serez, in July 1903, also reported that the Bulgarian Committees had encouraged Bulgarian villagers to revolt in the villages of Razlık, with the priests and some villagers participating in the uprising, and that measures should be taken to prevent conflict.¹⁶⁸ Although the official documents report that weapons and cartridges were collected peacefully and Tahsin Bey states that he had developed good relations with the public, the Bulgarian committees did not remain silent in the face of intense efforts to confiscate weapons.

Within two months, Tahsin Bey succeeded in collecting 2000 firearms, around 10.000 bullets and 59 bombs, which provoked the Bulgarian committees to attempt to assassinate Tahsin Bey. Likewise, several Bulgarian women made complaints to several embassies, the Sublime Porte and even European states, targeting Tahsin Bey. As a result of these complaints and foreign intervention, a commission was established, and an investigation was held. He was found guilty of not killing but using pressure on people. However, this was not the only problem. Tahsin Bey survived an assassination attempt organized by Bulgarian *komitadjis*. He was openly threatened in a note written by *Komitadji* Baytar Simon.

Several uprisings in a smaller scale in different districts of Cuma-i Bala, Menlik and Petriç took place before the more significant Bulgarian uprising. Tahsin Uzer says that towards the end of 1902, the banditry problem came to a boil. His precautions prevented Cuma-i Bala and Menlik uprisings from expanding to Razlık – at least for a while. Otherwise, as he suggests, Razlık was a more suitable place for a revolt. Due to Tahsin Bey's foresight about the danger in Serez and on the borders of Bulgaria, he summoned the administrators of neighboring districts for a meeting for consultation and coordinated measures. The local governors all agreed on the danger of an upcoming revolt and the need for immediate precautions, such as collecting all the firearms in the area, and they prepared a report. How-

¹⁶⁶Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 130.

¹⁶⁷Arzu Taşcan, "Prens Ferdinand ve Ekzarh Yosif Arasındaki Bazı Mektuplaşmalarda Makedonya ve Komitalar," *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi*, no. 12 (2012): 235-248, 239.

¹⁶⁸BOA, TFR.I.SL., 15- 1426.

ever, the report written in the meeting was not taken seriously by the authorities.¹⁶⁹

Finally, as foreseen, an uprising broke out in Cuma-i Bala,¹⁷⁰ rapidly spreading to other regions. Armed Bulgarian villagers fought against the gendarmes and attacked police offices and the local *Duyun-ı Umumiye* (Debt Administration) office as well as Muslim villages. This uprising was barely suppressed before spreading to Razlık, which indeed might have turned the famous 1903 Bulgarian Uprising into a “1902 Bulgarian Uprising.”¹⁷¹

Kemal Beydilli says that the failure of the 1902 uprising demoralized but also triggered Bulgarians to prepare for a more significant and broader scale revolt.¹⁷² This event made two things clear: the European press’s general approach and the Sublime Porte’s inefficiency. The Sublime Porte preferred to downplay such a critical event, emphasizing the loyalty of the majority of Bulgarian villagers in the region to the state, a statement that Tahsin Bey did not agree with at all. As Uzer expresses, even such a widespread and obvious situation failed to alarm the administrators of the empire. The fire of revolution was still burning because the state did not take any drastic action.¹⁷³ He seems to have believed that the reason for the lack of a brutal response was the unawareness of administrators rather than the delicate balance of power increasingly working against the Ottoman administration. Fikret Adanır reiterates that several viziers in the Sublime Porte wanted to take serious action, but they were prevented from doing so by Abdülhamid II, who feared doing so would make a Turkish- Bulgarian war inevitable. In his memoir, *Yıldız Mabeyn Başkâtibi* (Court Chief Clerk), Tahsin Paşa mentions Abdülhamid II’s cautious policies towards Bulgaria. According to Tahsin Paşa, Abdülhamid II was right to be extremely cautious about Macedonia and the situation in Bulgaria as the Macedonian Question was a problem that concerned the whole of Europe and was so dangerous that it could drag the state into a disaster. In his memoir, *Mabeyn Başkâtibi*, Tahsin Pasha explains what Tahsin Uzer considered Abdülhamid II’s lack of endurance as follows: To “govern the nations well” in a matter so sensitive that it could lead the empire to disaster in both domestic and foreign policy; Abdülhamid was waging a two-front war, one

¹⁶⁹Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 137.

¹⁷⁰present-day Blagoevgrad

¹⁷¹Ibid,138.

¹⁷²Beydilli, “ Makedonya Mes’alesi’ne Dair,” 92-93.

¹⁷³Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*,139.

based on politics and the other on force, both through diplomacy and keeping the military forces ready against revolutionary movements.¹⁷⁴

However, Hasan Tahsin Bey was not the only one worried about the situation. Kazım Karabekir was concerned that banditry in Macedonia was an intractable issue. He reiterates that, during the 1903 Bulgarian uprising, around 30.000 Bulgarian revolutionaries were killed and the three vilayet were taken control of by Europeans. In 1904, 27 Bulgarian *komitadji* were killed in Manastir; that number increased to 78 Bulgarian and 27 Greek *komitadji* in 1905. *Komitadjis* always took action in spring, killing Muslims and each other. European gendarmes, especially Italians, cooperated with the *komitadjis*, trying to minimize the danger they faced when sent to court. In contrast, if the bandits were captured by Ottoman soldiers their situation was hopeless.¹⁷⁵

As discussed in Chapter 3, the 1903 Bulgarian revolt, launched despite the protests of various groups, shocked everyone, including the European states and Bulgaria at the time. Shortly before the revolt started, Ottoman state authorities also received intelligence stating that a general Bulgarian revolt would break out, and the relevant authorities were ordered to complete the necessary military preparations. An encrypted telegram sent to Manastır *vilayet* on August 3, 1903, repeating information sent through another encrypted telegram dated July 31, 1903, reported that the Bulgarian *chetas* attacked villages and massacred Greeks, Turks and soldiers in their tents. Rumors circulated that the Bulgarian “bandits” around Manastır were preparing for an all-out revolution and administrators took measures to address the threat.¹⁷⁶ In the telegrams sent from the governorship of Serres on August 10 and 12, 1903, according to intelligence received from a reliable Bulgarian informer, Tahsin Bey reported that Bulgarian bandits would massacre Muslims in the villages, and that the Bulgarians had buried their goods in the ground before the rebellion and smuggled their animals to the Principdom’s side. In the same documents, Tahsin Bey reports that a solution must be found to protect both Muslim and Christian villagers, especially women and children, from massacres and attacks.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴“govern the nations well/milletleri hüsn-i idare edebilmek için...” See: Said Paşa, Tahsin Paşa, İkinci Meşrutiyetin İlanı, ed. Ö. Andaç Uğurlu (İstanbul:Örgün Yayınevi, 2008), 423.

¹⁷⁵Kâzım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti 1896-1909*, (İstanbul: TÜRDAV, 1982),197-198.

¹⁷⁶BOA, TFR.I..MN, 14 -1343.

¹⁷⁷“Siroz mutasarrıflığının şifre telgrafı 20 Temmuz sene 319 Razlık kaymakamlığından bu kerre dahi alınan bir telgrafnâmede Bilice karyesi İslam ağalarından ve sözüne

Sandanski chose the village of Bansko in Razlık as his base, and Razlık became one of the hotspots for conflict in the region. The village of Bansko was strategically located, approximately 5.5km south of Razlık and at the entrance to the mountainous regions where the bandits could operate comfortably.¹⁷⁸ A telegram sent from Razlık district governorship to the Siroz governor Rükneddin Bey's office on August 7, 1903, reports on a clash with Sandanski and his militants near Razlık and the consequent pursuit of the bandits.¹⁷⁹

Sandanski, who came to the region through the Şarapçı gorge with his band of approximately 150 *komitadjis*, spent the night before the uprising in a dairy near the village and entered Banska in the morning to join the villagers and punish those who did not participate. Many Bulgarians from the village of Bansko voluntarily or compulsorily joined this band. However, the Ottoman forces clashed with the band at 4 a.m.

Sandanski's bandits suffered losses and had to retreat following a skirmish with two detachments from the Ottoman law enforcement forces that lasted for about 7 hours. Ottoman forces pursued the retreating bandits. Razlık District Governor Tahsin Bey, who could not come to Bansko because he participated in the clashes in the center, assigned his aide Omer to gather news from the region. However, Omer was seriously injured during the clashes and died.¹⁸⁰

In a telegram dated August 10, 1903, the Governor of Siroz gave information about the measures to be taken after the Razlık District Governorate reported

'itimâd edilenlerden biri kaymakam-ı mumaileyhin nezdine giderin(?) devlete sadakat ve ..dan emin olduğu bir Bulgar çorbacının evvelki gün yalnız olarak miyânelerinde açılan bir mekâtada eşkıyanın ve köy çorbacılarının karyeleri yakmak ve orada bulunan İslamları katl etmek niyetinde bulunduklarını ve pek çoklarının levâzım-ı niyetlerini hâne ve bağçelerinde topraklarında istihzâr etdikleri mahallerde koymakda bulunduklarını ve iğtişâş(isyan)dan evvel Balkanda bulunan sığır ve koyun hayvanâtını Emâret tarafına kaçırarak tasavvurunda olduklarını dahi kendünün dahi havfından nâşi yere gömdüğünü ve köy Bulgarlarının pek haincesine .. tashihâtlarını birer birer beyân ve İslâm olsun, Hristiyan olsun kadın ve çocukların duçar-ı tecâvüz ve tasallut olmamaları için yalnız köyün dahilen muhâfazasına iktifâ olunub ekserîsi Bilice fırarlarından 'ibâret olan eşkıyanın köye adam duhûlleri esbâbının hâricen istikmâli çaresini düşünmek icâb ettiğini ve tezkire ile bir ay ticâret-i Bulgarya'ya giden Bilicelilerin hatt-ı imtiyâza karîb karyeye 'avdet eylediklerini [...]' BOA, TFR.I.SL., 16 -1563.

¹⁷⁸Ender Korkmaz, "Osmanlı Arşiv Evraklarına Göre İlinden İsyanında Yaşanan Başlıca Olaylar," *Uluslararası Dil, Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimlerde Güncel Yaklaşımlar Dergisi* (CALESS) 2, no 1. (2020): 319.

¹⁷⁹BOA, TFR.I.SL, 16 - 1550.

¹⁸⁰BOA, TFR.I.SL, 16-1550. Also cited in Ender Korkmaz, "Osmanlı Arşiv Evraklarına Göre İlinden İsyanında Yaşanan Başlıca Olaylar," *Uluslararası Dil, Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimlerde Güncel Yaklaşımlar Dergisi* (CALESS) 2, no 1. (2020): 319.

that the bandit had traveled from the Sarapçı strait towards the Vlach village of the Menlik district and that there was a possibility that he would attack Bansko village.¹⁸¹ Tahsin Uzer narrates the clashes with the Sandanski and his *cheta* in his memoir. One of the most striking parts in this narration is that pressure from the “Infamous” *Komijadi* Sandanski led the entire village of Bansko to resist the confiscation of their guns. Faced with the danger of the entire population of Bansko village moving to the Pirin mountains in revolt, Tahsin Bey found another agent to help him solve this issue in a legal way.¹⁸² Meanwhile, he faced several dangers, from assassination attempts to armed conflict with one of the biggest *chetas*. Tahsin Bey, who was informed that the Committee leader Sandanski had passed through Razlık with a band of 250 people, pursued him. There were clashes with the bandits in the “Şarapçı gorge”.¹⁸³ Sandanski managed to escape, ten of Tahsin Bey’s soldiers were killed and 20 wounded, while the bandits did not suffer any losses. Tahsin Bey attributes the loss to Lieutenant Colonel “Hacı Ali Nazmi” Bey’s stupidity.¹⁸⁴ Despite the rapid and intense military intervention in both Razlık center and Bansko, the efforts to start a rebellion continued into August. By September, the Bulgarians were still trying to stockpile arms and arm men in the area. Around August 25, a Coptic (Roma) citizen living in the area found a large, newly manufactured bomb in Bansko and reported its location to the Ottoman authorities.¹⁸⁵ According to an intelligence report dated September 24, weapons and were transferred across the border via the village of Godlova while activity continued in several villages, including Draglishte-i Zir and Bansko. According to a document dated September 24, it was reported that weapons and ammunition were transferred across the border in the village of Godlova, which is close to the border. According to what was learned from the same intelligence, activity continued in several villages, including Draglishte-i Zir and Bansko. Around this time, a car full of ammunition was seized in the village of Bane (probably present-day Banya). It was also noteworthy that many young Bulgarians began to appear in the villages. The Thessaloniki Governorate considered these developments as signs that a new general uprising would begin in a few days.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹BOA, TFR.I.SL, 16 – 1556.

¹⁸²Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 129.

¹⁸³“Şarapçı boğazında takip edilen eşkiyanın Menlik kazasının Ulah köyüne doğru gittiği ve Banisko köyünde kötülük yapma ihtimali olduğu Razlık Kaymakamlığı’ndan bildirilmesi üzerine tedbir alınmasına dair Siroz Mutasarrıflığı’nın telgrafı.” BOA, TFR.I.SL 16 – 1556.

¹⁸⁴Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 131.

¹⁸⁵BOA, Y.PRK.UM., 6-61. Also cited in Ender Korkmaz, “Osmanlı Arşiv Evraklarına Göre İkinden İsyânında Yaşanan Başlıca Olaylar,” *Uluslararası Dil, Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimlerde Güncel Yaklaşımlar Dergisi* (CA-LESS) 2, no 1. (2020): 320.

¹⁸⁶BOA, TFR.I.SL., 20-1936. Also cited in Ender Korkmaz, “Osmanlı Arşiv Evraklarına Göre İkinden

The intelligence received was correct and telegraphic communication with Razlık was cut off on the night of September 26. The bandits and their collaborators opened fire on soldiers in Razlık and a clash ensued. A gendarme corporal was killed in the conflict. In the morning, when the Ottoman law enforcement officers tried to search the houses near where the conflict took place, the bandits opened fire on the soldiers from the houses. In the resulting clash, two Bulgarian bandits, one of whom was wearing the official uniform of the Bulgarian army, were killed. Meanwhile, a barn used by bandits to store ammunition burst into flames. The fire brigade tackled the fire. Although a group of 100 people left the bandits and wanted to burn the village of Bachevo, about 4 kilometers north of Razlık, this attempt also failed due to the intervention of Ottoman law enforcement. An attempt by the bandits to organize a massacre in the Muslim quarter of Razlık also proved fruitless.¹⁸⁷ A *cheta* band trying to enter Razlık via Bansko was also destroyed by the Pristina division in an ambush. Some 33 bandits were captured or killed in clashes that lasted for two nights.¹⁸⁸ By September 28, public security was completely reestablished in Razlık.¹⁸⁹

During the 1903 Bulgarian Uprising, Tahsin Bey witnessed and experienced many adventures in Razlık. He gives a generous account of it in the book so the audience could read different events in which officers, soldiers and ordinary villagers took an active part. Baki Ağa's and his son's bravery in conflict with Bulgaria bandits in Barçova, or Corporal Murat's struggle against hundreds of Bulgarian bandits to protect 300 Muslim civilians until reinforcements arrived are only a couple of the

İşyanında Yaşanan Başlıca Olaylar," Uluslararası Dil, Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimlerde Güncel Yaklaşımlar Dergisi (CALESS) 2, no 1. (2020): 320.

¹⁸⁷The village named "Bachevo" is "Barçova" which was mentioned by Tahsin bey in his memoir. Tahsin Bey has an interesting anecdote regarding this village and incidents took place in September 1903. He mentions a brave Albanian Baki Ağa who was ambushed by eight *komitadji*. After his horse died immediately, Baki Ağa also pretended to be dead. When *komitadjis* showed up, Baki Ağa fired his flintlock and killed three of them at once. After a short while his son "who was as brave as Baki Ağa" also joined him and they killed the entire band. Razlık governor Tahsin Bey who was around and heard the gunshots and arrived. Baki Ağa and his son hid six of the dead bodies and showed only two of them. They aimed to take the weapons for themselves. However, Tahsin Bey permitted them to take eight weapons and reported the bravery he witnessed to the Vali Hasan Fehmi. Baki ağa and his son were rewarded with fourth and fifth rank Majidi medals and 200 golds which Baki Ağa did not receive and donated to the army with another 200 gold lira of himself. See: Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 140-142. The document showing the request for rewarding the Baki Ağa: "*Razlık'ın Bacova karyesinden Baki Ağa'nın taltifi hususunun Sadaret'e arzı*." 21 September, 1903. BOA, DH.MKT. 581 – 49.

¹⁸⁸BOA, Y.PRK.ASK., 204-106; BOA, TFR.I.SL. 20-1944. Also cited in Ender Korkmaz, "Osmanlı Arşiv Evraklarına Göre İkinden İşyanında Yaşanan Başlıca Olaylar," Uluslararası Dil, Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimlerde Güncel Yaklaşımlar Dergisi (CALESS) 2, no 1. (2020):321.

¹⁸⁹BOA, TFR.I.SL., 20-1945. Also cited in Ender Korkmaz, "Osmanlı Arşiv Evraklarına Göre İkinden İşyanında Yaşanan Başlıca Olaylar," Uluslararası Dil, Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimlerde Güncel Yaklaşımlar Dergisi (CALESS) 2, no 1. (2020):321.

events he witnessed.¹⁹⁰

Figure 4.2 An insurgent band in the rising of 1903



Source: Henry Noel Brailsford, *Macedonia; Its Races and Their Future*. New York: Arno Press, 1971, 200.

During his governorship in Razlık, Tahsin Bey joined a commission of inquiry created by both sides to investigate the clashes and losses at the Bulgarian border. He compares the predicament of the Ottoman empire and the surprisingly much better condition of Bulgaria, a newly founded state. The Bulgarian commission was in much better condition, boasting a great number of participants, high-ranked members and around twenty nurses. They also wore new uniforms – as the audience could understand from the words of Tahsin Bey, this was not the case for the Ottoman side.¹⁹¹ Tahsin Bey emphasizes and attaches importance to the issue of image many times throughout the memoir, as it seems to have affected him quite a lot. He was distraught when the Ottoman delegation revealed the weaknesses of the state in the face of the image of a modern, effective and disciplined state like Bulgaria. Years later, while serving as governor of Drama, Tahsin Bey was assigned to a delegation to investigate after many Bulgarian soldiers were wounded or killed in a conflict between Bulgarians and Turks in the Ropçoz-Dospat district on the Bulgarian border. He writes that the Bulgarian delegation paled before his own delegation. He compares the event to the meeting in Razlık ten years before and

¹⁹⁰Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 143.

¹⁹¹*Ibid*, 148.

writes that the pride and joy he felt that day added five years to his life.¹⁹²

Figure 4.3 The government mansion in Razlık under construction during Tahsin Bey's governorship, H. 1320



Source: BOA,FTG.f./168

Tahsin Bey's success against bandits in Razlık and the course of events in Macedonia influenced his assignment to his next places of duty. There were rumblings of an uprising in the town of Gevgili. Notye township director Hasan Efendi was ambushed around Banıçe and was wounded. The bandits killed ten soldiers and a military medical student who were with the director before fleeing with their leader Yuvan. Tahsin Bey was informed by Hulusi Bey, the inspector of the Courthouse, when he arrived in Thessaloniki. Inspector Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa¹⁹³ stated that he hoped that Tahsin Bey would be as successful and diligent as he had been in Razlık and sent his predecessor Münib Bey to court, holding Gevgili responsible for his miserable condition. In his memoir, Tahsin Bey relates that he received the information of his assignment by telegram on September 12, 1903, from the

¹⁹²Ibid, 306.

¹⁹³Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa (1855-1922) the Inspector- General of Maceodonia.

Governor Rauf Paşa, and started his duty on October 1, 1903.¹⁹⁴ However, some of the correspondences and documents after this date were signed by Tahsin Bey as “district governor of Razlık.” For example, a document signed on 29 Kanunuevvel, 1320 (January 11, 1905) ordered the transfer of Razlık District Governor Tahsin Bey to Gevgili, instead of Gevgili District Governor Mahmud Münib Bey due to his impotence and appointment of Imroz District governor Ahmed Zihni Efendi.¹⁹⁵ His letter of appointment to Gevgili indicates that, with the approval of Inspector-General Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa, Tahsin Bey was appointed to the Gevgili District Governorate. The transfer was announced in a letter received from Thessaloniki Province and Gevgili and Razlık Districts; after the examination, there was no issue preventing him from being appointed. In accordance with the approval of his appointment, Tahsin Bey was appointed to Gevgili in Kânunusani 31, 1320 (February 1, 1905). The documents mentioned above indicate that Tahsin Bey was first transferred and later officially appointed to the governorship of Gevgili, which explains the two-year gap between the dates in the documents and the memoir.¹⁹⁶

The scene that greeted Tahsin Bey in Gevgili was discouraging. This region, being close to the Greek border and rife with security problems, was, like Razlık, a hotspot for banditry. Despite the banditry problem, Gevgili was considered a rich district developed in terms of trade. At the time it had a population of approximately 35,000 people, 15,000 of whom were Muslims, 14,000 were Bulgarians and 6,000 were Greeks and Vlachs. The biggest trouble in Gevgili was banditry. According to the report from Tahsin Bey to Rumeli Inspectorate on April 2, 1905, under the leadership of *komitadji* Cambaz Tampo, 7 *cheta* known as Vasil, Apostol’s brother’s Andon, Taraykov, Lazar, Tudor, Yuvan and Arkir were engaged in banditry activities in Gevgili.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴Ibid, 181-182.

¹⁹⁵BOA, DH.MKT. 923-59.

¹⁹⁶Şahin. “Tahsin Uzer’in Mülki İdareciliği,” 55.

¹⁹⁷BOA, TFR.1.SL. 69 – 6816 also cited in Korkmaz. “Tahsin Uzer’in Yaşamı,” 54.

Table 4.2 The situation of bandits in Yenice Vardar and Gevgili regions

Number of members	Leader	Alias	Years of Activity	Zone of Influence
23	Apostol Petkof	Vardar Güneşi (Sun of Vardar)	20	Gevgili
18	Captain Sava	Bulgarian Officer	3	Belkız
25	Yuvan	Sığirtmaç	16	Yenice-Gevgili
15	Lonidof		7	Belkız-Gevgili
25	Arkir	Baroviçe	15	Tikoşda
10	Lazar		10	Gevgili
8	Dede Yuvan	Tikoşlu Eski Kurt (Old Wolf of Tikoş)	10	Gevgili
10	Gogo	Kılkışla	15	Gevgili

Source: Tahsin Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1979), 184.

Tahsin Bey fought against many of these famous *chetas*, eliminating or completely neutralizing some of them, and was honored with medals by the state. Vardar Güneşi Apostol Petkof and Sava arrived in Gevgili with their *chetas* and engaged the Ottoman gendarmerie forces on February 28, 1904. Captain Sava and his band were utterly destroyed. The battle with Apostol raged on, with Tahsin Bey's cousins coming to the rescue, destroying Apostol's band without any casualties. The date given here as 1904 would have been around March 1905, according to the documents sent from Gevgili governorship. The correspondence reporting that the Bulgarian bandit chief Apostol and a band of forty people under the command of Loindras were defeated in Gevgili is dated March 19, 1905.¹⁹⁸ After these victories, Tahsin Bey and the other officers involved were rewarded with medals of merit, silver medals and promotions.¹⁹⁹ The destruction of these bands silenced the Bulgarians and was celebrated by the Muslims of the area. Tahsin Bey states that, despite his efforts, he could not appease the Muslims, who mutilated the corpses of the *komitadjis* to the extent that Apostol could not be identified among them.²⁰⁰ In fact, Apostol had barely escaped with injuries. Tahsin Uzer later saw him at the

¹⁹⁸“Şaki Apostol ve avanesinin kamilen helak edildiğini bildiren Gevgili Kaymakamlığı'nın telgrafı” BOA, TFR.I.A, 66-254; BOA, TFR..I..A., 26-2533

¹⁹⁹“Bulgar eşkiya reisi Apostol ile avanesinin tepelenmelerinde gayret gösterenlere gümüş liyakat madalyalarının dağıtılışı ve fazla madalyanın da iade edildiği.” BOA, TFR.I..A, 26 – 2533

²⁰⁰Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 186.

celebrations of the Second Constitutional Revolution.²⁰¹

Tahsin Bey, according to a correspondence dated February 26, 1906, was assigned to Florina District, taking over from then-Governor Refet Bey.²⁰² Hasan Tahsin Bey's Florina district governorship started on March 2, 1906, lasting until March 17, 1908. The order for his appointment was issued on March 27, 1906, about one month after the start of his duty similar to his appointment to Gevgili.²⁰³ Tahsin Bey's term of office in Florina lasted 25 months. During this period Tahsin Bey reported that the people of Florina were very honest, respectful and self-sacrificing people. However, Florina was one of the eight military regions set by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) and was one of the districts where major battles took place during the Ilinden Uprising. By 1904, Greek bands had also started their banditry activities and Florina became a major battlefield for Bulgarian and Greek *komitadjis*.²⁰⁴

Due to economic problems and internal conflict within the IMRO, Bulgarian guerillas lost the momentum they had shown in 1903; however, the region was still in turmoil due to constant clashes between Bulgarian and Greek forces. In contrast to the situation in Razlık, the main targets of the Bulgarian committee members in Florina were generally the Greeks. Two of the most important events that Tahsin Bey witnessed during his term as district governor was the battle of Istrebne and Fethi Bey's killing of committee members Yorgi, Bulani and Kara Vidas.²⁰⁵

Tahsin Bey traveled to Noska to meet the *nahiye müdürü* (township governor) Zeynel Bey around 10 June.²⁰⁶ While they were visiting the house of a Vlach priest, a letter from a Bulgarian informant arrived, notifying the men of the presence of a large Greek band at Istrebne Balkan that had gathered with the intent to burn Zelnic village, an Exarchist stronghold. On the morning of May 29, 1906, (June 11, 1906), they led a regiment in that direction. The battle started at 9 a.m. The Greek band, estimated to consist of 150 men, was positioned at the

²⁰¹Ibid, 185.

²⁰²BOA, TFR.I..MN., 86-8539

²⁰³Şahin. "Tahsin Uzer'in Mülki İdareciliği," 58.

²⁰⁴Kayalar, "Struggle over Macedonia." 85-86.

²⁰⁵Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 194.

²⁰⁶It was May 1906, according to the memoir. Ibid, 194.

upper hills of the İstrebne Balkan. Detachments from Florina, Kesriye and Soroviç worked in coordination to besiege the Greeks. Throughout the course of the battle, telegrams demanding more troops and artillery were sent to Manastır.²⁰⁷ The clashes continued for 16 hours and were described as a small-scale war rather than a battle. In the end, the Ottomans lost 20 soldiers, with 35 wounded while the bandits lost 75 men and 57 *komiteci* were imprisoned. Tahsin Bey describes the scale of the battle by giving the number of bullets used by the military forces: 750 men used 450,000 bullets. On the way back, Tahsin Bey and Fethi (Okyar) Beys were ambushed, and Noska town manager Zeynel Bey was killed in the struggle.²⁰⁸

Between 1905 and 1906, the conflict between Bulgarian and Greek guerrillas, especially the Patriarchists and Exarchists, escalated and did not subside until the last days of Tahsin Bey's district governorship. Tahsin Bey states that banditry activities had decreased in Florina just before his appointment to Kesendire.²⁰⁹ While the biggest clashes took place between Bulgarian and Greek bands, the *komitecis* were also targeting non-committee members, especially the Greek bands trying to seize the villages under the influence of Exarchate for the Patriarchate. Greek bands fought against Bulgarian committees rather than Ottoman military forces during the Exarchate-Patriarchate war. However, Anıl Kayalar states that, contrary to the general opinion discussed in before, the Rumelia Inspectorate records indicate that the Ottoman military forces did not show any special tolerance towards the Greek bands.²¹⁰ Tahsin Bey's narration on his experiences with Greek bands in Florina, including the battle of Istrebne and the clash at Balkamin, supports his claim.

²⁰⁷Kayalar, "Struggle over Macedonia," 98-99.

²⁰⁸Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 195.

²⁰⁹Ibid, 213.

²¹⁰Kayalar, "Struggle over Macedonia," 109.

5. TAHSIN UZER, THROUGH THE LENS OF HIS MEMOIR

5.1 Development of his Personality

Studying Tahsin Uzer's life from birth to his exile in Malta, where he wrote his memoir, provides the opportunity to better understand the factors that shaped the character of this historical figure, as depicted in his own words. Many variables influenced the man, from the family he was born into, the schools he attended, the education he received, the authors he read, his health and the political environment he inhabited. To understand Tahsin Bey, one must examine him as an individual, a late 19th century Ottoman intellectual, and a Young Turk civil administrator. If we examine Tahsin Bey's family background and early life as depicted in the first parts of his memoir, a few points stand out.

Tahsin Bey was born into a relatively wealthy family, and his father was both a farmer and a trader. He was assigned to provide supplies to the British, French, Turkish land and naval forces during the Crimean War. Tahsin Bey's father had many commercial ties in Anatolia, Istanbul and Thessaloniki and had two houses built one year after marrying Hatice Hanım in 1859. He also bought Gorgob farm in Istanbul for 9000 gold coins in 1864.²¹¹ Tahsin Bey describes the financial situation of his family as follows: he was born in a room facing the sea in the *selamlık* part of the house his father had built in Thessaloniki. He had such a financially privileged childhood that he could watch the hustle and bustle of people who did not even have access to water. Even the water fountain where he watched people quarrel was commissioned by his father in 1860 to alleviate a water shortage. The inscription on this fountain indicated that Tahsin Bey's father and grandfather were people of great importance in the "Aşkomi river, Ohrid and Radomir region".²¹² This

²¹¹Korkmaz. "Tahsin Uzer'in Yaşamı," 7-8.

²¹²"*Sahibü'l-hayrat ve'l-hasenat Prizren kazasının, Radomir nahiyesine merbut Serin karyesinden Hacı*

economic comfort remained a key part of Tahsin Bey's life for many years, until he got married and had children. Although he lost his father at a very early age, Tahsin Bey still had the economic resources to complete his education. He and his mother moved in with his brother-in-law when Tahsin's father passed away, but they had enough wealth to live on their own afterwards. In his memoir Tahsin Bey states that his mother was generous with money and, thanks to this, he either gave all the money he received as a child to the other children of the neighborhood or bought toys for them.²¹³ Tahsin Bey enjoyed this financial prosperity throughout the early years of his career. There was a slight increase in his salary when he was promoted from Pürsican to the directorate of the Ağustos township. The amount of his salary, which he stated had increased from 378 *kuruş* to 480 *kuruş*, was insignificant for Tahsin Bey because he was relying on his father's farm income and cash savings. For this reason, Tahsin Bey did not even go to receive the salary from the district manager himself, but instead sent "old trooper" Mahmut to receive the salary. Mahmut would tie each of their salaries inside a handkerchief and bring them to Tahsin Bey, who would randomly choose one of these pouches and give it to Mahmut.²¹⁴

In order to understand the socio-economic conditions that Tahsin Bey was born into on a larger scale, it is necessary to understand the city where he was born late 19th-century Thessaloniki. Cosmopolitan, wealthy and culturally diverse, Thessaloniki was one of the most important cities of the empire, especially within the Balkan territories, and had a Turkish, Jewish and Greek population. It was the second city after Istanbul to be granted a municipal council based on French model and equipped with powers to expropriate property for the public good.²¹⁵ According to some, Thessaloniki was the largest city of the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Izmir. Although there were those who stated that the population was 170,000, Kazım Nami Duru believes that the population of a city of this size must have been much higher.²¹⁶ The 1881-1883 census, conducted during Tahsin Bey's childhood, recorded 29,489 Muslims, 34,523 Jews and 36,985 Greek citizens living in the central district of Thessaloniki. There were also a smaller number of

İbrahim bin Kethüda" Based on this *kethüda* inscription, Tahsin Bey deduced that his grandfather had an important position in the aforementioned regions. See: Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 3.

²¹³In addition to his good economic standing, Tahsin Bey tried to establish good relations with others throughout his life, starting from childhood. See: *Ibid*, 5.

²¹⁴*Ibid*, 59.

²¹⁵Mark Mazower, *Salonica City of Ghosts* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 224.

²¹⁶Kazım Nami Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1957), 11.

Bulgarians, Protestants, Vlachs, Armenians and other nationalities living in the city. Kazım Nami Duru states, at the end of the 19th century, the majority of Thessaloniki's population consisted of Jews. Therefore, the most spoken language was Judeo-Spanish. Since French was taught in *Alliance Israelite Universelle*.

schools, the intelligentsia spoke French and published a French newspaper called the *Journal de Salonique*. Greeks and Bulgarians had gymnasiums. The Turks seemed to have no private schools. Therefore, the children went to the Military Middle School or Women's Middle School.²¹⁷ Since the last quarter of the 19th century, Thessaloniki increased its importance even more, especially in terms of culture and politics. Nevertheless, this statement of Kazım Nami Duru seems like a bit of an exaggeration when we look at the different censuses and estimates. According to Ritter's population estimates, the province of Thessaloniki in 1872 was estimated as 1.237.338 while the population of Baghdad in 1874 was estimated as 2.200.000.²¹⁸ The most serious population census in Thessaloniki was held in 1890, and the population of Thessaloniki was 98,938, according to this census. Based on this detailed census, the population of the Jews was 47,322, the Muslim Turks were 31,703, the Greeks were 15,032, and the population of other nations was 4,900.²¹⁹ when the Ottoman population in the provinces is examined, the official Ottoman statistics between the years 1885-1914 indicate that provinces such as Aydın and Trabzon were more populated than Thessaloniki.²²⁰ The position of the city's Muslim elite should not be underestimated either. When the city was first granted to have a municipality, the prosperous bourgeoisie, led by Muslims after Jews, found a partner in Muslim-led local government. The municipality attracted Muslim elite from their estates in the hinterland to the city itself and became a regulator of urban life. Also, it is not a correct assumption that Muslims did not take good part in education and publishing. Some of the Turkish Muslim Private Schools in Thessaloniki at the beginning of the 20th century were: Mekatib-i Hususiye-i İslamiyye, Feyziye Mektebi, Yedigâr Terakki Mektebi.²²¹ Muslims in the city also publish newspapers. Turan Akıncı determined that there were 64 periodicals published in Thessaloniki between 1869-1924 and 25 of them were in

²¹⁷Kazım Nami Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Hatıralarım*. (İstanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1957), 11-12.

²¹⁸Cem Behar, *The Population of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey* (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Matbaası, 1996), 38.

²¹⁹Turan Akıncı, *Selanik* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2017), 62.

²²⁰In order to see the demographic statistics in the late 19th- early 20th centuries in the Ottoman provinces including the provinces above-mentioned, see: Behar, *The Population of the Ottoman Empire*, 47-48.

²²¹Akıncı, *Selanik*, 105.

Turkish. He cites *Rumeli* and *Zaman* newspapers as examples of these publications.²²² The newspaper *Asr*, published in 1895, can be given as another example.²²³

To conclude; Thessaloniki was a multi-religious, multilingual and multicultural urban center where printing was carried out in Turkish, Greek, French, Bulgarian, Ladino-Sephardic Hebrew and Romanian languages in the 1890s. Over time, it had become an important port city and trade center, one of the nexuses where the Turks and the Western world interacted most intensely. Goods from countries such as England and France entered the market of the Ottoman Balkans at the Port of Thessaloniki. Products such as Serres cotton and Macedonian tobacco were also exported through this port.

Thessaloniki, as the headquarter of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), where the party's most important decisions were taken, played an important role in the Constitutional Revolution.²²⁴ The Young Turk Revolution which started out as an assertion of the values of cosmopolitan loyalty to the empire over the divisive power of nationalism, and its ideology of "Unity of the Elements" seemed attractive in a city like Thessaloniki where nationalism offered no sure future for either the Muslims or the Jews.²²⁵ There were two clubs named *Kristal* and *Yonyo* in the *Olympos* square in Thessaloniki. Especially the *Yonyo* was an important place where the Unionists gathered and discussed the period's politics. All kinds of beverages were sold in these clubs; but mostly Munich beer was consumed.²²⁶ Being a resident of Thessaloniki meant being involved in the intellectual, economic and political life that characterized the city. Being brought up in such an environment gave Tahsin Bey the opportunity to experience firsthand the different elements of Ottoman society and the balance between them. Through these experiences he developed an understanding of the region and its problems, enabling him to serve as a more effective administrator during his civil duties.²²⁷ As the center of

²²²Ibid, 105-106.

²²³Mazower, *Salonica*, 230.

²²⁴Korkmaz, "Tahsin Uzer'in Yaşamı," 7-8.

²²⁵Mazower, *Salonica*, 261.

²²⁶Tahsin Bey was also detained in 189, in Istanbul Beyoğlu while drinking beer in a German beer hall. It is noteworthy that in centers important for the organization of the CUP, such as Thessaloniki and Istanbul, Beer Houses are described in more than one source as social circles where Unionists gathered and exchanged ideas and documents. It could be indicated that these narratives correspond with the lifestyle and social practices associated with Unionists in different sources. Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 17-19, Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Hatıralarım*, 19.

²²⁷Korkmaz, "Tahsin Uzer'in Yaşamı," 7-8.

CUP activity, where the party made important decisions regarding the Macedonian Question and the future of the empire, Thessaloniki was a place of great importance for Tahsin Bey and many Young Turks, especially those who were also born, raised and educated in Rumelia. The city played a vital role in the proclamation of the second Constitutional Monarchy. The term *Kabe-i hürriyet* (Kaba of liberty), which was also mentioned several times in the memoir of İbrahim Temo, was used by the Unionists to refer to the city of Thessaloniki.²²⁸ In contrast, Istanbul, which symbolized the tyranny and domination of Yıldız Palace, was called *Kahpe Bizans* (Byzantium the fickle). After the revolution, there were those who bore a special enmity towards those who came from Thessaloniki, emphasizing the fact that Thessaloniki and those who grew up there had a considerable influence on the socio-political affairs of the empire.²²⁹

The death of Tahsin Bey's father when he was only six years old meant that the absence of a father figure would shape his childhood. Tahsin Bey mentions how his mother, Hatice Hanım, served as both a mother and a father to him and his siblings. For this reason, he frequently mentions his mother and her prayers, wishes and advice in many parts of his memoir. After his father passed away, Tahsin Bey and his mother moved to the house of his older sister's husband. However, because his mother's financial means were sufficient to allow her to live on her own, Tahsin Bey and Hatice Hanım eventually left his brother-in-law's house and continued to live together.

Hatice Hanım came from one of Thessaloniki's most prominent families, and both she and Tahsin Bey's father profoundly influenced the boy. Tahsin Bey describes how his parents influenced him as follows:

“My father was never interested in politics or government affairs, but my mother followed political events. My father did not like the civil service. However, as his child, I entered the government service with the township directorate at the age of 19 and until today, I have been busy with government duties, big and small. I didn't leave the government for a minute. It is rare to find such a difference in life, soul and vision between father and son. However, he had always been positive and peaceful, and I have always lived in sorrow, grief and struggle.”²³⁰

²²⁸İbrahim.Temo, *İttihat ve Terakki Anıları* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınevi, 1987), 173, 183.

²²⁹Mithat şükrü Bleda, *İmparatorluğun Çöküşü* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1979), 53.

²³⁰Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 6.

It could be inferred from the words above that Tahsin Bey's interest in politics came from his mother. This interest was sparked at a young age when he overheard conversations about national issues at the dinner meetings held at the house of Celal Bey, Hatice Hanım's older brother.²³¹ Hatice Hanım's death deeply affected Tahsin Bey. Although he does not give much information about his father's death, Tahsin reserved a separate place in his memoir for his last memory of his mother and her death. Hatice Hanım died of a stroke (possibly a seizure) while Tahsin Bey was the governor of Drama, not long after he had lost both of his children.²³²

Another notable element in the memoir is Tahsin Bey's psychological and physical state, especially in his youth. The health problems that emerged during his student years at *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* and continued in the early years of his administrative life are mentioned throughout the first parts of the memoir. The political environment of the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* and his intensified hatred towards Abdülhamid II, combined with his health problems, resulted in both physical and mental illness. Tahsin Bey mentions that his health problems started when he was a student at *Mülkiye* and grew worse, to the point that he believed he had tuberculosis. During this period, he gradually lost weight and was so sickly that his family began to worry. While he did not actually have tuberculosis. Tahsin Bey was diagnosed with hypochondria.²³³ Tahsin Bey's rare health problem is described in the following passage:

“The illness anxiety disorder is a chronic mental illness previously known as hypochondria. People with this disorder have a persistent fear that they have a serious or life-threatening illness despite few or no symptoms. People with illness anxiety disorder — also called hypochondria or hypochondriasis — have an unrealistic fear that they have a serious medical condition or fear that they're at high risk of becoming ill. They may misinterpret typical body functions as signs of illness. Even after medical tests show no problems, people with hypochondriasis are still preoccupied with the idea that they're seriously sick. Their persistent health worries can interfere with their relationships, careers and life.”²³⁴

As described above, during this period Tahsin Bey continually had body pains and,

²³¹Ibid, 8.

²³²Ibid, 3-4.

²³³Ibid, 11.

²³⁴*Cleveland Clinic*, “Illness Anxiety Disorder (Hypochondria): Symptoms & Treatments,” Sept, 2, 2022, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9886-illness-anxiety-disorder-hypochondria-hypochondriasis>.

despite taking care of his health, continued to lose weight and feared he had developed tuberculosis. Tahsin Bey describes the desperate situation he was in:

“I just decided to visit the doctor for consolation, because I was sure that I could not escape from tuberculosis. One day I requested that doctor Fevzi Paşa explain the situation clearly. After a long explanation, he assured me that I was healthy. However, these words did not assuage my suspicions. I visited my cousin doctor Şevket, he repeated the same things, but it did not change my opinion .”²³⁵

Tahsin Bey's hypochondria worsened after he joined the Committee. The unfavorable political conditions of the Empire and his hatred towards Abdülhamid II increased his anxiety, so much so that he considered giving up on life. He even volunteered for the dangerous mission of assassinating the Minister of the Navy, Hacı Hasan Paşa. His mood grew even worse before he was arrested and deported to Pürsican in 1897. He describes himself as a mentally and physically sick man who constantly cried while listening to songs and worried about political issues. 1897 was an important year when the CUP intensified its activities. Especially in July and August of 1897, hundreds of letters, newspapers, pamphlets, and leaflets were sent weekly to the branch that only Tahsin Bey was involved in. At the same time the Hamidian regime was making many arrests every day. Tahsin Bey, in his statement more clearly showed his attitude towards the Abdülhamid regime, describes the atmosphere of that day as follows: Everyday thousands of "innocent and oppressed patriots" were arrested and tortured by Abdülhamid II's spies in cooperation with the governors of Beyoğlu and Üsküdar, and the Beşiktaş guard.²³⁶ The political environment he was in must have worsened Tahsin Bey's condition. This illness continued during his duty in Pürsican, but after he was appointed to the Çiğ sub-district, he finally overcame it and became physically stronger.²³⁷ However, Tahsin Bey does not emphasize his pessimism and psychical weakness, apart from his hypochondria. Instead, Tahsin Bey projects a positive image of himself from his childhood years to his last place of duty. For example, when he was a child, he was loved and admired by his mother's friends, who often asked him to sing because he had a beautiful voice. Throughout his education, he attracted attention either with his student performance or leadership qualities that drew people to him. He continued to exhibit these leadership qualities throughout his

²³⁵Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 12.

²³⁶Ibid, 17.

²³⁷Ibid, 15-16.

career. The locals loved him in every town and township he worked in, and his successes as a governor, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, underline his capability.

He did good work in every town and township he was appointed to, and became a young, dynamic, principled and fair manager. At the age of 19, he was appointed to the directorate of a township and at the age of 23, he became district governor in a difficult region like Razlık, where the Bulgarian guerillas were most active. It is not an unfounded claim that Tahsin Bey was a successful administrator in the places where he worked. As stated in the previous chapter, the reflections of some events mentioned in the memoir could be seen in the archival documents. These documents confirm the reconstruction activities that Tahsin Bey mentions in his memoir, such as the school, military and government buildings that he had built with the support of the locals. In some documents cited in the previous chapter, it is seen that he was acknowledged by the state several times both for his fight against guerillas and for his public works. Considering these documents, it can be thought that Tahsin Bey exhibited a good example of administration in the places he served in Macedonia.

The thing to note here is not whether Tahsin Bey drew a realistic self-portrait or not. It is his emphasis on how much he was approved, loved, and admired by people, which he often expresses at different stages of his life. It is difficult to say whether this situation has anything to do with his earlier psychological state or whether it is simply his nature.²³⁸ Whether due to his character or in line with a conscious agenda, Tahsin Bey draws a positive image both as an individual and as an administrator. The incidents that seem like flaws in the narrative also serve this image of Tahsin Bey. For example, the incident he experienced in Yörükler village in Pürşiçan may seem like a negative situation at first glance. The Yörüks, who could not pay their taxes, were forced to climb trees and were not allowed down until they paid their taxes. Tahsin Bey tells that he beat the officer who collected from the villagers in this way: "despite his(Tahsin Bey) young age, he showed courage" and beat him to death. This incident caused Tahsin Bey to contradict with

²³⁸ According to Freud, "hypochondriacal anxiety emanates from a variation of narcissism. Although the definition of narcissism has changed a lot, Rosenfeld (1964) reviews the psychoanalytic literature on hypochondria and offers his own, new theory in which he starts from Freud's observation that the hypochondriac is fixated in the narcissistic phase. Rosenfeld suggests that infantile confusional states, based on a failure of normal splitting – a phenomenon of the paranoid – schizoid position – are at the heart of hypochondria. He sees his new theory as a further exploration of the meaning of Freud's assertion that hypochondria is a narcissistic illness, thus confirming the value of and extending Freud's observations in the narcissism paper." See: Philip Crockett, "Freud's 'On Narcissism: An Introduction.'" *Journal of Child Psychotherapy* 32, no. 1 (2006): 4–20.

the governorship and face the danger of being dismissed. However, Tahsin Bey did not give up on justice, standing with the righteous and the oppressed villagers, so the region's people loved him very much.²³⁹ Similarly, he mentions an investigation opened against him while he was the district governor of Razlık. However, this investigation was opened because Bulgarian women complained about him. Tahsin Bey was actively fighting against guerillas and confiscating weapons. As a result of this investigation, he was offered a reward instead of punishment.²⁴⁰

However, there were cases that Tahsin Bey did not mention in his memoir. While he was the Director of Ağustos Township, he was sued for insulting Zülfikar Bey, one of the people of Ağustos township. The Ministry of the Interior sent a document requesting Karaferiye District Governorate to investigate the case and send notification to Razlık governor Tahsin Bey. The document does not reveal the content or outcome of the case. However, such a lawsuit may mean that Tahsin Bey may have acted selectively while creating his narrative not to damage his image.²⁴¹

5.2 Understanding Tahsin Bey's Ideological Development: Being a Young Turk and Intellectual in the Hamidian Era

Two important factors shaped Tahsin Bey's intellectual life and ideological development: his education at the School for Civil Service and his participation in the CUP. Due to his involvement in both *Mülkiye Mektebi* and CUP, the curriculum he received, the names he read and the publications that influenced the students of *Mülkiye* had a great impact on Tahsin Bey's frame of mind. According to his memoir, Tahsin Bey, who was a student in the *Mülkiye İdadisi* on September 9, 1889, graduated in 1897.²⁴² In order to understand how Tahsin Bey's intellectual life and political thought were shaped during this period, it is necessary to take a look at the education system of the period, especially the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* and Young Turks' intellectual lives.

²³⁹Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 34-35.

²⁴⁰Ibid, 128-129.

²⁴¹Mustafa Şahin, who came across the same document, has a similar conclusion." *Tahsin Bey never mentions this subject in his memoir. We think there are two reasons for this. Making it a principle not to talk about the investigations that did not result in a conviction, the second is that he does not talk about bad events. He always prefers to include praiseworthy and proud events about himself.*" See: Şahin, "Tahsin Uzer'in Mülki İdareciliği," 45.

²⁴²Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 6-8.

While the history of the modernization of education in the Ottoman Empire goes back to 1839, the spread of state education in the periphery became possible only after the second half of the 19th century.²⁴³ During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, great importance was given to schools. In the late 1870s, with Said Paşa, the schools' academic quality was strengthened. As one of the most influential names at the time, (Mizancı) Murad Bey should be counted. The General World History course given by Murat Bey at the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* directly touched on political issues. This course had impact on the students of *Mülkiye* and played a significant role in raising young people with innovative and libertarian ideas, thanks to a history course that was very different from the superstitions and traditions the students were accustomed to hearing in primary school or at home.²⁴⁴ In general, history education in Hamidian schools had been given since the 1880s in a way that specializes in both provinces and subjects.²⁴⁵

Tahsin Bey took courses at the *Mülkiye İdadisi* included World History, World Geography, French, mathematics, physics, Ottoman History, Finance, and commercial law.²⁴⁶ Therefore, is not surprising that Tahsin Bey frequently included information about political history in his memoirs, such as the history of ancient Macedonia and more importantly, emphasized the importance of knowing about regional, imperial and world history. General History knowledge and awareness, especially provided to the students by the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye*; influenced not only Tahsin Bey, but also the intellectual life of many other Young Turks who were raised in this period. Murad Bey's influence on the *Mülkiye* students and the Young Turks secretly organized within Hamidian schools was not limited to history lessons. Distribution of Mizan magazine, published by Murad Bey, reached a very high level in CUP organizations, especially after 1895.²⁴⁷ Tahsin Bey, who was in charge of receiving and distributing documents such as magazines, leaflets and newspapers in the German beer hall in Beyoğlu in 1897, said that he cried after reading the Mizan newspaper, which gives an idea about the prevalence of Mizan among the Young

²⁴³S.Akşin Somel, *Osmanlı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi (1839-1908)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2010), 93.

²⁴⁴Serif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin siyasî fikirleri 1895-1908*. (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1964), 43, 63.

²⁴⁵Somel, *Osmanlı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi*, 245.

²⁴⁶Korkmaz. "Tahsin Uzer'in Yaşamı,"11.

²⁴⁷Şükrü Hanioglu,. *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1986), 201.

Turks and its influence on dissident students.²⁴⁸ Mizancı Murad's effects on Tahsin Bey were not limited to this. The "just ruler" ideal that Mizancı Murad followed later²⁴⁹ seems to be a situation that Tahsin Bey took as an example for his own administration. He emphasizes that he strove to be a fair manager at every opportunity. In addition, the content Murad Bey's novel "Turfa or Turfanda?" seems to be parallel to Tahsin Bey's own exile narrative in 1897 whereby the novel character named Mansur Bey did suffer because of his chastity and idealism, and that he was exiled to Syria because of his criticism of the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman War.²⁵⁰

The reforms made during the period of Grand Vizier Said Paşa were interrupted to a great extent, especially after the dismissal of Pasha in 1885. During this period, courses such as French and philosophy were reduced and moral courses were increased.²⁵¹ With the increase in the activities of armed nationalist organizations in the 1890s, absolutist policies were increased, and this absolutist attitude was also reflected in the education curriculum. However, these changes in the curriculum implemented by the Abdülhamid II regime should not be considered anti-modernization but a necessity brought by the current situation. Already in this period, the obligation to train civil servants, one of the most important duties of schools, resulted in the dominance of modernist tendencies despite the changes in the curriculum.²⁵²

The impact of the Hamidian period on the civil servants trained by the Hamidian schools is complex. Thanks to the institutional education brought by the objective and uniform examination system, which is applied at certain intervals according to age and education level, an education in which success and merit can be measured objectively has created strong thoughts on the objectivity of knowledge in the horizons of children who grow up from this system. While individuals who grew up in this system tended to be positivists and modernizers in general, they also tended to have authoritarian thoughts. In this sense, contrary to Ramsour's generalization,²⁵³

²⁴⁸Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 18.

²⁴⁹According to Şerif Mardin, this ideal is a characteristic reaction of Islamic communities participating in the modernization movement in the first phase of westernization. See: Mardin, *Jön Türklerin siyasi fikirleri*, 67.

²⁵⁰Ibid, 67

²⁵¹Ibid, 44.

²⁵²Somel, *Osmanlı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi*, 212.

²⁵³Ramsour always refers to the cadres that will form the backbone of the Young Turk movement as "Turkish liberals". See: Ernest Edmondson Ramsour, *Genç Türkler ve İttihat Terakki*, (İstanbul: Etkin Yayınları,

It is difficult to see Hamidian education created liberal and democrats.²⁵⁴ The end of Abdülhamid's education could be a synthesis of authoritarian, bureaucratic ideology and progressive worldview. Most of the individuals who grew up in this system became obsessed with authority, progress and order. Compared to the ad hoc administration of *idare-i maslahat* (Tahsin Bey uses this word as an insult) that Abdülhamid II applied to different ethnic elements and conditions, the Unionists were more concerned about putting the empire into a rational and standard legal order.²⁵⁵ One of the situations that Tahsin Bey was most dissatisfied with while he was the district governor in Razlık was the Governor Rüknettın Bey and his administrative attitude. Almost every day, despite the *komitadjs* and the loss of soldiers, with his insensitive attitude, Governor Rüknettın Bey annoys Tahsin Bey. Tahsin Bey refers to him as "Kambur Rüknettın Bey" and criticizes his administration to be "soulless and *idare-i maslahatçı*".²⁵⁶

5.2.1 Tahsin Bey's Initiating into the CUP and the Hatred of Abdülhamid II

Tahsin Bey devoted the second part of his memoir to how he got involved in the CUP and his hatred towards Abdülhamid II. "During the time Tahsin Bey spent at the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye*, besides acquiring an academic background, he met with different ideas. In this period, Tahsin Bey, who got ideas about the homeland, developed thoughts against the oppressive elements under the rule of Abdülhamid II, and acted within the CUP in the context of his concerns about the homeland and his hatred for the oppressive government. Moreover, despite coming from a relatively wealthy family, being an orphan, his illness and political situation show that he had a difficult adolescence. Nevertheless, Tahsin Bey developed a character to struggle with difficulties in this period, and the experiences and thoughts he gained during this period affected his attitude in his administrative life, especially his duties in Macedonia."²⁵⁷

Tahsin Bey states that the CUP was restructured and organized in Istanbul when

2008).

²⁵⁴Somel, *Osmanlı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi*, 340.

²⁵⁵Ibid, 341-342.

²⁵⁶Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 126.

²⁵⁷Korkmaz, "Tahsin Uzer'in Yaşamı," 16.

he was in the 3rd year of the *Mülkiye İdadisi*. At that time, Military Medical School was the revolutionary center of the CUP. It was Uzun Emin Bey from Thessaloniki, who was a medical student, who suggested that Tahsin Bey join the CUP. Tahsin Bey, who took an oath and joined the CUP with the number 129, tells that he was given the *Mizan*, *Meşrutiyet* and *Kanuni Esasi* newspapers. After joining the CUP, he includes some of his trusted friends in the CUP and establishes the "*Mekteb-i Mülkiye* Branch". Tahsin Bey, who started to work more effectively in the CUP with the branch he founded, made his mother a member of the society. Meanwhile, Tahsin Bey, who was physically ill, states that his hatred towards Abdülhamid II intensified every day. With the effect of his deteriorating health, he decides to become a fedai in 1892. Tahsin Bey states that this incident was an indication of the degree of enmity and hatred towards "Kızıl Sultan Abdülhamid".²⁵⁸ Tahsin Bey's feelings and thoughts against Abdülhamid II and his administration are frequently seen in the following years. He rebelled against Abdülhamid and his administration and continued the struggle by sacrificing his life and youth to overthrow that administration. He considered the Abdülhamid regime as a weak administration that could not even protect the lives of its people.²⁵⁹ Tahsin Bey, who exhibited a typical Unionist profile with his hatred of Abdülhamid, has other thoughts and themes that are observed to have an impact on both his education in *Mülkiye* and the Unionists he was a part of. One of them is the emphasis on the "salvation of the homeland". Authors such as Namık Kemal were began to be read again among the military medical students, and the theme of patriotism gained momentum with the influence of the military profession. The main theme of the Young Turk magazines published in Europe was that the homeland was going to perish and finding a solution to this problem was more important than anything else. In the articles Mizancı Murad Bey wrote to *Meşveret*, it is seen that since the autumn of 1896, he focused on the First Constitutional Monarchy constitution and the theme of saving the homeland.²⁶⁰ In a declaration published in *Mizan* in 1896, it was emphasized that the sole purpose of the CUP was to save the homeland.²⁶¹ Şükrü Hanioglu

²⁵⁸ Akşin Somel discusses the effects of the increasing absolutist policies in the 1890s, especially around 1892, on the curriculum. Increasing CUP activities in 1897 and arrests against dissidents were discussed before. In this context, it is not surprising to see the hatred of Abdülhamid and the years 1892 and 1897 as turning points in his relations with the CUP in the memoirs of Tahsin Bey, a student of the *Mülkiye* See: Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 10-12.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 44, 50.

²⁶⁰ Mardin, *Jön Türklerin siyasî fikirleri*, 51-52, 81.

²⁶¹ "Osmanlılar!
İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti bir cemiyet-i fesadiye değildir. Bil'akis vatanın selamet ve saadeti uğrunda kendi selamet-i zatiyelerini bile feda etmiş erbab-ı gayret ve hamiyetden mürekkebirdir. Emeli büyüktür, necibdir. ...
...Maksadımız selâmet-i devlet ve hilâfetdir. Bunu anlamamış kimse kalmamıştır. Alemin matbuatı şöyle dursun, mecalis-i resmîyede, kürsi-i hitabetlerde yahud resmi notalarda bile haysiyetşikenâne suretde İslâmiyet ve Osmanlılık nâm ü şânına tecavüz ediyorlar.

states that the main motivation of the Young Turks in bringing the constitutional government was not libertarian ideas, but the effort to save the state by creating an upper identity with constitutional guarantees.²⁶² İbrahim Temo, one of the founders of the CUP, who went to the Military Medical School, said to Ishak Sükuti that "the beloved homeland will perish with its current state and administration style, so it is necessary to take action".²⁶³ Kazım Nami Duru also draws attention to the emphasis on patriotism in the ideas spread especially among military school students. He narrates that the words of the crowds at the meetings and celebrations during the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, song composed for Namık Kemal and the poem of Namık Kemal had a great emphasis on the theme of salvation of the motherland.²⁶⁴ Tahsin Bey, like his contemporaries, was heavily influenced by the theme of patriotism and the state's concern for salvation, and he frequently expressed this effect. In fact, he states that at the age of 19, his only concern is the love of the country, and the love of the country drove him crazy. He states that one of the reasons for his success in his civil service life is the love of the country, working for the benefit of the nation and the state, and strengthening the bond between the nation and the state.²⁶⁵

5.2.2 Positivism and Social Darwinism

Şükrü Hanioglu says about the Young Turks, "The Young Turks became very interested in theories such as positivism that do not care much about the role of the individual in society, but on the other hand, they showed an increasing interest in the ideas that the individual should intervene more in the development of the society."²⁶⁶ Thoughts such as biological materialism, positivism, and social Darwinism, who entered the Military Medical School without facing much pressure, were passed on to new students.²⁶⁷ Ahmet Rıza, one of the representatives of positivism and social Darwinism, was replacing dogmas with science. Ahmet Rıza, whom Auguste

....Erbâb-ı basireti artık gafletten vaz geçmeğe halisâne da've etmekle beraber her hâl ü kârda iltizam etdiğimiz maksadın kudsiyetine binaen tevfikat-ı samedaniyyeye istinâd ve tevekkül ile hareket edeceğiz. *Heyet-i Teftiş ve İcra* (*Mizan*, no 1, Kanun-i evvel 1896-9 Receb 1314, s.23) See: Hanioglu, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, 448.

²⁶²Ibid, 69-72.

²⁶³Temo, *İttihat ve Terakki Anıları*, 13.

²⁶⁴Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Hatıralarım*,. 29-32.

²⁶⁵Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 15, 56.

²⁶⁶Hanioglu, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, 53.

²⁶⁷Ibid, 51.

Comte influenced, argued that every substance in the world is interconnected by a law of nature. Understanding these objective laws of nature and their effects on societies was imperative.²⁶⁸ The effect of these thoughts of Ahmet Rıza on the Young Turks can be seen in Tahsin Bey's memoirs. Tahsin Bey, whose health improved when he became the director of the Çiğ sub-district, explained his actions that contradicted his duty as the director, as his youth. He states that he cannot become an adult without first being a child, despite his patriotism and sense of duty. "Everyone, whether he is a director or a sultan, is obliged to be subject to the laws of nature and to pass the stages of human life." He emphasizes the immutable objectivity of the laws of nature.²⁶⁹ Apart from that, Tahsin Bey's first impressions were bad when he started to be the director of Çiğ township. He complains that people believe in dogmas, ignorance and primitivity.²⁷⁰ Several times he complains about the situation and decides to escape to Europe where he could find a more suitable lifestyle for himself. One could infer from his words that he was arrogant but looking at memoirs written by other intellectuals in more or less same period, it could be seen that Tahsin Bey's account is not unique. Ebubekir Hazım Tepeyran in his memoir complains about the same situation. As an intellectual Tepeyran draws a quite similar picture with his education, having similiar ideas about the censorship implied by the Hamidian regime and ignorance of people. When he was in Kastamonu, Tepeyran wants to develop agriculture and introduce the locals with potato and opium poppy harvest techniques as they bring more profit than grains. Yet, he faces with the ignorance and bigotry of the locals. Although they provide all the means and seeds for cultivation, locals do not incline for this novelty. Moreover, some of the peasants who used the seeds ask for money as they consider this as a duty rather than something good for their own interests. Tepeyran's attitude proves how astonished and terrified he was against what he witnessed in locals. He explains the situation as "pure ignorance of the shameless peasants. In addition, the fear and superstitions displayed by the villagers, even in an event that could be objectively explained by the laws of nature, such as the lunar eclipse, astonished Tepeyran."²⁷¹ Apart from these, Tahsin Bey's attitude displayed in several parts of his memoir can set an example for social Darwinism. For example, he expresses his anger towards the Bulgarian guerillas and about the bulgarian peasants taking up arms in the region due to the escalating terrorist incidents while he was the Razlık

²⁶⁸Mardin, *Jön Türklerin siyasi fikirleri*, 130-135.

²⁶⁹Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 45.

²⁷⁰"Eski köye yeni âdet olmaz. . . Bu iptidai, terbiyeden yoksun insanlarla nasıl çalışacağım? Hayır yapamam. Avrupa'ya kaçmaya karar verdim." See: Ibid, 29-38.

²⁷¹Ebubekir Hazım Tepeyran, *Canlı Tarihler 1, Ebubekir Hazım Tepeyran1-2*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1944), 52-54.

District Governor.

“[...] However, after the painful scenes I saw, I had an endless fire of hatred and revenge against the Bulgarians[...] In many parts of the district, the Turks were being killed one by one. I was getting nervous in the face of these constant murders, and the hatred inside me was increasing. I had to start by taking all risks and possibilities into account. I was determined to take action by assuming the conscientious and administrative responsibility.”²⁷²

In the part where he describes the Florina district governorship, he talks about the "Bulgarian Hafi Village Organization". According to Tahsin Bey, this organization, which played a major role in the loss of Macedonia, was getting stronger. Tahsin Bey argued that there were only two remedies that could hinder the work of this organization: First, the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy as soon as possible, the second; burning a Bulgarian village in retaliation for every village burned and murdered by Bulgarians, and the complete extermination of its people.²⁷³ Especially the second solution proposal can be given as a good example of the combination of the conditions and traumas of the period with social Darwinist thoughts. The idea of retaliating and destroying a village en masse when circumstances develop in this direction is a good example of the harsh reality in which the fittest survive. In all examples, it is possible to see the traces of both Tahsin Bey's and Tepeyran's education and the effective currents of thought of the period.

5.2.3 Traces of Encyclopedism and Didactic Style

Ahmet Mithat is one of the main representatives of encyclopedism, which started to be seen in the Ottoman intellectuals during the late Tanzimat and Hamidian periods. While encyclopedism had no political concern, Young Ottomans like Namık Kemal politicized the concept of westernization. The Young Turks also treated westernization as a political issue. Nevertheless, some figures such as Abdullah Cevdet continued to represent encyclopedism as of the late 19th century.²⁷⁴ However, some encyclopedists, who focused only on science and culture without making political criticisms and completely replaces religion with science, criticized Abdullah Cevdet's compromising attitude towards those with religious sensitivities. Therefore, it can-

²⁷²Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 126-127.

²⁷³Ibid, 200.

²⁷⁴Z.Avşar, E.Kaya,S.Onur, *Toplumsal ve Siyasal Bir Proje: Ansiklopedi ve Ansiklopedizm*, s231.

not be said that the Young Turk intellectuals fully embraced encyclopedism due to its apolitical and anti-religious attitudes. However, as in Şinasi, for example, it is not impossible to see an attitude somewhat similar to encyclopedists in order to educate and inform the public. Although there is a hostile attitude towards corrupt clergy in Tahsin Bey's memoir, there is no negative attitude towards religion itself. While Tahsin Bey appreciates European culture, he strongly opposes European intervention in Ottoman affairs. Still, the memoir, which has an extremely political and critical style, has a didactic style from time to time. Considering the geographical structures, demographic information of the regions or the explanations of the concepts from time to time, the effect of the encyclopedist movement can be partially mentioned in this memoir.

5.3 The Malta Puzzle: Tahsin Bey's Malta Exile and its Impact on his Memoir

The published memoir ends with Tahsin Bey's description of his time as deputy governor of Bursa, which takes up a little bit more than a page. At the end of his service in Bursa, he was appointed to Van province as governor.

In the third chapter of the memoir, the publisher, his son Celalettin Uzer, leaves a note:

"I will present the readers memoirs of Tahsin Bey's time in the governorships of Van, Erzurum, Syria and İzmir, his service as the İzmir Deputy in the Last Chamber of Deputies of the Empire, and to his exile to the island of Malta: I will publish and present the second part of the memoir which he wrote in Malta in the book. However, in this book, I will only briefly touch upon these issues." ²⁷⁵

One of the most controversial parts of this memoir, which is mostly related to the Macedonian Question, is actually the issue of Tahsin Bey's exile to Malta. First, Tahsin Bey states that he wrote his memoir while in exile. The conditions in which the work was written are of particular importance. Moreover, some left Malta, where many key political figures were exiled, at different times, in different ways. The time Tahsin Bey spent as governor of Van, Erzurum and Syria, which

²⁷⁵Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 335.

Celalettin Uzer claimed were to be found in the unpublished second part of the memoir, could have given the reader more detail about the reasons behind Tahsin Uzer's exile in Malta. Moreover, the circumstances in which he was in exile in Malta could have directly explained the circumstances in which the memoir was written.

Before delving further, let us look at the nature of the late Ottoman memoirs in general. Ali Birinci classifies the memoirs during the late Ottoman Empire, which became widespread since the 1870s and gained momentum after 1908 revolution, according to different criteria. One of them is that the memoir is characterized by purpose of the author.²⁷⁶ These memoirs could be categorized as:

- 1- Sultan Abdülhamid II's statesmen who wrote their memoirs such as Kamil Paşa, Said Paşa, Serasker Rıza Paşa. Especially the memoirs of Kamil and Said Paşa wrote refutations to each other's memoirs.²⁷⁷
- 2- Memoirs written to express their personal effort and honorable role in the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy such as Mehmet Rauf from Leskovik (Kırçak), İbrahim Temo, Kazım Nami Duru, Mithat Şükrü Bleda.
- 3- There are also examples of memoirs that describe the sufferings after the great wars, or that they were written to express their service in the war and that they did not have any faults due to their defeats. There are numerous civil servants, statesmen and military officers who wrote their memoirs after the First World War and the War of Independence. Some of them are Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) Paşa, İsmet (İnönü) Paşa, Kazım Karabekir Paşa, Fahrettin Altay Paşa.

Banditry issue in Macedonia constitutes a good part of Tahsin Uzer's memoir. Yet, Celalettin Uzer indicates that there is an unpublished volume of the memoir in which a detailed narrative on Tahsin Bey's governorship during the First World War and the Malta Exile are provided. Besides, Tahsin Bey wrote his memoir when he was exiled to Malta as a political prisoner due to the Armenian genocide;

²⁷⁶In particular, the statesmen of the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II wrote their memoirs, some in haste and some later, in order to keep themselves out of their old sins and to show that they were not responsible.

²⁷⁷One of the memoirs counted in the first made by Ali Birinci was written by Rıza Paşa, who served as the serasker of Abdülhamid II for 17 years. Rıza Paşa was still in the position of seraskerlik during the years when Tahsin Bey was governor in Macedonia, but he was dismissed and exiled by Abdülhamid II. Serasker Mehmed Rıza Paşa also displays a similar motivation in the preface of his memoir. According to his statement in the preface, he was dismissed on 21 July 1908 (Rumi 8 July 1324) because he wanted the "Supreme Law" to be implemented before the revolution. Since the system of the first constitutional monarchy was not completely established yet, some attacks took place against Rıza Paşa in the public opinion, but Rıza Paşa, thought that the accusations made without legal basis, did not fit into either the constitutional administration or justice, he preferred not to respond at a time when the public had not calmed down yet. However, upon the wishes of his children, who were negatively affected by the thoughts and accusations against him, he felt the need to write and publish the "history of his life" "*tarihçe-i hayatım*" in order to respond to the accusations against him. See: Rıza Paşa, *Hülasa-i Hatırat*, 1325.

Tahsin Bey's memoirs can be considered both in the second category, but mostly in the third category.

Another classification Ali Birinci does is that that memoirs can be classified according to their authors' profession. According to the classification made by Ali Binici, Tahsin Bey can be considered both in the category of administrators and those in prison or exile.²⁷⁸

Both the reason why Tahsin Bey was sent to Malta and his departure from Malta are quite controversial. It is known that Tahsin Bey was exiled to Malta due to the accusations of British authorities regarding the deportation of Armenians while he was the governor of Erzurum.²⁷⁹

In his memoir's first and only volume, Tahsin Bey does not say much about his days in exile. He is only self-critical about his hesitation to side with Mustafa Kemal from the start, realizing too late that he had made a mistake. He also briefly describes his return. According to the memoir, after two years of exile, he returned to Turkey with the other prisoners thanks to the delegation sent by Mustafa Kemal to London. However, Rıdvan Akın's article on the trial of the CUP government before the military court and the Malta exiles provides a different story. Those delegates of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies arrested after the occupation of Istanbul were taken to Malta by ship on March 18, 1921. The exiles were newly elected deputies, including Faik Bey (Baltakkıran), Rauf Bey (Orbay), Mehmet Şerefettin (Aykut), Kara Vasıf, Numan Usta, Ali Çetinkaya, Mersinli Cemal Paşa, Tahsin Bey (Uzer) and Celal Nuri Bey (İleri).²⁸⁰ According to Akın, Tahsin Bey was among the 17 exiles that escaped from Malta during the time of the Battle of Sakarya. A member of Karakol Society²⁸¹ Kara Kemal Bey planned the escape. Kara Kemal's friends in Italy arranged a cargo ship, the exiles made it to Rome and a Celaleddin Arif, a delegate from Ankara, provided them with passports. Most of the

²⁷⁸ Ali Birinci, "Hatırat Türündeki Kaynakların Tarihi Araştırmalardaki Yeri ve Değeri", 611-614.

²⁷⁹ Bilal Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri* (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınları, 1985), 171.

²⁸⁰ Rıdvan Akın, "İttihat ve Terakki Hükümetleri'nin Divan-ı Harb-i Örfi'de Yargılanması ve Malta Sürgünleri (1918-1921)," *Galatasaray Üniversitesi Hukuk Dergisi*, no. 1 (2014): 90.

²⁸¹ In late 1918, a new intelligence organization was formed under the name of Karako Cemiyeti, or the Sentinel Association, and proceeded to accomplish important missions during the Turkish War of Independence such as delivering weapons to armed groups fighting the occupation forces in the Anatolian heartland and providing supplies and equipment to the National Forces. The Sentinel Association was dissolved upon the occupation of Istanbul on 16 March 1920, when all of its senior members including Kara Kemal were arrested. See : National Intelligence Organization, "History of the MIT," Sept. 10, 2022, <https://www.mit.gov.tr/english/tarihce.html>.

exiles went to Germany and some of them later went to Ankara. This escape took place in September 1921, which coincides with the time period indicated by Tahsin Bey, though the details contradict with what he wrote in his memoir. According to the memoir, instead of the “Bekir Sami” delegation sent to London, Celaleddin Arif in Rome helped them to return to their country, thanks to the diplomatic efforts of Mustafa Kemal. This contradiction and lack of details on the Malta exile raise questions concerning the credibility of Tahsin Bey’s account. If the original manuscript written by Tahsin Bey during his Malta exile were to be discovered, these questions could be answered. The accounts of some of the other exiles suggest that Tahsin Bey might have lived under better conditions in Malta than he had during wartime. In a letter he wrote from Lemnos in 1919, Ziya Gökalp shared his first impressions of Malta:

“They gave cots and bedding here. There is a person for the laundry. There is a bath. We can also swim in the sea. They provide for our every need. We do not have financial problems. We use the money to buy what we need. We discuss science, literature and philosophy. We live a university life here. Herds of sheep graze in front of us. We listen to the birds of the field. In short, we live within the framework of beautiful nature [...] In short, this building is no different from European hotels.”
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However, despite Ziya Gökalp’s description, other sources state that not all exiles sent to Malta were held under the same conditions. Mithat Şükrü Bleda describes the harsher side of the Malta exile in detail, noting that the occupation forces made many arrests after Istanbul was occupied.²⁸³ He states that many of the detainees were innocent and could not be executed, so they were exiled to Malta. The British authorities did not treat the exiles very well. According to Bleda’s memoir, the exiles spent their trip to Malta in uncertainty, fearing execution. Meeting with people they knew after arriving on the island had a positive effect on the mood of the exiles. Tahsin Bey is among the people Mithat Şükrü Bleda mentions having met with in Malta. Bleda’s statements are therefore valuable in providing qualifying information about Tahsin Bey’s experiences. It should also be noted that those who came before him were subjected to ill-treatment, insults and psychological violence when they first arrived on the island.

²⁸² Akın, *Malta Sürgünleri*, 59-120, 102.

²⁸³ Mithat Şükrü Bleda (1874-1956), CUP’s former secretary-general, was also born in Thessaloniki and was a Malta exile.

Although the British authorities did not want to release the Malta exiles, who included many important administrators who were likely to return to Anatolia and organize the War of Independence, some were released thanks to negotiations with the Ankara government. However, those who were accused of involvement in the Armenian deportation were exempted from this exchange. After some time on the island, terrible rumors arose about the exiles whose names were associated with the deportation: “We knew that one day we would get out of this hell. But the others... No one could say anything about their fate. The number of those involved in the deportation of Armenians was 16... We decided to help them escape from the island, no one would know about it except for these 16 people.”

As planned, these 16 exiles found local collaborators and made a deal in exchange for money, managing to escape from Malta before the British authorities noticed. The fugitives first hid in Italy for a while.²⁸⁴

The Ankara government wanted some administrators among the Malta exiles to be smuggled into Anatolia to help organize the Turkish National Movement. An intelligence officer named Basri, one of the former Unionists, was appointed to the task and helped organize the escape in collaboration with Kara Kemal.²⁸⁵ On September 6, 1921, the Italian ship Tricotti received permission to sail from Malta to Naples. The Malta exiles, who were to escape on the same day, left the camp in three groups and got on the ship. Tahsin Bey was in the third group. They arrived in Naples on September 8, and in Rome on September 9, 1921, where they were issued passports with the help of the Ankara government.²⁸⁶

Mustafa Şahin, based on the memoirs of Tahsin Bey and the statements of his daughter-in-law, Sırma Hanım, states that Tahsin Bey returned from Malta thanks to the diplomatic initiatives of Bekir Sami Bey’s delegation, traveling first to İnebolu and then to Anatolia via the Berlin-Odessa route. However, Bilal Şimşir, who Mustafa Şahin also refers to, provides extensive information about the Malta exiles and states that Bekir Sami Bey’s delegation could not free all of the exiles on the prisoner exchange list, despite the wishes of the government in Ankara. Since some people in Bekir Sami Bey’s delegation did not share the same views as

²⁸⁴Bleda, *İmparatorluğun Çöküşü*, 126-142.

²⁸⁵Kara Kemal: A prominent Unionist, former Ottoman minister. (1868-1926)

²⁸⁶Arif Oruç, *Kara Kemal’in Son Günleri* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2021), 47-51.

the Ankara government, in the negotiations with the British on March 11, 1921, they accepted that some prisoners be exempted from the exchange list. Bekir Sami Bey stated that 27 exiles were political criminals and should be handed over to the Turkish government. British authorities indicated that they could free 17 of the 27 exiles but held that there were some they would not free under any condition. Tahsin Bey, given the prisoner number 2774, was among them. The official agreement was signed on March 16, 1921. A total of 16 people were not included in this agreement. According to the memoir of Ali İhsan (Sabis), cited by Bilal Şimşir, all of these 16 were former Unionists that fled the island on the above-mentioned Italian cargo ship, Tahsin Bey being among them.²⁸⁷ Tahsin Bey must have stayed in Italy for a while, as there is a document reporting that he went to Anatolia on February 26, 1922.²⁸⁸ Additionally, when Tahsin Bey passed away in 1939, in an obituary published in İkdam newspaper stated that “He was exiled to Malta with other patriots for protesting the occupation of Istanbul by the enemy, fled from there and was included in the First Grand National Assembly as a İzmir deputy.” This statement also confirms that Tahsin Bey escaped from Malta.²⁸⁹

Tahsin Bey’s exile to Malta and how he was able to return to Turkey are worth discussing. First of all, Tahsin Bey wrote his memoir while in exile in Malta. The reason for his exile, the conditions he experienced there, and why and how he escaped are all interconnected and are likely to have influenced Tahsin Bey’s narrative. Since there are two different inferences in two different theses on Tahsin Bey,²⁹⁰ I believe it is important to contribute to the discussion by making an assumption based on information from the sources. In addition, the absence of the second part of the memoir, which is supposed to give more detail about Tahsin Bey’s Malta exile, leads the researcher to make such speculations. Furthermore, Tahsin Bey’s escape from Malta or his arrival as part of a prisoner exchange may have had some important effects. As stated in the correspondence between British High Commissioner Admiral de Robeck and Lord Curzon, Hasan Tahsin Bey,

²⁸⁷Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri*, 348-387.

²⁸⁸BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ., 59-61

²⁸⁹“Bu kıymetli idarecimizin idarecilik hayatı burada başlar. Rumeli’ninmuteaddit nahiyelerinde dört sene müdürlük yaptıktan sonra Razlık, GökeliGevgili), Florina (Florine) ve diğer bazı Selanik kazalarına yedi sene kaymakamlık yaptıktan sonra Drama Mutasarrıflığı’na ve oradan da sırasıyla Beyoğlu Mutasarrıflığı, Bursa Vali Vekaleti, Van, Erzurum, Suriye, İzmir valiliklerinde muhtar hizmetler gördükten sonra Son Mebusan Meclisi’ne İzmir mebusu sıfatıyla iştirak etmiştir. İstanbul’un düşman tarafından vaki işgalini protesto eden diğer vatanperver şahsiyetlerle birlikte Malta’ya neyfolunmuş ve oradan kaçarak Birinci Büyük Millet Meclisi’ne İzmir mebusu olarak dahil olmuştur.” See: İkdam, Dec. 4, 1939, no.111, .2. This passage was taken from the work of Korkmaz. See Korkmaz. “Tahsin Uzer’in Yaşamı,” 115-116.

²⁹⁰Ender Korkmaz’s MA thesis indicates that Tahsin Bey escaped from Malta, while Mustafa Şahin states that Tahsin Bey was freed from Malta through diplomatic efforts.

former governor of Erzurum and Damascus and later İzmir deputy, was accused of having close relations with Talat Pasha and being involved in the preparation of the Armenian genocide.²⁹¹ Bilal Şimşir describes the situation as a complete farce, saying that even during the process of collecting evidence against the Malta exiles, the British High Commissioner could find no evidence to prove the accusations against Tahsin Bey.²⁹² More importantly, the fate of Tahsin Bey and the other prisoners accused of involvement with the deportation of Armenians was uncertain, as Şükrü Bleda notes, meaning that the way they may have been treated differently while on the island, which could have impacted their mental health.

Although he said that he started to write while in Erzurum, it is possible that Tahsin Bey wrote this memoir in an attempt to address the accusations made about him. If nothing else, one could infer that Tahsin Bey was trying to explain the entire process of the dissolution of the empire and justify his personal actions during this struggle. Moreover, it was an understandable situation for Tahsin Bey, considering that his fate in Malta was uncertain. There are others who wrote memoirs with a similar motivation in the period after the Ottoman defeat. For example, Cemal Paşa²⁹³ wrote his account of the years 1913-1917 during the military trials of *Divan-ı Harb-i Örfi*, which started in 1919 after the end of the First World War.²⁹⁴ In other words, he described the period that was the subject of accusations and described the events leading to the First World War from his own perspective. In addition, Cemal Paşa's memoirs were translated into German and French in 1922, and the German version was printed.²⁹⁵ Similarly, Mehmed Selahaddin Bey wrote a book called "What I Know About the Foundation of the CUP and the Fall of the Ottoman Empire" in 1918,²⁹⁶ stating that he wanted to explain how the state came to this point and to prevent similar events from happening in the future.²⁹⁷ An account of the life of Şemsi Pasha, who was appointed to suppress the rebellion initiated by Resneli Niyazi for the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy and was

²⁹¹F. O. 371/5089/E. 2805: De Robeck'ten Curzon'a. Yazı. İstanbul, 25.3.1920, No. 402/R. 2886 This passage was taken from the work of Şimşir. See: Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri*, 171.

²⁹²Ibid, 233.

²⁹³Ahmet Cemal Paşa (1872-1922).

²⁹⁴M.Şükrü Hanioglu, "Cemal Paşa." *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Türkiye İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1993.

²⁹⁵Cemal Paşa. *Hatıralar-İttihat-Terakki ve Birinci Dünya Harbi* (İstanbul: Selek Yayınları, 1959), 5.

²⁹⁶Mehmed Salahaddin Bey served in the Supreme Court for more than four years. Although there is not much information about him, he was known to be close to the leaders of some political parties in the early 20th century.

²⁹⁷Mehmed Selahaddin Bey, *İttihad ve Terakkinin Kuruluşu ve Osmanlı Devleti'nin Yıkılışı Hakkında Bildiklerimiz* (İstanbul: İnkılab,1989), 17-18.

killed by Mülazım Âtîf (Kamçıl), a Unionist *fedâî*, was published by Müfid Şemsi, Şemsi Paşa's son, in 1919 when the CUP left power. Müfid Şemsi stated that the book was written in response to Resneli Niyazi and his memoirs. Moreover, Müfid Şemsi tried to refute his father's claims that he was ignorant and inadequate, and presented the events that Resneli Niyazi related in his memoir from his own point of view. It is understandable that the fall of the CUP and the Ottoman defeat at the end of the First World War led to the proliferation of such narratives. Various memoirs written between 1918-1922 have a similar motivation. It is not surprising to see these attempts to explain the events that resulted in the disintegration of the state from different perspectives, with some authors justifying their actions, while others made accusations.

6. CONCLUSION

The Macedonian Question is not a temporary crisis emerged during the dissolution of an empire. On the contrary its impacts still dominate the politics and the societies of Southeast Europe. As an unsolved problem even today, the Macedonian Question is still popular and source of debate for the scholars. Within this framework one of the most attractive topics is the banditry issue in the region. There are several studies which pursued different methods and having different approaches. The Macedonian Question and its aspects became one of the milestones in the creation of national memories and historiographies in the Balkans. The Balkan Wars and loss of the entire Rumeli and as the next phases of the Macedonian Question created major traumas affecting the ruling elite of the Turkish Republic, thus official Turkish historiography. Tendencies in Balkan historiographies have changed a lot within decades, especially stereotypical arguments on evil Muslim ruler and Christian subject evolved into a more layered debate in which socio-economic aspects gained more significance. In the last few decades more revisionist scholars produced works and contributed to the study of the Macedonian Question. In terms of sources and methods, personal accounts gained popularity not only in Turkish but also in Balkan historiography. Scholars studied memoirs within the Macedonian Question and banditry framework in which it is possible to see several historical figures including Ottoman administrators and bandit leaders. However, Tahsin Uzer's memoir published by his son under the name of "Macedonian Banditry History and the Last Ottoman Administration" seem to be relatively neglected. There are not many studies on Tahsin Bey's memoir within this framework. A couple of master thesis and dissertations touch upon his memoir in the relevant parts of their studies though a study directly focused on the Tahsin Bey's experience within this context is absent. This study aimed to deal with the issue of banditry in Macedonia and the Ottoman administration, as it says in its title, rather than a biography of Tahsin Uzer. Therefore, the thesis excluded the irrelevant parts and his missions after he left Macedonia.

In order to better understand the context of Tahsin Bey's memoir, the second and third chapters outlined the issues that shaped the memoir. The second chapter focused on the general framework of the Macedonian Question. Different views of scholars from different historiographies were compared. The chapter discussed how "Macedonian Question" is described in different historiographies. The emergence of the question and milestones were given. The significance of the Russo-Ottoman War and the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin were underlined in terms of the recognition of the problem as one of the urgent international questions in European diplomacy. The following sections focused on major reasons created the problem by comparing different views. Many scholars more or less agree upon that the influence and intervention of the Great Powers played a key role in the emergence of the Macedonian Question. The second reason is changing in socio-economic dynamics both in the region and in the empire in general. Existent laws, regulations and administration could not meet the requirements of the socio-economic changes. Last section focused on the ethno-religious conflicts and their impacts in the region.

There are different opinions on the factors that played significant roles in the emergence and development of the crisis. Comparing to different historiographies, it is possible to infer that the ground for such a complicated issue was established much earlier. The constant wars and defeats did not only disturb the peace in the Balkans but also affected the economic situation with a heavy tax burden in the region. These wars especially the ones with Russia and Austria had a negative impact on the Ottoman economy in general. Expansionist and pan-Slavist policies of Russia and competition with Austria in the Balkans influenced internal developments. Ottoman administration could not meet the requirements of the change in the socio-economic dynamics in the society in Macedonia. Corruption in local government and abuse of privilege by the Greek Patriarchate made ethnic differences more visible contributed to the situation and led to violence and terror to reign the region in the following period. These changes cannot explain the whole story of Macedonia. It is difficult to indicate a certain point on which one can talk about the emergence of the Macedonian Question. Yet, it is well-known that the crisis was accepted as one of the primary issues within the Eastern Question and internationally recognized in Berlin Congress conveyed after the Ottoman defeat to Russians. After this point, the term of Macedonia and the "Macedonian Question" became one of the primary issues in European diplomacy. Irredentist policies of other Balkan states especially Bulgaria which had to give Macedonia in the Berlin Congress and interests of the Great Powers had the greatest impact on the development and complication of the Macedonian Question and it could not be

solved until the First World War.

The third chapter primarily focused on the systematization of terror and the emergence of the revolutionary organizations in Macedonia. Although there were several movements and organizations operated in the region, due to the time period and places that Tahsin Uzer covered in his memoir, the chapter mainly focused on the Bulgaro-Macedonian movement and its revolutionary committees and their guerilla activities. Different parties within this movement such as the Internal Organization and The Supreme Committee, their differing ideas on the future of Macedonia and impacts of Bulgaria on banditry were discussed. The section also focused on the Ottoman administration and Muslims' reaction. Ottoman administration had to deal not only with the bandits on the field but also with other Balkan states and the Great Powers. At that point, every response shown by the military forces, or the Sublime Porte would be exposed to more pressure of reforms and threat of war by other Balkan states and European powers. Although the conflict of interests between different groups and states turned the situation in favor of the Ottomans from time to time, the loss of the whole Macedonia and even the Balkans was inevitable.

The fourth and fifth chapter focused on Tahsin Uzer and his memoir. The memoir of Tahsin Bey with personal experience as well as critical analysis from a broader perspective provides historians a better understanding of the local and rural life in the regions and time of banditry in Macedonia got its peak, how socio-economic and administrative problems fed and influenced banditry and providing critical outlook on nationalist movements other than the romantic ones and showing that a personal narrative which was not a mere story of a "great man" but the one who actively fought against both banditry and problems of Ottoman administration, at the time and region. A less studied memoir written by Tahsin Uzer did not only contributed with the information on banditry and uprisings that Tahsin Bey witnessed, but also provided another perspective of how a Young Turk administrator perceived the banditry issues, insight of the administrative relations between the periphery and the center of a collapsing empire. His psychological situation was rather difficult to be analyzed but his profile and traumas could contribute to the analysis of his ego. The way he emphasizes his illness and weak nature in his early life, in the later parts of the memoir evolves him into both a physically and mentally strong person and a leading figure whose decisions and actions change the course of history.

The study did not only focus on what incidents were covered by Tahsin Bey but how his ego, personality, background, his persona in short affect the way he narrated and justify his actions and ideas. To have a critical and cautious approach to the memoir, the study compared some other memoirs. It can be inferred that some aspects of Tahsin Bey's memoir are not unique, but they are highly related to the conditions of their time period and the intellectual persona that this period created. Tahsin Bey was born in Thessaloniki, one of the important commercial, cultural and political centers of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the education he received at the *Mülkiye Mektebi*, the high intellectual level of this school and the Young Turk movement that Tahsin Bey met while he was studying here, became a turning point in terms of Tahsin Bey's administrative life and shaped his worldview and ideological identity to a great extent. These influences show their effect in Tahsin Bey's memoirs, as in many other intellectuals of the period who were brought up in similar conditions in the same period.

However, there are some points to be careful while studying Tahsin Uzer's memoir. Lack of the original manuscript limits analysis on the memoir. Thus, If the original manuscript or further details belonging to the memoir are discovered, a more detailed and accurate analysis could be made and interpretations would not remain as speculations. The researcher's lack of access to the original writing creates an obligation to examine the memoir by questioning its originality, authenticity and credibility. Moreover, as noted in the discussion about the Malta Exile, a significant part of the work was not published, that may have influenced his perspective on the subjects he dealt with in the memoir. In addition, when the parts examined in the memoir, the style changed in different parts and that the narrator suddenly passes from Tahsin Bey to his son Celalettin Bey. Celalettin Uzer, by interfering with the flow of the memoir in the parts he deems, makes the audience question some details that may not be in the original memoir, and supported the information given by his father by adding some documents. These are the parts that the researcher could see. Yet, the rest of the memoir should also be approached carefully and cautiously. The possibility that the language, is simplified is an issue which Ali Birinci finds quite troublesome in terms credibility, should be considered here as well. In the book named Famous Governors, there are small word differences in the part taken from the memoirs in Tahsin Uzer's biography and in the printed memoirs. Although the actual reason for these is unknown, considering that the famous Book of Governors was published at an earlier date (1969), the slightest difference in this book, which is the

only source with which we can compare the language of the memoir, is important.²⁹⁸

Moreover, while reading Tahsin Bey's memoir and trying to understand the Macedonian problem through his lens, different aspects of Tahsin Bey's identity should be taken into account, and different regions, different conditions and traumas he lived in until the Malta Exile, in which he wrote his memoir, should not be forgotten. Tahsin Bey, as a Young Turk from Thessaloniki, who traces his paternal lineage to Skenderbeg, carried hatred towards the Abdülhamid II and his regime, joined the CUP, and was arrested and sent to Pürsican for exile. However, Tahsin Bey was also a person who was strickly bounded to the Ottoman empire and represented the state as the administrator of wherever he went. Abdülhamit Kırmızı states that seeing identity and personality as an constant and concrete entity and not being able to go beyond black and white makes it difficult to understand historical figures.²⁹⁹ A statist point of view can be observed, no matter how hostile he may be towards Abdülhamid II. The terms he uses for *komitadjis* are not different from those used in official documents. Some of the words he used for the committees, the regions where these committees were active such as “*eşkrya, komitadji, cheta, şekavet yuvası, mikrop yuvası,*” are also seen in Ottoman documents.

In addition, while describing his first visit to Razlık, Tahsin Bey, who tries to protect the rights of the villagers regardless of their nationality and religion and to pursue a fair administration, states that the Razlık region is a place of revolution and almost all the people are *komitadji*. Here, the language used for the non-Muslim people of regions such as Pürsican, Çiç, Ağsutos is gone, and a more vengeful language comes instead. “It was my greatest desire to show myself in this duty, which was my first district governorship, to serve the country and especially to take revenge on the cruel Bulgarians who wanted to destroy my country and who shed Muslims blood in Macedonia at the first opportunity.”³⁰⁰ Abdülhamit Kırmızı, while discussing the life of Ferid Pasa from Avlonya; states that the life stories of imperial bureaucrats show how life unites different geographies in the best way. An

²⁹⁸“On bin nüfuslu 20 kadar karyenin (Köy) idaresini deruhde eylemiş olduğum zaman henüz 19 yaşımı ikmal etmemiş, daha doğrusu tevellüdüm, 1294 Ağustos (1878)....Müdür olduktan yedi ay sonra Selanije gitmiş, Mahkemeyi şeriyede ispatı rüşt ederek eyrramda bulunan parama ve çiftlikteki hisseme mutasarrıf olmuşdum.” See: Orhun, *Meşhur Valiler*, 515. “Nâhiye müdürü olmuş, devletin, milletin mukadderatına karışmış, 10.000 nüfusun, yirmi kadar köyün yönetimini yüklendiğim gün(5 Teshrinevvel 1313-5 Ekim 1897) henüz 19 yaşımı ikmal etmemiş, daha doğrusu, doğum tarihim 1877 Ağustos olduğuna göre 19 yaşına girmiştim. Buna ne hâcet, müdür olduktan 7 ay sonra Selânîk'e gitmiş, Mahkemeyi Şer'îyyede, ispat-ı rüşt ederek, eytamda bulunan 590 altınma tasarruf etmiş ve amcamla annemin vasiliklerinden resmen kurtularak, çiftlikteki evime ve hisseme sahip olmuştum.” See: Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 24.

²⁹⁹Abdülhamit Kırmızı, *Avlonyalı Ferid Paşa, Bir Ömür Devlet* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınevi, 2014), 448.

³⁰⁰Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi*, 79.

Ottoman statesman who worked in different parts of the empire gets the view of every town, city and province he worked in. It was a necessity to take into account the space. He has to keep up with the spirit of the place and the conditions it imposes and survive in these conditions.³⁰¹

This effect is also seen in Tahsin Bey's narrative in some other parts. In particular, while describing his days in Kesendire, he mentions not only the Greeks in Kesendire, but also the Peloponnese and Crete revolutions, and the results of these revolutions. Moreover, he complains that the Greek armies occupied İzmir because the state did not follow a correct and effective policy in these regions. It is seen in these pages that; it is not only the 20-year-old *Kızan Kaymakam* Tahsin Bey who narrates about the events in Razlık, Kesendire and Florina. It is the narrative of a statesman and former deputy who struggled with *komitadjis* in different parts of Macedonia for years, served in eastern provinces, experienced a world war, witnessed the occupation of İzmir and was eventually arrested and exiled to Malta. While trying to understand the Macedonian problem through Tahsin Bey's eyes, it is necessary to analyze his character, the city where he was born and grew up, the education he received, the ideologies and movements of the period and the social-political atmosphere of the Abülhamid II period. Apart from this, the date and conditions in which the memoir was written should also be taken into account, and it should not be forgotten that Tahsin Bey's experience and traumas over the years may have influenced the way he narrated the events he experienced years ago. Discovery of the original manuscript or the unpublished second volume of Tahsin Bey's memoirs can affect the entire story. Moreover, a new memoir or a document giving details of how neighboring provinces and their governors were dealing with the same issues can enrich the literature in this field.

Lastly, the memoir of Tahsin Bey requires a more sophisticated, multifaceted and comprehensive approach than taking it as a mere historical source or an ego document. It may not be peculiar but a typical example of its age but maybe that's why it is even more crucial to approach it as a sort of hybrid narrative in which one could not only analyze it as an ego document but also have a better understanding of how major tendencies, ideals, ideologies, political concerns, and milestones of the latest period of the Ottoman history reflect onto a Young Turk intellectual's life story. It could be achieved by looking at the world through Tahsin Bey's perspective, empathizing with him and his view of the late 19th century Macedonian villages,

³⁰¹Kırmızı, *Avlonyalı Ferid Paşa*, 445.

bandits, Hamidian rule and all the paths that led the unpleasant end of the empire.

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